



February 2017  
Vol. 3 No. 2

## Student Teachers Gain Experience at StMS

St. Michael School recently welcomed and mentored two student teachers. Catherine Graff, a member of the StMS Class of '14, and Shawna Vinovich, who currently serves as our Instructional Teacher Assistant in Mrs. Deborah Sunday's Kindergarten classroom, and is pursuing her Master's in Teaching through N.C.S.U.

Graff, a junior at Ohio State, has her sights on teaching middle grades Language Arts and Social Studies. Graff has spent time observing urban schools in Columbus, Ohio, which helped to prepare her for teaching at St. Michael over her winter break from college.

Under the mentorship of Dr. Laurene Madern, Graff observed and assisted her and several other teachers. The following week she taught several Grade 7 and Grade 8 Language Arts classes based on Edgar Allan Poe's short story, *The Tell-Tale Heart*. "It was a pleasure to have Catherine in my class," said Dr. Madern. "She is competent and caring and used her time in the class very well," she said. "She taught writing and vocabulary, administered and graded a vocabulary test, and



participated in some of the daily activities of the school such as carpool and lunch duty. Catherine was easy to work with and had a very positive attitude. Her classroom management was good and the students enjoyed her," said Dr. Madern. "I gave her a candle when she left and told her to go light the world!"

Vinovich is a certified teacher in California, has substituted at our school, and worked as a full-time Pre-K teacher locally at Primrose School. She is a graduate of Chapman University in Orange, California, earning a degree in

communication and public relations.

"I love being at St. Michael and definitely want to teach in a Catholic school," she said. "I love the

students and their families, and I really appreciate the support system of teachers we have here. I also like the flexibility to use hands-on methods to teach engaging lessons and to teach at the pace best suited for the class.”

She is enrolled in the N.C. State University Master of Art in Teaching (MAT) program, and has managed her college class schedule while working as an ITA. “This program is specifically designed for people who already have a college degree and now wish to teach. I’m really looking forward to my graduation this May,” she said.

As part of her student teaching internship, Vinovich is now working with students on the Morning Board and in their Learning Centers. She will be planning 3-5 day consecutive lessons for the students in Math and Language Arts, and her lessons will be recorded and assessed by her professor.

“I’ve been working with Shawna for three years now and I know she will be an excellent teacher,” said Sunday. “I’m proud to support her, and I hope I’ve been a good role model. I’ve told Shawna how important classroom management is, and that you have to try different reward and discipline methods to see what works best for each new class. I’ve also suggested that she keep a journal of how she taught different lessons with notes about what worked well and what could be improved,” she said. “I remember well when I was a student teacher in a second-grade classroom in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania. I was so afraid, but I realized that the challenges and rewards of teaching were exactly what I wanted. I think Shawna has that same passion and will have a rewarding career as a teacher,” said Sunday.

## Grade 5 Classroom Offers Innovative Seating

What’s all the buzz about in Grade 5? It’s about a “big reveal” in Ms. Stacy Corcoran’s classroom. Shortly after students returned from the Christmas break, they entered the classroom to see two big changes:

1. Their desks were all gone!
2. The room was full of comfortable chairs, colorful rugs, yoga ball seats, couches, small tables and stand-up desks!

“I had been thinking about flexible classroom seating for a while. My roommates are both teachers and have flexible seating in their classrooms (Grade 3 and Grade 5),” said Corcoran. “I visited their rooms, did some research, and talked to our administration. They were excited for me to give it a try, so I sent a letter to the fifth-grade parents explaining the concept and asking for used chairs and



tables we might use,” she said.

Corcoran received many used and new items of furniture, and bought a few items herself. She even found a few ‘perfect’ tables while on vacation in Florida, and somehow managed to fit them into her car to bring back to her classroom.

The most important part of the seating experiment was to establish the rules, set clear expectations, and model proper behavior. She also made it very clear in the first few weeks that students must make "Smart Seat" choices and that this arrangement is a privilege. She also let students know that their former desks were still available if needed!

Students may choose different seats every time they enter the classroom. They must try all the seats over a period of time, however, and not get too attached to anything in particular. "They need to be kind and respectful of each other, and realize that some seats might be better for some tasks. The good news is that we have places to read or write quietly and places to collaborate and work together. Students and parents seem very pleased with the new seating. Positive parent email comments included:



- "Thanks for the creative, educational idea."
- "It is essential for children and young adults to be exposed to a structured, collaborative environment."
- "Hey! I love this concept!"

Many other teachers and parents have stopped by to see Ms. Corcoran's innovative flexible seating. Our school community applauds Ms. Corcoran's willingness to take a risk!

To learn more about the concept of flexible seating, read this article:

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/flexible-seating-student-centered-classroom-kayla-delzer>

## **From Cary to Kitale: A Leap of Faith**

**By Mrs. Heidi Lawrence, Curriculum Facilitator**

It was Sunday. My family and I were listening to Pastor Eisner at our church, the Northwest Community Church.

Our church had been providing financial support and Bibles to the Pokot Region of Kenya. Now it was time for hands-on assistance. Our pastor's plan was for a team of church members to hand deliver Bibles and 1,000 hygiene supply bags as well as 1,300 cinch sacks filled with school supplies, toys, and clothing for the Pokot children.

