



MAKING THE Connection TO Career Technical Education

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Chippewa Valley Schools' teachers mentor a new generation of educators

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Test scores aside, one of the best measures of a program's effectiveness is the success of its graduates. Did students take life-long lessons with them after graduation? Did they feel prepared and confident for what came next? Did they gain practical, useful skills? These, and many others, are the questions of real importance.

The Teacher Cadet program, offered to senior students, is a year-long, two-hour, daily program of study that begins the preparation process for those who find the idea of becoming a teacher more than a little intriguing. This career and technical education (CTE) program is taught at Chippewa Valley High School by Becky Kiel, and at Dakota High School by Terri Kubiny. A hallmark of Teacher Cadet is that after some initial preparation in areas such as safety, ethics/professional responsibility, human growth/development, communication, applied learning, and much more, students will gain some actual "classroom" experience in one of our preschool through middle schools under the guidance of a cooperating teacher. This is the part of the preparation that our alumni will often cite as the most impactful. As CTE programs in our district go, this one is fairly young, insofar as following up with graduates is concerned. But the time has come to share some feedback from five alumni who graduated as early as 2011 and as recently as 2016.

Let's start with Morgan Bechtell (CVHS 2011) and Katie Carion (DHS 2011). Both are in their first year of teaching kindergarten. Morgan, who attended Central Michigan University (CMU), is now teaching in Phoenix, AZ, where she says her Michigan certification was accepted without having to do anything more. In 2011, we did not yet have an articulation agreement with CMU, so it took Morgan five years to complete her requirements to become a teacher, which was not uncommon. Students today, however, can shave as much as a year off of that process by earning two CMU credits for their Teacher Cadet experience which allows them to be placed in an education cohort at the university level much sooner.

Katie attended Oakland University (OU)—our first articulation partner—and even though OU required additional placement hours, with the classroom experience and the two credits earned from her high school Teacher Cadet program, she successfully completed her program of study in four years and now teaches at Woodland Elementary School in Troy, MI.

Both young women knew from the onset that they wanted to become teachers. And both say that the actual classroom experience in the Teacher Cadet program solidified their decision to do so. They learned

in high school to write effective lesson plans, to observe, and to use appropriate classroom management strategies. And they both came to realize that teaching is actually not just teaching; it involves so much more. As Morgan says, "I knew what was going on behind-the-scenes in the classroom, and gained insight into many activities that a teacher is required to perform in addition to lesson planning, lesson delivery, and assessment."

In addition to the important role their high school instructors played, when asked about a mentor who may have positively impacted them, they both identified their cooperating teacher from their classroom placement. For Morgan, it was Maureen McCaron at Erie Elementary—who, by the way, was her own, much-admired, first grade teacher—who set the standard that Morgan tries to emulate. As Morgan says, "I strive to be like her every day; having a caring, compassionate, and positive attitude with all of my students." One of the most significant experiences for Morgan in Ms. McCaron's classroom was seeing the positive influence her interaction with students had on their learning. Each day, Morgan worked with students to help them learn their weekly spelling words. Every Friday, Morgan tested the students and observed that, "Students were learning and understanding their spelling words and I saw my efforts directly having a positive impact on their achievement."

For Katie, it was science teacher, Mary Thompson at Ojibwa Elementary who made a big difference in her life as a mentor. And just like Morgan and Ms. McCaron, Katie had previously been a student in Ms. Thompson's class and says, "When I attended Ojibwa, I really enjoyed her lessons and her style of teaching." Even through college, Katie continued to volunteer in Ms. Thompson's science class, and Ms. Thompson continued to provide valuable insights, "many of which I incorporated into my student teaching experience." A lesson that Katie created in high school about how a magnet affects a compass, is one she was also able to use for an assignment in college. Katie still sees some of the students from her Teacher Cadet classroom experience who are now sophomores at Dakota High School.

Another alumnus who finds herself teaching now in Arizona is Jessica DeVriendt (DHS 2012). In her case, it's in fourth grade, not kindergarten. Unlike Katie and Morgan, Jessica had no idea what she wanted to do post high school. She was thinking about nursing, but the thought of blood made her uncomfortable. Her older sister suggested trying Teacher Cadet, and a great suggestion it turned out to be.

