

Sara Wodatch
Grade 7 Science - Northeast MS
June 1, 2021
Letter of Application

Team Coordinating Committee,

My name is Sara Wodatch. I have been teaching in the Bristol Public Schools for the past five years. I started my career at my alma mater, Chippens Hill Middle School, where I taught 8th grade science from 2016-2020. This past year was my first teaching 7th grade science at Northeast Middle School. Throughout the beginnings of my career in Bristol, I have met many high quality teachers that have inspired me to apply to be a TEAM Mentor.

I want to be a TEAM Mentor because I want to provide the same support and guidance to new teachers that I received myself from my colleagues and mentors. Starting out as a first year teacher, I became overwhelmed with the minutiae of the everyday and struggled to make connections to the big picture goals I had for myself and my students. My own TEAM Mentor, veteran 8th grade team teachers, and my science department colleagues provided advice and support every step of the way. Using their prep time to reflect on my lessons, staying after school to answer all my questions, and even welcoming me into their rooms so I could observe their suggestions firsthand. I learned and grew from all our interactions. Now, as a teacher with a bit of experience, I feel I have the confidence and understanding to provide a new teacher with the same level of support and guidance I received from my colleagues. I strongly believe that teachers need other teachers; we cannot do this profession alone.

As a mentor, I will provide a student or beginning teacher with constructive feedback on strategies in the classroom, examples of high quality lesson plans and assessments, and advice to help navigate the beginnings of their teaching career. One of my favorite things about working at the middle school level is the time I have to collaborate with my colleagues. I have spent countless prep periods with teachers in all content areas. Either working to make connections between different curriculums, reviewing assessment data and planning for our next steps in the learning sequence, or sharing anecdotal evidence of different strategies we've tried in class. I find great value in cooperative teaching and planning and know this would be of benefit to a new teacher mentee. Another benefit I could share with a new teacher is my learning from professional development activities that I participate in each year. Most recently, I've taken part in professional learning in the instruction and intersectionality of the NGSS and Universal Design of Learning. Continuing my own professional learning is a benefit to myself, my students, and to my collaborators. A final quality I have is the ability to relate to a student or new teacher. I was a student teacher six years ago, a new teacher five years ago, and I consider myself now to be in only the beginnings of my career. I have recently been where new teachers are.

Although curriculums and programs have changed, much is still the same. During my student teaching, I was learning about the Next Generation Science Standards and helping my own cooperating teacher navigate the change in curriculum. As a first year teacher, I helped pilot NGSS lessons, and helped write Bristol's 8th grade science curriculum the following year. Even today my colleagues and I are working to create assessments aligned to the curriculum we created a few years ago. I understand what new teachers are experiencing; walking into an ever-changing career like teaching is stressful at times, but it helps to know others have gone through similar experiences.

Thank you for the opportunity to apply to become a TEAM Mentor. I hope I can make a difference to new teachers in the same way others have made a difference in this profession for me.