

Heather Verheeck

Third Grade Teacher



When Heather Verheeck was four years old, she arranged her stuffed animals in front of a toy chalkboard and proceeded to give them a lesson. Her grandfather, serving as an honorary member of the class, was instructed to sit quietly in the back row as Heather practiced her teaching well into the evening. Anyone who knows Heather can picture this scene quite clearly, as her strong classroom skills and love for children shine every day. Heather exudes warmth and an understanding that each child brings something special to the classroom. It's clear that there was an important seed planted at an early age. She's a teacher to her core.

By the time Heather was thirteen, her stuffed animals were replaced by children in her new role as a camp counselor. In the decade that followed, Heather earned her BA in English literary studies and an MA in elementary education. In each of these programs, she sought ways to put theory into practice, though her students were not always as placid as those in her first class! Completing student teaching in New Jersey public schools prepared Heather to teach in any and every environment. Some of these experiences were more challenging than others, but they all reaffirmed her lifelong ambition to have a class of her own and share her love for learning.

Once she completed her graduate work, Heather chose to pursue another dream—living and teaching in New England, a place where she felt at home from many family vacations to the area. This dream came true in 2012 when Crossroads hired her as an assistant Lower School teacher and after-school coordinator. In the early stages of her career, Heather's skills and dedication, as well as her love of working with students, were recognized quickly. And, the very next year, Heather became the school's third grade teacher and soon after the Director of Summer Programs, a role that oversees an initiative that has blossomed under Heather's leadership.

Regardless of the context, Heather's students are "her kids," a designation that once earned, lasts a lifetime. Heather keeps her door open at all hours of the day and is often the first to arrive to school and one of the last to leave. As she prepares her lessons in the afternoons and into the evenings—a habit that she perfected in her youth—you'll find students orbiting around her desk, sharing stories, laughing, and recounting what they learned during the day.

As casual as these conversations are, Heather is always searching for ways to help her students feel valued and safe, and most of all, to love learning. Recently, she completed an Orton-Gillingham training to master highly effective strategies for increasing her students' reading and writing skills. As a lifelong learner herself, Heather knows that each day, "her students teach her something new about life or the world around us." And as they do, Heather loves to "take a step back and see the world through an eight-year-old's eyes." So, while the audience has changed since her grandfather attended her class, many of her goals for transforming students through essential life lessons remain the same. Heather is warm, kind, and able to embrace every student who enters her world. Students respond in miraculous ways to her energy and love of learning. We are so fortunate to have her at our school.

