

**Students who could become teachers****BY BRAD FRANKLIN**[bfranklin@goochlandgazette.com](mailto:bfranklin@goochlandgazette.com)

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***GHS juniors, seniors hope the experience will aid in teaching***

Tyler Vick was probably destined to be a teacher.

As the daughter of an elementary school librarian and a high school shop teacher, her future might have always involved lesson plans and raised hands.

But now, Vick, along with nine other Goochland High School juniors and seniors, has the opportunity to decide if teaching is for her long before she ever enrolls in her first collegiate class.

"I think it'll be a learning experience but it will also give us some great insight and we'll be able to decide if teaching is really what we thought it was," Vick said.

Two weeks ago, the 10 students in Shannon Orr's "Teachers for Tomorrow" (or Teacher Cadet) class, along with their families and other school officials, took part in a reception at the school. It was also where GHS principal Jon Bennett handed out the cadets' work gear: a green collared shirt that will identify them as teachers-in-training.

The students in the pilot program include Vick, Brandi Fleming, Sarah Wood, Jordan Grubbs, Amber Johnson, Courtney Johnson, Will McLaughlin, Melissa Barker, Taylor Williams, and Kathryn Tyler.

The idea is to have the students learn about child development and then observe teachers in their natural environment, all the while picking up as much as possible, Orr said.

"Teachers for Tomorrow is a 'grow your own solution' to the critical shortage of teachers," Orr explained. "It was started in South Carolina in 1985 by CERRA (The Center for Educator Retention, Recruitment, and Advancement). It's a course designed for high school juniors and seniors who have an interest in the teaching profession."

In order for students to apply, they had to maintain at least a 3.0 grade-point average while also completing an application process which included writing an essay, getting five teacher recommendations, and being interviewed by Orr and other staff members.

This is the first year the program is being offered at GHS.

"We've already talked about so much and I'm looking forward to not only learning about how children learn but also seeing that in action," Vick noted.

The class, Orr said, will be split into two sections. During the first semester, the cadets will learn about child psychology, self esteem, evaluating educational toys, history of the education system, and creating lesson plans.

If that wasn't enough, the students will also have to put in 10 hours of overtime through volunteer work.

During the second part of the year, they'll go into other GCPS classrooms to complete observations, pre-school through high school. They will also be given the opportunity to shadow staff members in the district. Once this is complete, they then move into the field experience, or student teaching.

"They've given me their preferences as far as grade and age level, and I find them two teachers to work with," Orr said. "For 12 weeks, they will enter the classroom and become active student teachers. They have to create lesson plans and do actual teaching."

Orr will then check in on the students, observing three lessons taught solely by the cadet without help from the classroom teacher.

"To see you going into my chosen field, which I think makes a difference, has been very powerful," Bennett told those at the reception. "They might find out this isn't the area for them, and that's ok. But they'll find out what teaching is really all about."

That's exactly what Vick said she's expecting.

"I want to make a difference," she said. "This program is going to give me a great chance to find out if teaching will be the way to do that."

In her experiences, Vick said she's seen so much that she appreciates and this course will only strengthen those beliefs.

"I learned a lot during my time at Randolph [Elementary School] and I can't wait to go back and see how those teachers make that impact on the students," she added. "I'm excited but I'm also a little nervous but when I'm with the kids, I know I'll be a little better."

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