

# MAKING WAVES AT DCS



## DHS Assistant Principal Lauren Thompson Strives to Prevent Teacher Burnout



While working on her second master's degree in Applied Positive Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, Dexter High School Assistant Principal Lauren Thompson began a deep dive into the subject of teacher resilience. As an educator with Dexter Community Schools since 2009, she has experienced firsthand the challenges of the teaching profession and how quickly teachers can experience burnout. She recently reworked her 2018 master's thesis on this topic into a chapter for a teacher education textbook in an effort to address this issue early on and provide sustainable resilience practices teachers can utilize throughout their career.

In collaboration with Dr. Sara Clemm von Hohenberg at Concordia University in Ann Arbor, Thompson's chapter contribution, "Cultivating Teacher Resilience in Pre-Service Education Programs: Making a Case and Providing an Educational Framework," looks at the how effective educators can experience "social and emotional deficits" as a result of the demanding nature of the profession, which can eventually lead to burnout. However, Thompson suggests that educators who are "taught, practice, and implement preventative and proactive culturally responsive resilience practices at the onset of their careers are more likely to positively adapt and endure the adversities associated with the profession."

"Teacher burnout has always been a problem," Thompson says, "but it became exacerbated during and after the pandemic." This research is intended to address the issue of teacher burnout right from the start of a teacher's career, in their college and graduate school years. "We want teachers entering the profession to have the skills they need to sustain their career long-term," Thompson says. She is currently working toward her doctorate degree in Curriculum, Communities and Culture from Loyola University in Chicago, with further research on this topic as the subject of her dissertation.

Thompson has spoken on the topic of resilience at many conferences including the World Congress of Positive Psychology, ResilienceCON, and the MHSAA Women in Leadership Conference. In 2021, Thompson initiated the first SEC Women in Leadership Conference, working with Ann Arbor Pioneer Athletic Director Eve Claar and Saline varsity basketball coach Leigh Ann Roehm to fully realize the December event. Her session on Mindset/Real-Time Resilience was well-received by over 150 young women attendees.

Dexter Schools is fortunate to have such a dedicated and mindful individual working with our team of incredible teachers. Thompson's interest in addressing the issue of teacher resilience with the intention of creating a sustainable culture of support not only benefits our teachers, but flows down to our students. A teacher with the education, skills, and workplace supports necessary to thrive in the profession will convey that strength and energy to their students.

"Lauren's leadership in positive psychology and teacher resilience has benefitted Creekside in so many ways," says Creekside Principal Tammy Reich. "She presented in classrooms, at staff meetings and during professional development to staff and students alike. Our school community is better because of her contribution and expertise in these areas."

Thompson graduated from Dexter High School in 2000, and did her student teaching at Creekside Intermediate in 2009. In 2012, she became a special education teacher at Creekside, then added the role of graduation coach in 2016. Thompson was named Creekside's Assistant Principal in 2018, and in 2021 also served as the Director of Early Middle College and the Principal of the Alternative High School. Most recently, she moved into the DHS Assistant Principal role in 2022. Throughout many of these years, Thompson has also coached DHS women's basketball, with last year's team earning the SEC Red Championship.