

RCCSD Novice Teacher Education

MENTORING IN NOVEMBER

This time of the year can be very challenging for new teachers. It is likely that the hectic pace of the first few months of school has taken its toll, both mentally and physically. New teachers are likely to be very tired and are probably experiencing some feelings of disillusionment. The stress of being a new teacher, along with the seemingly unending workload, may cause new teachers to question their efficacy and commitment to the profession. Your role as a mentor is vital during this phase. The following list, adapted from Paula Rutherford's book, *21st Century Mentor's Handbook: Creating a Culture of Learning*, contains some suggestions for helping new teachers to begin to rejuvenate their passion for their career:

- Take a lunchtime walk with your mentee in the crisp air. Talk about their upcoming plans for the holiday and remind them to make time to relax and recharge over Thanksgiving break.
- Ask your administrator to put a note of thanks and encouragement in the new teacher's mailbox. A little positive attention goes a long way with helping to rejuvenate a teacher's feelings of self-efficacy.
- Review the teacher's accomplishments from the first marking period. What struggles have they conquered? What goals do they have for the second marking period?
- Be sure that the new teacher does not fall into the turkeys and pilgrims trap with students in the days leading up to break. While some celebrating is fine, the majority of the school day should still be focused on rigorous, standards-based learning. Remind them that students crave structure.
- Provide coverage for the new teacher to spend time observing a veteran teacher.
- Discuss the impact of the upcoming holiday season. Remind the teacher that holidays can have a negative effect on the behavior of some students. Discuss the fact that the holidays can be difficult for some children and talk about ways to support students who seem to be struggling as the holidays approach.
- Help the new teacher with scheduling and preparing for parent conferences. Conferences can be very intimidating for new teachers. Discuss strategies for keeping conferences positive and productive. Role play and have the teacher practice how he/she will conduct any potentially difficult conferences.
- Discuss strategies for dealing with parents who are concerned about school issues.
- Remind the teacher that it is important to maintain positive open communication with parents. Parents who are kept up to date will have far less concerns and questions about student progress and grades.
- Check in to make sure that the new teacher is updating grades frequently. Remind them that grades for assignments should be added to the system (DSC or HAC) in a timely manner.
- Put a Thanksgiving treat on the new teacher's desk with a note that says that you are thankful for all of his/her hard work. A pumpkin pie just might be the answer to putting a smile back on that teacher's face.
- Keep up the hard work as a new teacher mentor. The RCCSD Office of Novice Educator Development is thankful for all that you do to support our novice educators!

Rutherford, P. (2005). *21st century mentor's hand book: Creating a culture of learning*. Alexandria, VA: Just Ask Publications.



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UPCOMING NEW TEACHER WORKSHOPS

- Schoology for New Teachers: November 14th
- Conflict Resolution for Teachers: December 18th
- Why Didn't I Learn this in College? Part 1: January 15
- Why Didn't I Learn this in College? Part 2: February 19



STUDENT TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: TAYLOR STAFFIERI, RICHEY ELEMENTARY

Tell us about your school experience. What was school like for you as a student?

Growing up, I went to a small, K-8, private school. I went to this school from kindergarten to sixth grade. This was a school where students came from many different towns and where countless positive relationships were formed between the students and teachers. Every staff member and student in this school created a close-knit family. I am still very close with many of the people I went to school with. I am even still in contact with my Kindergarten, second grade, and fourth/sixth grade teachers.

I was always the kid who loved going to school. I liked my classmates and all of the teachers. I was lucky enough to be with my favorite teacher for fourth and sixth grade. My favorite subject was (and still is) science. I'll always remember the exciting science experiments that we did. I will never forget when we had to protect an egg in a container and drop it from the top of the football stadium bleachers. We wanted to see if the egg would crack or if it would stay intact... my egg cracked. Even though my egg did not survive the drop, I will always have the memory of that exciting science lesson.

Who or what inspired you to be a teacher?

My role model has been a teacher for my entire life. She has pushed me to be the best that I

“Each student is unique in his/her own way and the relationships that are formed are one-of-a-kind.”