Jessica's cooperating teacher was Patty Robine, second grade instructor at

Cheyenne Elementary who she describes as "amazing!" Jessica remembers working daily, one-on-one with a low achieving student, helping her to learn numbers in expanded form. "One day, Ms. Robine mentioned that my student did so well on her math quiz that she earned an A! The extra help I gave her paid off. After this experience, I felt I could actually be a teacher," says Jessica. Another lesson that she learned from Ms. Robine that she incorporates into her teaching practice is that effectively communicating with parents is an important component of good student learning.

Jessica credits Teacher Cadet for solidifying her decision to become a teacher, and says, "I gained confidence in myself through the program and it was a big help during my college experience." She also did her student teaching in Chippewa Valley Schools at Mohawk Elementary, under the guidance of fourth grade teacher, Kelly Gendernelle. "I felt very lucky to be supervised by such a phenomenal teacher!" Jessica too, took advantage of the articulation agreement with OU which saved her both time and money. About teaching in AZ now she says, "This experience is exciting, challenging, and sometimes feels a little overwhelming, but I love what I am doing!" She misses her family and friends, but her older sister who made that life-shaping suggestion to enroll in Teacher Cadet, is also her colleague in the same district teaching sixth grade.

Not everyone who completes Teacher Cadet goes on to become a teacher, but as Katie Schroeder (DHS 2016) will tell you, it helped her to achieve her goal to be a positive role model for kids, and "it gave me so much more respect for teachers." She learned invaluable, lifelong lessons like, "not everything is smooth sailing" so she had to learn to communicate, listen and work better with her cooperating teacher, Christina Brewington, second grade teacher at Shawnee Elementary. She recalls now that "Those kids truly brought out the best in me and the impression they left on me allows me to continue to be the best possible version of myself today." The experience left such an impact, that Katie wrote a reflection called The Life Long Lessons I Learned as a Teacher Cadet posted online at: <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/life-long-lessons-learned-teacher-cadet>

One final alumnus we'd like to feature is Hannah Bastian (CVHS 2015) who is currently a sophomore at CMU pursuing a degree with majors in Secondary Education and English, with minors in Leadership and Speech. Speech was a natural choice because when she was in Teacher Cadet, she participated in the related career technical student organization (CTSO) called Future Educators Association (FEA) and competed in a speech competition at the 2015 FEA International Confer-



Hannah Bastian (left) is pictured with her teacher cadet instructor Becky Kiel in front of The White House in 2015 when she won third place at the FEA International Conference in Washington, D.C.

ence in Washington DC. She won 3rd place!

When she started Teacher Cadet, Hannah was undecided on whether she wanted to pursue psychology or education in college. Once again, it was her cooperating teacher—Paula Goosen, 8th grade English teacher at Wyandot Middle School—who turned out to be her stellar mentor. "Mrs. Goosen was a GREAT teacher who demonstrated lots of patience and shared much life advice about the profession of teaching with me. She was so inspiring and supportive that I began to envision myself as a teacher." In addition to taking full advantage of the articulation agreement with CMU, and having passed the Performance Readiness Exam while in high school—an exam that all Michigan teachers must take and pass—she was able to apply to the education program and be accepted as a sophomore.

Hannah also competed with 2,000 other applicants for one of the 40 CMU leadership scholarships, which she was awarded. As a Leader Advancement Scholar (LAS), Hannah has periodically posted a blog about her learning experiences. While there isn't room to reprint it here, this author was most impressed with the April 28, 2016 blog entitled "Let's Get Social" (<https://hannahbastian.wordpress.com/2016/04/28/lets-get-social/>) where Han-



Katie Carion helps her kindergarten students learn the alphabet at Woodland Elementary in Troy where she now teaches.

nah reflects on the "Seven C's of Leadership." Everyone could benefit from her thoughts on the subject, especially during this very divisive, and heated presidential campaign.

Some final thoughts on Teacher Cadet from Hannah? The combination of all her experiences in the Chippewa Valley Schools' Teacher Cadet program have helped her to not only be well prepared for college, gave her confidence, but also propelled her on the path to becoming a

teacher, which she anticipates she will achieve in just four years of college. As Hannah says it best, "If I can do that at age 17 with my teacher's confidence invested in me, I will be okay at 22 when I finish my college program." We couldn't agree more!

Our thanks to our five alumni who shared their personal journeys with us, and who demonstrate that Chippewa Valley Schools' teachers do indeed mentor a new generation of educators!

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