

teacher talk

A Q&A with the newest members of the Cougar faculty.

Photos by Danny Lyons and David Freyermuth,
Interviews by Brianna Leyden



JENNIFER AYTES

Chemistry 1, Science Survival, World Futuristics

Is the subject you are teaching your passion?

The thing about science that fascinates me is that new things are always being discovered and changing, and there is always more you can learn. I have lots

of passions. I like a lot of subjects, but I think it's important for students to find an interest in science and how it affects their lives and the world around them.

Why did you want to teach high school students?

Chemistry and physics are things you can't really take in younger years, so that's why I went toward older kids. It's an important age to transition out of

middle school to young adulthood and learn things that go with you in your life, and don't just get you through high school.

What was your first impression of Northwest?

I like Northwest. It's a smooth transition, and everyone's gone out of their way to make me feel welcome. I just don't own enough orange.



REBECCA WILLIAMS

Special Education Resource

What inspired you to become a teacher?

I was working at Boys Town, a home for kids who are struggling with the legal system and having problems with family. I decided it was time to go back and get my teaching degree.

Why did you want to teach high school students?

I like high school students. I like the way they think; I like the way they're involved with school. Plus, I also have a history degree, so I could teach history if I wanted to. I could never teach elementary school; it's just not my niche.

What do you think of Northwest now that the school year has started?

There's a lot of orange around here. School spirit's good.

Do you have any suggestions for students who want to make a good first impression?

Organization and time management are critical to success.



WALTER MANSFIELD

Computer Applications, Keyboard and Document Processing

How did you end up at Northwest?

I was switched from a full-time job to a half-time job at SM North. An opportunity came up at Northwest, and I seized it. It's kind of fun, actually. They have two really different atmospheres.

Have you had any previous work experience in the field you are teaching?

The company I worked for was a family-owned business, kind of like Kelly Services, and we placed permanent and/or temporary attorneys, secretaries and paralegals at law firms around the Detroit areas. To a certain degree, I was a headhunter, but I had to wear all the hats of a small business — I did

marketing, advertisement, collection, billing, interviews, etc.

What else do you think is important for a teacher to do?

You have to joke with them a little bit, otherwise they just get bored and don't learn that much. Nothing is worse than a teacher who drones on and on and on. You just have to have some fun, and you have to make your class interesting.



JENNIFER QUICK

English 9, English 11

Why did you want to teach English specifically?

It was fun having the background in journalism and PR and showing students how something learned in high school is a relevant skill and can be used in the real world.

Why did you become a teacher?

I went to SM North, and I had great English teachers. I was working in development with Don Bosco, an intercity corporation that was working to create a charter high school. I was around the high school all the time, and I had always wanted to make a difference, instead of just fundraising. I wanted to be in the actual trenches and teach students.

How is high school now different from high school back then?

Well, just all of the Internet, like Parent Connect, and the attendance we still did on paper. The teacher took attendance and stuck it outside the door and, if the students were sneaky, they'd erase their absence. But SM North and Northwest still have a rivalry, and the books we read in English are still the same.



MINNIE SHELOR

Biology 1, Biology 2 AP

How long have you been teaching?

I've been teaching for three years prior to this year. I've been at SM West for the first three years.

Why did you want to teach biology?

Well, while I was going to school pursuing my other degrees, I really enjoyed peer teaching. And when I started looking at teaching at a high school level, biology seemed to be the best fit.

What were your best/worst subjects

in high school?

My worst subject was English. My best subject was probably theater. I was really active in theater and forensics in high school. I went to a really small school, so there was little opportunity and very few science classes.