



Teacher Feature

Jessica Mann has always had a knack for spatial relationships and mathematics, skills that ultimately led her to become Meadowbrook's Gifted/Talented Services Coordinator for the last ten years.

Miss Mann grew up in Niles in a neighborhood filled with children. She recalls a lot of imaginative play with other kids including pretend school and creating their own Olympic games. She enjoyed the multiculturalism in the area and sought out someplace similar when she searched for her current home in Evanston. She graduated from Maine East High School and went on to the University of Illinois where she earned a degree in elementary education, although she said there were times she considered architecture. After graduation, she took on a temporary job doing anything and everything at a software company. She was so bored while answering phones there that in between working on her own logic puzzles and reading books, she noticed a pattern in incoming phone numbers and started writing them down. Turns out her keen observation fixed a big problem with the company's phone service. "They thought I was a genius," she said. It wasn't long before she realized the work she was doing training adults on computers would be more satisfying if she were teaching the same skills to children.

A couple of other temp jobs came and went before Miss Mann found a position that took her significantly closer to teaching. She was hired as a short-term secretary in the District 28 office. After a couple of months, she became the Kidcare Director, a program she ran like her own business and an ideal transition for her to education. She eventually came to Meadowbrook where she taught fourth grade for six years. Along the way, she earned a master's degree in gifted education and took on the position she's in now. She teaches advanced math to fourth and fifth graders while also working with some younger students and coaching teachers who need help differentiating their curriculum for students in all academic areas. Miss Mann says she became interested in this area when she realized kids who were gifted in one aspect and challenged in another weren't getting personalized services.

Her own math skills helped Miss Mann develop her talent as a quilter. In eighth grade, she started sewing, a hobby she picked up from her mother who was a seamstress. When she wanted to be able to make presents for friends who were having babies, she learned to quilt. Now, she says all her friends' kids receive quilts, and the same goes for anyone who's retiring. While she enjoys spending time at Joann Fabrics, Miss Mann also loves working on graph paper to plan a design and then assembling the squares. "It's how my brain works," she said.

Fun Facts about Miss Mann

- Learned to play piano & clarinet as a child, and participated in the marching band in high school.
- Spent a month in Sydney, Australia visiting gifted programs for her master's degree.
- Also earned an advanced degree in administration and could see herself as a curriculum director someday.

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