YEAR 2 PSYCHOLOGIST, HEATHER VAN STOLK, BRINGS SENSORY CORNERS TO RICHEY ELEMENTARY

It's just her second year in Red Clay but new psychologist, Heather Van Stolk, is already making a difference at Richey Elementary. With the collaboration of Richey's FCT, Jaclyn Durant, Heather has provided a basket filled with sensory tools for each Richey classroom. Each kit has a glitter bottle, a water bubbler toy, a koosh ball, playdoh, a ring of illustrated calm-down skills and breathing techniques, and a dry erase board for doodling, plus a 2-minute timer. According to Heather, she and Jaclyn “thought that it would be a good way to introduce the idea of trauma-informed classrooms to the teachers and to work on constructing a school-wide trauma-informed culture rather than having just a few rooms here and there with strategies in place.” So far, 91% of the teachers would recommend the Calm Corners to a colleague at another school and 73% feel it's a helpful part of classroom management. Way to go, Heather and Jaclyn!



can possibly be and never let me give up. My mom is the reason why I want to be a teacher. She inspires me to be just like her. She is hardworking and always willing to learn. When I was younger, I would go to school with her every year on “Take Your Child to Work Day.” I would draw on the chalkboard and help her grade papers. My favorite part of going to school with her was obviously the pens, stickers, and rubber cement. Let's face it, teacher supplies are so much fun! I'll never forget noticing the positive relationships she had with her students and how she impacted their lives. My mom is my inspiration. She is the reason why I chose to become a teacher.

Why did you choose to participate in the WilmU YLR program instead of completing a traditional student teaching experience?

I chose to participate in the WilmU Year Long Residency program over traditional student teaching because I heard about how incredible the experience is. One evening when I was sitting in my Practicum 1 class, a group of people came in to talk about the Year Long Residency. I was immediately interested. I knew that if I chose this path, I would have a highly trained and exceptional cooperating teacher (and boy do I have one!!). I also knew that I would have an entire year's worth of teaching experience. Knowing this makes me feel like I will be even more prepared for my first year of teaching than I would if I chose the traditional route for student teaching.

What has been the most surprising thing about teaching so far?

Throughout my college courses, I would consistently hear about the importance of building relationships with students. I was surprised with how quickly those relationships formed. It was especially surprising due to the fact that the students are all so different. Each student is unique in his/her own way and the relationships that are formed are one-of-a-kind. I absolutely love when the students come to me with smiling faces and an exciting story about what happened over the weekend.

What is one piece of advice that you would share with another student teacher?

Do not be afraid to mess up. More is learned from making mistakes than always doing things correctly. We always tell our students that it is okay to make mistakes because that is how we learn. We have to listen to our own advice.

STUDENT TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: AARON BROWN, SHORTLIDGE ACADEMY



Tell us about your school experience. What was school like for you as a student?

I graduated from Amityville Memorial High School in Amityville, NY in 2000. After graduation, I attended Suffolk County Community College (SCCC). At this time, I really didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I graduated from SCCC in 2003 with a A.A. in Liberal Arts. Once I graduated from SCCC, I attended Stony Brook University in New York. I graduated from Stony Brook University in 2006 with a B.A. in History. In 2015, I moved to Delaware and shortly after enrolled in the education program at Wilmington University. As a student, my mother always preached education, so I always studied hard and got good grades.

Who or what inspired you to be a teacher?

The person who inspired me to teach was Mr. Dorf, my high school history teacher. Mr. Dorf always made class fun and interesting. He always saw potential in me, even if I didn't see it in myself. It wasn't easy teaching in a high school like the one I went to, but he always made learning exciting for his students; he never let us settle for average, he always expected more. Just like Mr. Dorf, I will try to make teaching fun and instill in my students the idea that, no matter what career path you choose, if you work hard, you can do or be anything.

Why did you choose to participate in the WilmU YLR program instead of completing a traditional student teaching experience?

The reason I chose the WilmU YLR program over the traditional student teaching route was strictly for the experience that I would gain through the program. Also, after speaking to some of the participants in the 2017-2018 YLR program through WilmU and hearing about the



“Approach everyday with an open mind, ready to learn and give 100% to your students; being simply mediocre will never allow you to reach your full potential.”

knowledge and experience they acquired from their cooperating teachers, it was a no brainer to apply for the program. The YLR is great for me. Since I don't have a ton of teaching experience, it will allow me to get an entire year of teaching under my belt. The program will also provide me with marketability when looking for employment; especially since this is a change in career for me. Through the YLR, I attend every parent teacher conference, faculty meeting, PLC, lesson planning session and professional development opportunity which will ultimately prepare me for when I have my own classroom.