As I listened, I had an incredibly overwhelming feeling and knew that I wanted to be a part of this trip. The vision of the trip was centered on faith and children, two things I am very passionate about. As a teacher and a mom, I wanted to bring the love of Jesus to the Kenyan children by helping with everyday items and school supplies.

I thought, "God wants me to go to Africa? Now that's crazy." I'd miss work and the classes I'm taking to become a certified principal. But, the strong feeling persisted. A close friend said, "You just watch...God will put all the pieces together!"

And He did.

At the end of November, with a group of 31 other church members, I traveled to Kenya. In Kitale, I visited an orphanage that has its own school through Grade 8 and is establishing a technical school (metal work, carpentry, sewing, etc.) for those not going on to college or university. Later, I visited several communities within the villages, deep in the bush of western Africa.

On so many levels, I was touched by my numerous experiences and interactions with Kenyan women and children. Traveling to a third-world country will forever impact my perspective and worldview.

Whether it was multiplying decimals with three middle school boys at the orphanage or playing ball with a young girl in the village, it became increasingly apparent that "kids are kids" and that their accessibility to education will have a tremendous effect on each of their lives.



Whether they speak Swahili, Pokot, or even a little English; all children need to feel safe, loved, and have others that dream with them! Education is for all!

There are so many remarkable stories I could tell. I am in the process of sharing these life-changing moments with my students and with the St. Michael faculty.

I'm happy to share more of my experiences in person, but for now I'd like to offer this link to a few pictures from my trip to the villages and the orphanage.

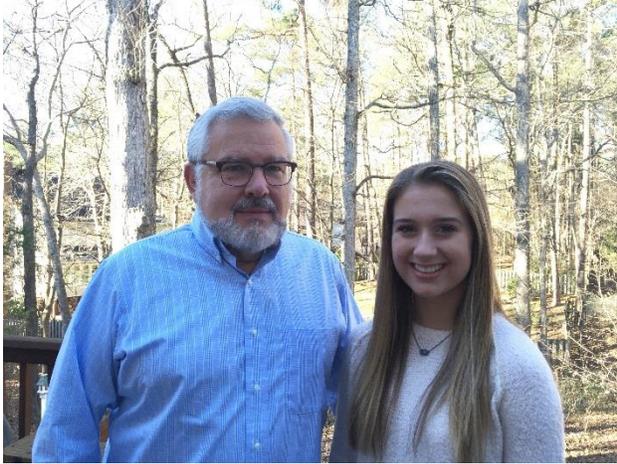
I am so grateful to the administration, faculty and parents at St. Michael for supporting me in so many ways. God has abundantly blessed me with the opportunity to teach at this amazing school and to freely share my faith journey with you all.

*Please enjoy these photos taken during Mrs. Lawrence's mission trip to Kenya.*

## Gauthier and Wicklin to Study WWII Silent Heroes

Our school was excited last month to learn that Middle School Social Studies Teacher Mr. Paul Gauthier and StMS alumna Rebecca Wicklin, a current sophomore at Cardinal Gibbons High School, received a tremendous honor. They have been accepted into the prestigious Normandy: Sacrifice for Freedom® Albert H. Small Student & Teacher Institute through the National History Day Foundation.





They will embark on a year-long course of study that concludes with a journey his summer to Normandy, France to honor a WWII Silent Hero® who died during or after the D-Day landings. Gauthier and Wicklin join 14 other student and teacher teams from around the country on this educational journey. Each team selects one Silent Hero from its hometown or region who is memorialized at the Normandy American Cemetery. Gauthier and Wicklin will spend a year uncovering the life story of this Silent Hero through readings, historical research, and primary sources such as war records, draft cards, or interviews with

descendants. Overseas travel, courses, materials, and even room and board are paid for through the generosity of Albert H. Small.

Gauthier said, "I was very interested in applying for this program and had several students in mind who I thought would share my interest. After interviewing them, and talking with their parents, I selected Rebecca. She always did very well in my class and has a true interest and respect for history. Soon they will learn which Silent Hero we will study. We are both looking forward to learning more about him and then honoring him at the Normandy American Cemetery."

Read more about the Normandy: Sacrifice for Freedom ® program: <https://www.nhd.org/normandy-sacrifice-freedom>

Both WRAL and Time Warner Cable interviewed Gauthier and Wicklin. Please click on these links to read the interviews.

WRAL: [bit.ly/2iVKxDy](http://bit.ly/2iVKxDy)

TWC: [bit.ly/2jQr8mM](http://bit.ly/2jQr8mM)

## **Stay in Touch with StMS!**

We hope you enjoy reading *The Messenger*! We send this quarterly publication by email to all school parents and teachers as well as to grandparents who have provided us with their email addresses through RenWeb. *The Messenger* is also shared with church staff, various advisory councils, and members of our Diocese of Raleigh Catholic Schools Office.

Please remember that you can read more about the daily activities of the St. Michael School community on [our website](#) and on social media. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and view our photo albums on [Flickr](#). We also welcome suggestions for future articles and are always interested in news from our alumni.