

WHY I TEACH: Jesse North



Even since she “played school” with her American Girl dolls in first grade, Jesse North has known that she wanted to be a teacher. Over the years, her dream to be a teacher grew as she would help her mom, Susan North, set up her Benchmark classroom each fall, and blossomed further after having “very special teachers at Radnor [High School] who made me see what a positive impact teachers can have.” The dream was solidified after spending two summers working at Benchmark Camp while studying Secondary English and Communications at Penn State University. After earning her bachelor’s degree in 2011, Jesse made her way back to Benchmark to work as a support teacher in a lower school classroom. “I thought I would only be at Benchmark for a few months but that summer a middle school position opened up, and the rest is history,” she said.

Jesse, who recently completed her sixth year of teaching at Benchmark, now teaches 8th grade English and physics. In addition to loving the small class sizes and middle school mentor program which “allow me to get to know my students on a deeper level,” Jesse most enjoys the freedom to choose the instructional strategies and materials that will best meet students’ needs. “Benchmark allows me to design my curriculum to meet the individual needs of my students,” she said. “Since I know the personal learning styles of my students, my job is the most rewarding when I am able meet the students where they are and then challenge them accordingly. When students trust their teacher and know he or she has their best interests at heart, they are more willing to take risks and push themselves— and that’s where the real growth happens!”

Outside of the classroom, Jesse enjoys being the photographer, designer, and editor of the Benchmark School yearbook with fellow teacher Jackie Brodo and leading the Hiking Club in the spring with Wayne Reichart.

As for her future, Jesse is confident that it will continue to include Benchmark. “I’m not sure there’s a more passionate, motivated, or supportive staff anywhere else,” she said. “I also get no greater joy than helping our students grow and see themselves in a different way than when they first came to Benchmark. The students here really get to know themselves and own their learning, and I think that’s a priceless lesson. I’m so glad that I get to be a part of that learning process.” 

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

What would you be most interested to go back to school for? I am actually attending West Chester University now and pursuing a Master’s in Reading. I hope to earn my degree by 2019.

What is your favorite memory from your school years? In high school, I loved LM Week (the week that led up to the final football game against Lower Merion). In college, it had to be dancing for 46 hours straight at THON in 2011.

What was your favorite subject when you were in school and why? I loved English! I always felt there was such magic in books. I loved the idea that you could find messages and symbols left by the author when you read closely; it felt like I was cracking a secret code.

What teacher most influenced you during your school years? My 8th grade teacher, Mrs. Ormsbee, was the best! She was so kind and had such a passion for teaching. I remember my love for English coming alive that year. Although I always knew I wanted to be a teacher, she inspired me to teach English.

What is your favorite book? To teach: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. To read: *The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah.

Favorite inspirational quote? “Go into the world and do well, but more importantly, go into the world and do good.” —Minor Myers Jr.

What are your hobbies outside of Benchmark? Cooking, hiking, kayaking, and spending time with family and my new puppy.

Interesting fact about you? “Jeopardy” is my favorite TV show, but if I were to be on a game show, I’d want it to be “Wheel of Fortune.”

Tell us about your family. I am the youngest of four siblings and the proud aunt to my five little loves: Molly, Reagan, Brynne, Connor, and Lucas.