What has been the most surprising thing about teaching so far?

The most surprising thing about teaching so far this year is the bond I made with my students. I thought by having two teachers in the classroom, the students would automatically think I was a student teacher. From day one, the students saw me as their teacher and not a student teacher who will be leaving them in a couple of weeks. Sometimes it is not easy for students to trust, especially working in the school that I work in with so many negative outside influences; but when you build a positive teacher-student relationship, students are eager to come to school work and hard every day. This is the reason I want to be a teacher: to build strong relationships and changes lives.

What is one piece of advice that you would share with another student teacher?

The piece of advice that I can share with other student teachers is never settle. Approach everyday with an open mind, ready to learn and give 100% to your students; being simply mediocre will never allow you to reach your full potential.

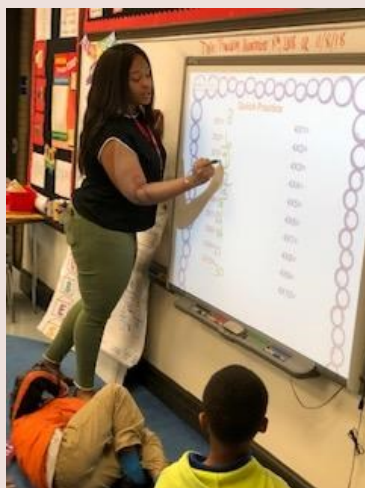


NEW TEACHER SHOUT OUT

ASHLEY BUCKINGHAM,
3RD GRADE MATH
TEACHER, WARNER
ELEMENTARY

"From the moment she stepped through the door at Warner, Ms. Buckingham has given her all to her students and this building. She asks questions and listens to suggestions given by others. She embraces being a continuous learner each day. Her classroom is differentiated, diverse, and rigorous, which makes it a continuous learning opportunity for the students. It is a pleasure to have such a vibrant novice teacher working with students here at Warner."

-Amber Tos
Instructional Support Coach
Warner Elementary



NEW TEACHER SPOTLIGHT— ANASTASIA MCGOVERN, YEAR 2 TEACHER, COOKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



What were you like as student?

As a student I always enjoyed science! The teacher I had made it fun and interesting. I enjoyed working in groups and discovering new concepts. I also really enjoyed reading and getting lost in a new book. I was a hands-on learner and, luckily, the teachers I had at St. John the Beloved made learning fun and interactive by having us get up and move.

Who or what inspired you to be a teacher?

I have always wanted to teach and work with students for as long as I can remember. I loved the idea of getting to be the person that makes a difference in a child's life every day.

What have you found to be the most rewarding part of being a teacher?

The most rewarding part about teaching is when I'm teaching a lesson and my students understand what I'm teaching and everyone is raising their hands. I love hearing students have conversations about what they've learned and helping each other work through assignments.

What has been the most challenging part of teaching?

Learning a new grade, trying to balance all the different curriculums and fit everything into one day has been a challenge.

What makes Cooke such a special school?

From the very beginning, the staff and all the teachers have been extremely supportive. Any questions that I have, I know I can ask anyone in the building and they will find a way to help. No matter what grade you are teaching, we are all a team at Cooke.

What have you gained from the mentoring program?

From the mentoring program I have found someone who is supportive and helpful, even though she teaches 1st grade and I teach 3rd. It has also given me the opportunity to continue learning and discovering new ideas to implement in the classroom.

What is one piece of advice that you would share with a new teacher?

Ask questions! Never think that you are being too annoying or too needy. Ask questions and be willing to learn from others experiences and knowledge.

What grade and subject do you teach?

I teach 3rd grade, all subjects.



NEW TEACHER SPOTLIGHT— AIZA MCCOLLUM, SKYLINE MIDDLE SCHOOL

What were you like as student?

As a student, I loved to learn new things. I was always interested in school and furthering my education. As a teacher, I continue being a student every day by listening and interacting with my own students. I am constantly learning new ways to engage my students.

Who or what inspired you to be a teacher?

In my life, I always wanted to be a person who helped someone on their path in life. I wanted to be someone that another person can count on and that is what teaching fulfills. Every day, I am able to do something that I love, which is help students in knowing who they are and how to be a person that knows they can accomplish anything. What inspired me to become a teacher was the countless number of people in my life who have cheered me on, especially my grandparents. They are a constant support system that have always told me to follow my dreams and I can accomplish anything. I want to be that support for a student who might not have that encouragement because it makes all the difference in life to feel like you have someone on your team. I want to be a student's cheerleader, mascot, and supporter.



