



## Issaquah High Teacher Profile

**Joseph Nguyen** (Mr. Nguyen [can pronounce like Win])  
Introduction to Sports Medicine, Health and Future Ready Teacher



### What is your education background?

This Fall 2021, I will be starting my fourth year at Issaquah High School and fourth year teaching overall. I have a Bachelor's of Science in Physiology from UW Seattle and a Master's in Teaching Math and Science with endorsements in Biology from Seattle Pacific University. Most recently, I added CTE endorsement to my teaching certification through Eastern Washington University.

### Did you grow up around Issaquah? If not, where did you grow up and did that help shape the person you are today?

I was born and raised in Tacoma, WA, about an hour Southwest of Issaquah. My parents and grandmother, who lived with us, immigrated to the US from Vietnam. I was raised as a second generation Vietnamese-American.

This definitely shaped the person I am today. First off, I was raised with a different cultural lens, being the child of immigrants. I spoke another language, Vietnamese, for the first few years of my life before learning English at school. The traditions, holidays, and customs that I practiced at home were Vietnamese and usually different than my classmates growing up.



I grew up in a pretty diverse community altogether. Every level of school I was in, there were many students from different backgrounds. There were students like myself from a Vietnamese background, but I also frequently interacted and engaged with many other cultures as well. In Tacoma, on 38th ST near Lincoln High School, there is an area that is referred to as "Little Saigon." This was a place that had many different Vietnamese businesses and shops that my family frequented often.

Although it has its share of quirks, I find it a beautiful place to have grown up and I do call it my hometown. There are systemic and historic challenges that have left deep impact in the community. There are many things I learned growing up in Tacoma that I still carry with me.

**What was your job/career before coming to teach at Issaquah? If you had a prior job/career, how did that job/career make you become a better teacher?**

I attended UW on a pre-med track. After graduating with my Bachelor's, I worked in the emergency rooms of Swedish hospitals as a medical scribe, as I prepared for applying to medical school. This meant that I followed doctors and did all of the documentation for patients' medical records. It was an intense, fast-paced job that had me working long, difficult hours.

This gave me a lot of insight into our healthcare system and it also let me see a lot of the application and practice of what I had been learning all of my life. A lot of the skills and stories I picked up from my time in the ER have given me opportunities to share and enrich my instruction. Students typically love when I share the crazy or intense things that I saw happen.

It also helps me as a teacher give students another perspective on entering the medical field. I admire doctors, nurses, and everyone involved in providing healthcare for our communities. However, I came to the conclusion it wasn't for me. I struggled with not feeling like I could help build relationships and build people up in that role. So, I instead pursued education where I thought that I would be able to invest in young people for a longer time. They'll be with me for at least 1 semester, sometimes 2 depending on the class. Over the span of multiple months, I can help build their skills and shape who they are. For some students, they might feel like the medical field is what they "should do." Sharing my story sometimes helps them see that they might have other goals or interests.

**What classes at Issaquah do you teach, and why do you love teaching that subject?**

One class I teach is "Introduction to Sports Medicine," an elective CTE class that students can start taking their sophomore year. This class will cover a lot of biology, anatomy, and physiology in the context of sports and athletics. It's a very fun class that applies a lot of the science to things that the students can see and do themselves. I love teaching this subject because I absolutely enjoy learning and sharing about biology and physiology (I have a whole degree in it!). The human body is intricate and interesting and studying it is very rewarding.

Secondly, I teach Health, a semester-long graduation requirement. This class covers so many different subjects. I really enjoy teaching it because it is such a personal and relevant subject area. Everybody has life, so they embody and practice all of the physical, mental, emotional, and social health topics that we learn about in the classroom.

With Future Ready, it is an elective class that you can take that will explore many of the different things you can expect to face post-high school. We work through things like understanding taxes, applying to jobs/schools, and how to make big purchases/rent things. My favorite part of teaching this class is really letting the students inform where they want the class to go and helping them be prepared for the things they are excited for after they graduate.



**How many years have you been teaching at Issaquah?**

I have been teaching for 4 years at Issaquah High School.

**Any favorite teaching memories?**

Some of my favorite teaching memories are when I have really earned my students' respect and trust. I usually find out after their time in my class is over, either through the semester has ended or they're on their way to graduating. Usually I get a card or letter, sometimes an email or a conversation, but they share with me how much they liked my class. They'll reference specific lessons or things that I said that really stuck with them. I cherish those moments and save the cards and letters.

Hearing from families and students that I've made an impact on their life, changed them, and inspired them are some of the most rewarding moments. If I had remained on the path to becoming a doctor, I think I could have helped a lot of people. As a teacher, I know that I've impacted many students who will then go on to impact their families, friends, and communities. When those students become doctors, engineers, artists, leaders, parents, and more, the things I taught and passed onto them will also be passed again.

**Are you a club mentor or sport coach and if so, what are the best parts of being a mentor/coach for that club/sport? Any memorable experiences you would like to share?**

I am advisor for a couple different clubs. HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) and Sports Medicine club.

My favorite experiences from these clubs are when we go to competitions and the students earn rewards. Their hard work pays off and I'm just proud of them for doing their best and accomplishing what they set out to do.

This year I'm looking forward to advising for SAGA and an Esports Club!

**Is (was) volunteering part of your life? If so, tell us about your volunteering experiences and what you love about them?**

I have volunteered often, since I was a teenager. There've been many things I've done, cleaning up parks, working with Tacoma Rescue Mission, daycares, etc.

My main source of volunteering is working with my church as a Youth Group Leader and on their AV/Tech team. I have worked with multiple youth groups before. It's another way for me to support youth in another sphere of their life.

The AV/Tech team is the most interesting and recent experience. I have always enjoyed working with technology on my own. However, at the beginning of the pandemic, many churches had to go to online streaming. I just was trained in how to run the soundboard and so I thought I'd give it a try. I had to learn everything from scratch and build the entire livestream production from the ground up. Now we have a professional system going and I've technically added Executive Producer to my resume!



## **What do you like to do outside of school?**

There's so many things! I have a ton of different hobbies, so I will separate by category.

*Entertainment:* Reading books, comics, manga. Watching TV, movies, anime.

*Sports:* Volleyball and Tennis are my favorite but I am open to playing anything! You might see me during passing period bouncing a volleyball around.

*Hobbies:* Arts and crafts, model kits, board games, card games

*Video Games:* Lots of different kinds! Some of the ones I played/enjoy the most include Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, Rocket League, Apex Legends, Genshin Impact, and more.

*Music:* Guitar, Singing, Karaoke

## **Is there anything else special about you that you would like to share?**

What stands out about me as an individual and as an educator is my desire to really care for the whole person. When I was in high-school, I had a difficult time for many different reasons. I know my family loved me, I did my best in school, and I had friends. However, it doesn't mean that time of my life didn't have hardship. There were some teachers that really impacted me by being themselves and being honest. So, I do my best to be bravely, openly honest and vulnerable in my teaching. I hope that I get to teach them some interesting information and skills. May that knowledge stay with them as they build upon it in their next classes. Yet, I think what most students will remember is how my class made them feel. My mission is that they always leave class feeling seen, acknowledged, and cared for. That's all I really set out to achieve each day I come into work.

