



## Maestra de la Semana

**Lynsee Whitman** is proof that the skills you learn in school really will help you get a job someday. She did not grow up with Spanish-speaking family and friends and never traveled internationally to study a foreign language, yet she's one of two Spanish teachers at Meadowbrook. How did she become skilled enough in Spanish to teach it? She simply studied it in school.

Señorita Whitman grew up in Arlington Heights, and began her Spanish education as a seventh grader. She says she loved the language, but it was not easy for her. She had to study and practice, an experience that has shaped her message to her students. "I tell them if you feel like you are struggling, so did I," she says. She took Spanish through her years at Buffalo Grove H.S. and went on to the University of Illinois where she minored in Spanish and majored in education.

Coming out of college, Whitman didn't know elementary Spanish programs existed, so she took a job as a fifth grade teacher in Schaumburg. When she heard that Wilmette students were learning Spanish in elementary school, she moved into a job there teaching in both elementary school and junior high.

A few years later, District 28 announced plans to begin an elementary Spanish program, and Whitman's dream job became a reality. "I was excited about getting the opportunity to be in on the ground floor of rolling it out," she said. Along with Señora Scherer, she set out to create a comfortable, stress-free environment where students can make mistakes. "Learning a language can be nerve wracking," she says. Now in her sixth year at Meadowbrook, she enjoys seeing her students gaining confidence, developing a love for language and connecting their classroom lessons with the outside world.

Her own love for Spanish extends to the culture as well. She appreciates that she can go into a supermercado in the area and find authentic food. Although she did not study in Spanish-speaking countries as a student, she has traveled to Spain, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Guatemala as an adult. While was able to communicate easily in places where no one spoke English, she is quick to point out she does not consider herself fluent, saying only a native speaker is fluent.

### **Fun Facts about Lynsee Whitman**

- Lives in River North and enjoys exploring the city with family and friends
- Older sister is a 6th grade math teacher at NBJH
- Studied sign language

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