“This program has allowed me the comfort of knowing I am not alone in my first year and I appreciate the mentoring program for allowing me this gift.”

What have you found to be the most rewarding part of being a teacher?

The most rewarding part about being a teacher is the connections you make with students. When I come into my classroom each day, I put on my teacher hat, but, on top of that, I also put on my parent hat, my confidante hat, and my friend hat. The role of a teacher embodies a vast array of obligations and, for one student, you might have to do all of these things. I pride myself on my rapport with students. I appreciate their quirks, their differences, their outlandish stories they tell me, and their openness to come to me for advice. My students have been the most rewarding part of my first year of teaching. They are amazing students and I have truly built an unbreakable connection with them.

What has been the most challenging part of teaching?

The most challenging part of teaching has been my pacing. I always OVERPLAN.

What makes Skyline such a special school?

Skyline Middle has welcomed me with open arms. I have felt nothing but kindness from my first day on.

What have you gained from the mentoring program?

From the mentoring program, I have gained a connection with my mentors that allow me to be more confident in my first year of teaching. Mrs. Sheppard and Mrs. Dobson have not only been great mentors but also friends. I can count on them for advice, a helping hand, or just an ear to listen. This program has allowed me the comfort of knowing I am not alone in my first year and I appreciate the mentoring program for allowing me this gift.

What is one piece of advice that you would share with a new teacher?

One piece of advice I would give to a new teacher is to never forget you are still a student. Every day I learn something about teaching that I never realized – especially the importance of making connections with students. I take the time out to learn things about my students such as their hobbies, their home life, and their attitudes. By knowing this, I can gauge how my classroom will run during that 48 minutes of time, how to approach certain students, and how I need to come across to my students in order for them to WANT to learn.

What grade(s) and subject do you teach?

8th Grade English





RCCSD RETIRED MENTORS

Teacher attrition rates are becoming a problem across the United States. The rates of attrition are especially problematic for our nation's neediest schools. In Red Clay, we are working hard to find new and innovative ways to ensure that our new teachers are fully qualified and fully satisfied in their jobs. One of the ways that we are working to help new teachers is through the implementation of a Retired Mentor cadre. Through grant funding, we have been able to hire a group of eight retired educators to serve as mentors for first-year teachers in our high-needs elementary, middle and high schools. Five members of the current group of retired mentors are former Red Clay educators. They are: Carmen Sheppard, Stephanie Hines, Angela Ogunde, Debbie Brady and Carolyn Martin-McGhee. The other three retired mentors are Steven Johnson, Maureen Emmett, and Sandra Dougherty. This group of retired mentors is providing 60 hours of face-to-face contact and support for twenty-two new teachers. We started the program last year with five retired mentors. The feedback that we received was so positive that we decided to write another grant to continue the program. The school district was awarded a \$20,000 grant to continue fund the program. The retired mentors and their new teachers are building relationships that will last for many years. The new teachers have expressed that they are grateful for the support of the retired mentors and have said that it is wonderful to receive support from mentors who have the time to commit to helping them and who have no current ties to the district. The new teachers have expressed that they feel safe to share their feelings and concerns with their retired mentors. Because this program has been so well received by the novice teachers, we will continue to look for ways to fund this program into the future.

"The retired mentors and their new teachers are building relationships that will last for many years."

Shout Out to Lead Mentor, Julia Morsberger, HB du Pont Middle School

Julia is a wonderful lead mentor! At the beginning of the school year, she had all of our information printed and ready to go. There was a spreadsheet made for who would hold our monthly mentor meetings. Our first meeting, she worked with each mentoring year to find a time that works for us all to come to our monthly meeting. Julia will always make sure to take time to check in with us and is always available to chat. Any time there is information that needs to be sent out we get it promptly forwarded through email. She leaves positive notes, cookie treats, A+ cards, and other thoughtful pick me ups in our mail boxes throughout the year. Overall, Julia is a fantastic lead mentor and our school is lucky to have her!!

- Rebekah Lewandowski , Year 2
Autism Teacher, HB du Pont M.S.

From the Novice Teacher Education Office:

