Stacy Camp

Mathematics Teacher: Grades 5 - 8 and 8 - 12

Hampshire Regional School District

M.Ed. – WSU `18
BA – WSU `14

As an undergraduate student at WSU, I was convinced I wanted to teach high school mathematics. It wasn't until I got my first job as a sixth-grade math teacher at Hampden Charter School of Science in Chicopee, MA that I realized how enriching and engaging teaching middle school really is.

Originally when I was hired to teach middle school, I assumed the math would be easy and unengaging, and that the challenge would be reaching my students and controlling the classroom setting. I have been pleasantly surprised time and time again over the past 5 years at how much I can learn from a 12-year-old. My number sense and fluency has increased immeasurably by learning strategies gained not only from my colleagues, but my students (mostly from my students). I thought I knew everything about fraction operations...but now I know how ridiculous that was. I have everything left to learn about what mathematics really means. I can reason through mathematics so much easier than I could as a college student, and it's because of what my students have taught me (however unintentionally!). Each topic, no matter how basic the structure, is much more complex than I was ever capable of realizing in high school and even college.

Changing school districts to Hampshire Regional (Westhampton, MA) has given me experience in both an urban and a rural setting. The challenges have been different, but both have been enriching. The overall trend in schools, no matter how opposite they may be, is that students do in fact want to learn. It might be my job to teach them with their already positive attitudes, or it may be my job to help them realize that they do indeed want to learn. But I believe that with the right experiences, any student can

improve in ability and attitude, no matter what background they come from. The challenge is figuring out how!

As I grow more adept in the classroom, I can reflect on how much my practice and beliefs have changed. I have spent many hours over the past few months converting my classroom from a traditional one to an inquiry-based one. The funny thing is, I thought I always taught using inquiry. It wasn't until I developed meaningful relationships with students, colleagues, and other professionals in the field that I realized I was teaching traditionally with an inquiry twist. I have high hopes for the current school year to change my role from a teacher to a supporter and to let each student discover the beauty of mathematics on their own.