

March 1, 2026

Dear TEAM Coordinating Committee,

Please accept my application to be trained as a TEAM Mentor/Cooperating Teacher through the Bristol Public School system. I am currently a Library Media Specialist at Stafford Elementary School, as well as at Giamatti/Edgewood PreK. I began my work in Bristol Public Schools as a long-term substitute Library Media Specialist at South Side School in August 2021, and I was officially hired at Stafford Elementary School in January 2022. Since joining the district, I have worked on my own practice, but with the guidance of mentors and other teachers. I've realized how important those are to new teachers, and as a result, I want to be a support for student teachers and beginning teachers as they enter the profession.

Through my experience as a student teacher, I realized the importance of having a good cooperating teacher. I learned firsthand how impactful strong mentorship can be in shaping effective teaching practice. While coursework does help prepare you to become a teacher, there is no substitute for actually being in a classroom, working with children. The coursework is the foundation; growth happens through reflective practice, collaboration and experience - ideally with someone to guide you. One of the key lessons that my cooperating teacher taught me was how important it was to build relationships with students. To this day, I can still hear her telling me that if you don't connect with the students, it doesn't matter how great your lesson is, they won't get anything out of it. The students want to connect with you, but it is up to you to foster that connection. This philosophy has guided my teaching career and something I am passionate about modeling and sharing with new educators.

I successfully completed the TEAM program on my first attempt with the support of a mentor who helped me each step along the way. Without her help and guidance, this would have been much more difficult. That experience reinforced my commitment to wanting to help beginning teachers. I appreciated those that helped me get to where I am right now, and I want to return that support and guidance to others. I believe that supporting educators early in their careers strengthens both individual teachers and the profession as a whole, and I am willing to dedicate my time and energy to those that are just starting out.

I bring several qualities that I believe are important as an effective mentor/cooperating teacher. As a relatively new educator, I feel like I can relate to those just entering the profession. I have recently been through the student teaching process as well as completing the TEAM program. I am familiar with how both work, and with the training provided by the district, will be a great resource for future educators. I am reflective of my own teaching practice and am comfortable articulating instructional decisions, challenges and strategies. I know firsthand how difficult it is to be a new teacher, and I want to be able to support the growth of someone just starting out. The teaching profession is difficult, and one of the best things about it is that there are supports in place to help, such as TEAM mentors and cooperating teachers. I worked in the business

world for 17 years, and we didn't have anything like that. I think it is a wonderful opportunity to help others understand what the teaching profession truly entails.

Since working at Bristol Public Schools, I have worked with staff to help with their practice as much as possible. I regularly collaborate with teachers to support curriculum and student engagement. In addition, I am committed to ongoing professional learning and participating in non-mandated professional activities. This past year, I served on the district AI Committee, where we learned about how AI can support teaching and learning. I applied this knowledge and led a professional development session for staff at Mountain View and Stafford during professional learning in August. I continue to serve as a resource for colleagues interested in what AI can do for them. These experiences, along with my prior experience presenting to adults in the business world, have helped me be able to work effectively with adult learners through collaboration and communication.

In addition to working with adults, I value building strong relationships with my students. I have run an afterschool STEM club for the past three years, and I loved having that opportunity to further connect with kids. It is great to see how kids respond in different environments, and this has helped my teaching practice as well.

I also view the role of a TEAM mentor/cooperating teacher as an opportunity for my own professional growth. Going through this allows me to reflect on what works for me, what doesn't, and what I can do better. I believe teaching is all about continuing to learn and grow, and that is one of the things I love most about what I do. I am eager to grow while supporting others. Thank you for your consideration of my application.

Sincerely,
Sarah Lewis
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