



BRISTOL EASTERN HIGH SCHOOL

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March 20, 2022

Carly Fortin
Director of Office of Teaching and Learning
Bristol Board of Education
129 Church Street
Bristol, CT 06010

Dear Mrs. Fortin,

Please consider my application for mentorship in the TEAM program. My path to becoming a teacher was full of inspiration in the form of mentors who each offered me a unique and invaluable facet of what a teacher could be. Life is cyclical and serendipitous. The times in my life when I have needed a role model most, I have benefitted by that being delivered and it is these mentors who have formed the pedagogy I have adopted in my practice and who I am as an educator.

The most integral part of becoming a teacher is the student teaching experience. I have heard horror stories of mentors not being invested in the process and offering no feedback. Fortunately for me, my mentor teacher and TEAM mentor quite literally prepared me for the classroom and shaped me into who I am. Most importantly, I walked away from my experience understanding that I am a lifelong learner, a student myself. The best gift they gave me was helping me recognize my strengths during a time when I was critical of myself. To lean on my fellow teachers and to build each other up; being a part of professionals who understand that our development is interdependent on each other; that we teach each other and we learn ourselves.

Learning to question ourselves as teachers, to take the step from receiving feedback and use that for personal reflection and growth, and transition into learning to question yourself is invaluable. This gift is a rarity and I received this from my first administrator as a new teacher. The thoughtful tools I was given to grow, forced me to want to be better. It furthered an intrinsic drive within myself to always be more efficient, prepared, and responsive in my planning, instruction, assessment, and relationships with colleagues and students alike. Her wisdom was a reflection of all that I aspired to learn and created a hunger to strive to ask myself hard questions, research to find innovative answers, and challenge myself to discover new ways to become an integral part of my district.

Having life come full circle has provided me with a new perspective and the desire to give back to future generations, the same gifts that I have so generously been bestowed by those who walked this path before me. In graduate school I spent my practicum observation hours in the classroom of my former teacher. During

“BE Safe, BE Responsible, BE Respectful, BE Kind”

her first year of teaching here in Bristol she gave me the gift of authenticity and connection. Her classroom was the epitome of a positive inclusive climate. Even as a nervous 24 year old rookie she was herself, and accepted us for ourselves and made us feel valued. Fast forward 15 years, and observed her not as my teacher but an educator. Unsure of how I could replicate her craft, she responded, "You won't. You will be you. And you will follow your heart. And you will love them. And they will know." And so I did. Just this week, after almost 10 years, my favorite teacher became a substitute in MY classroom. Meeting her yet again, as a peer, I knew that she had given me yet another gift. Without her, and those like her that inspired me, I would not be committed to bettering my craft. Where one circle had opened so long ago, it had come full circle.

I want to become a mentor to pass these gifts on to future generations of teachers. While I may not be the teachers they were and our journeys may not look the same, I know that I too can offer incoming teachers the opportunity to develop their own pedagogy in meaningful ways. As an 8 year veteran in Bristol, I have taught grades 9-12 in both academic and accelerated classes. Being a member of the At Promise Team for students who have historically struggled academically and behaviorally gave me new insight into teaching and relationships with students, that I greatly miss since teams no longer exist. I have successfully collaborated with 4 special education teachers in co taught classrooms, and was asked to serve as a model pairing in one of those groupings as well as lead a professional development with said special education teacher on differentiation. Through these years I have served on several committees including PBIS, SBDI, and climate and culture. For a period I volunteered on the district's CIIC committee. I was asked by Human resources to assist in administrative interviews for BAIMS. Most recently I jumped at the opportunity to be a part of the first ARCTEL TESOL cohort to gain dual certification for ELL and will have a sheltered EL English class next year. In addition to my professional learning, I've brought my students on field trips to NYC and organized a fieldtrip for Juniors to attend a cultural exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum, free of charge. Just this year I became a co-advisor for the Class of 2025. All of these experiences can be viewed as what I contribute to the school and district, but in reality they are what shape me.

As a teacher or mentor applicant, I am no better than those before or after me, but what I can offer future educators is to pass down the gifts I have been given. I can offer student teachers the chance to have a safe space to grow in my classroom and develop their purpose as a teacher. To me, that does not mean to teach like me or run their classroom like I do, rather to allow them access to my various roles in the building and community and time to experiment with their visions on how to implement the curriculum and aid them in reflecting on their personal strengths and weaknesses. I believe that I have a good understanding of the current state standards, teacher evaluation rubric, lesson plan structure, all of which is reflected in my own personal evaluations from four different administrators. While those things are important, so much more important to me is knowing that whomever I am paired with I can provide with a broad and diverse experience of what being a teacher is. Teaching isn't only doing what is easy in a perfect situation with the right lesson plan, it is the exact opposite: nothing going right, your lesson falling apart, and having the foresight and flexibility to pick up the pieces in the moment and do what is right for the kids in front of you. I am certain that I won't be the perfect cooperating teacher, but I will be my authentic self and my student teacher will learn and grow with my help and guidance.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Shelly Nocera