

# Back to school

When I put in my resignation letter to the public school system after delivering Leo in October, I didn't think I'd ever find myself in this position again. I envisioned the end of August as being a time for me to prepare my own children for school, while anticipating a much-needed respite for myself. Instead, I've found myself surrounded by my own books, binders, posters, markers, and crayons, as I tumble into a great new teaching - and learning - adventure.

This time, it's a whole new world for Mrs. Barberry. I spent the past 8 years teaching English, Creative Writing, Yearbook, and Drama to high school students in some of the most challenging public schools in the metropolitan area. And now? Art! - to preK-8 students at St. Joan of Arc (SJA) in Aberdeen.

I was honored when the school's principal, Virginia Bahr, offered me the position. I'd mentioned that I'm certified to teach art a few years ago when I ran into her after Mass. She hadn't forgotten, the opportunity had opened up, and the rest is history!

We were just getting ready to register Collin for kindergarten at SJA, when Mrs. Bahr invited me to join her faculty. It couldn't have come at a better time, as we were struggling to find a way to pay his tuition on one salary. I prayed, and God answered. Now, I have to face the challenge of having my own child as a student!

But beyond the gift of additional income, I also feel that God has called me to SJA for a purpose. I'm not sure what that may be quite yet, but I imagine He may want me to help bring out the artist in every student, particularly those who lack the confidence to harness the creativity He instills in them. I aim to believe in my students the way my favorite art teacher, Mrs. Dunaway, did. "Anyone can learn to draw," she said on the first day of 9th grade. "But, first you must learn how to see."



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I've never been so excited about going back to school as I am this year. There are a number of reasons why:

1. I entered college as an Art Education major and only switched to English because writing papers was so much easier for me (Thanks, Mrs. Strong!). **But art was my first love.** I continue to pursue art classes and creative endeavors on my own and am so excited about sharing one of my greatest passions with budding young artists.
2. **Coming from a big family and a busy neighborhood, I have been surrounded by children my whole life!** Even though I've spent the majority of my career working with high school students, elementary and middle school students have the same basic needs: to be loved and to feel like they belong. In

working with younger students, I will approach my students needs at a different level (literally and figuratively). I'm looking forward to witnessing the fruits of all of their imaginations. Now, I'll channel my inner Julie Andrews...

3. There was very little parental involvement in my former schools. This is not the case at St. Joan of Arc. After all, these parents are extending themselves to ensure their children are well educated. **I can relate to the SJA parents, because I am one of them.** I share their concerns and can comprehend the depths to which they love their children. I aim to be a partner with my students' parents in ensuring their children's success in art class and beyond.

4. St. Joan of Arc is a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM school), so **integrating technology into my lessons is a must!** I started teaching with an overhead projector, walking around with the trademark green smear on the side of my wrist. Now, I have an LCD projector linked to my iPad, so I can show YouTube videos (try making sense of that sentence 20 years ago...but, wait, in 20 years, what will they say about it?!?!) I'm also excited about using technology to bridge cross-curricular content, so that my students can be learning about Ancient Egypt in social studies and making hieroglyphics in my class.

5. **By far, the most exciting thing about teaching about St. Joan of Arc is that God is welcome there.** I can (and will) begin each class with a prayer. I can teach about Michelangelo's "Sistine Chapel," "Pieta," and "Madonna at Brughes." My friend who teaches art at a public school told me, "I can't even show a picture of Jesus...There goes the entire Italian Renaissance!" But, centuries of art created in the name of faith will have a safe place in my classroom. So, too, will the masterpieces my students make, with the hand of the Holy Spirit guiding each pencil mark and brushstroke.

I still have a little over a week until my first students arrive, but I will be ready for them with a smile and plenty of paper, waiting for them to make their mark.