Dear Parents/Guardians,

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as well as welcome you all back to the start of another fantastic school year! Words are not enough to express the level of excitement I possess from recently becoming a member of the Westfield Academy and Central School District as a 6th Grade English Language Arts/Social Studies teacher! After having taught for three years in Boca Raton, FL as a teacher of the gifted and talented for grades second and fifth as well as in Penfield, NY as a K – 5 Enrichment Specialist, I am looking forward to returning to my roots in Western New York for the 2015 – 2016 school year.

Sixth grade is an exciting time as children embark upon new adventures in the world of learning. This is a year of important transitions, as well as one in which the acquisition of new skills is accelerated. I hope to make your child's learning experience a fun and exciting one, and I hope to instill a love of learning that will last throughout your child’s years of schooling and adulthood.

It is extremely important to keep in mind that we all build on small successes. Each child will progress at his/her own rate, acquiring new skills as he/she is developmentally ready. Therefore, maintaining each child’s self-esteem and building a secure foundation for future growth will always remain a priority in our classroom. I am looking forward to working with your child this year and helping him/her to achieve their fullest potential.

My educational philosophy as a teacher has always been to maintain the perception that the young minds sitting before me are the future citizens of our world. I see myself as having a large impact on their future development and growth towards their search of identity and outlook on life itself. My philosophy affects my attitude, influences my decisions, and directs my interactions with others. I believe that all students are capable of academic achievement if they are given the proper attention and source of inspiration to succeed.

I believe that each child is a unique individual who needs a secure, caring, and stimulating atmosphere in which to grow and mature emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially. It is my desire as an educator to help students meet their fullest potential in these areas by providing an environment that is safe, supports risk-taking, and invites a sharing of ideas. Overall, there are three elements that I believe are conducive to establishing such an environment, (1) the teacher acting as a guide, (2) allowing the child’s natural curiosity to direct his/her learning, and (3) promoting respect for all things and all people.
The goal of teaching has always been an important aspect in my life. Working with children of all ages and skill levels as a coach in Fredonia State University’s Learn to Skate Program, has had a major impact on my decision to pursue a career in teaching. However, I have acquired the passion for teaching students with specified needs (both gifted and delayed) due to the close relationships that I share with my grandfather, a paraplegic, and my cousin, a quadriplegic. Having attended college courses with my cousin as his scribe at a young age was a very influential experience as I began to think about my future career as a teacher. Accidents like theirs happen unexpectedly every day and can greatly affect one’s goals and ability to achieve them. Therefore, by allowing me to recognize the fact that life is too short to miss out on the opportunities that lie before you, I have made a continuous effort to instill the advice of my cousin and grandfather in my students advising them to always follow their dreams, take chances, and challenge themselves.

As a creative, hardworking, and dedicated individual, I have managed to obtain both my bachelor and master degrees in just four short collegiate years. I have obtained my Master of Science Degree in Education in the area of Differentiated Instruction and Gifted & Talented Education, which has allowed me to obtain Gifted and Talented Professional Certification in grades kindergarten through twelfth from Canisius College. I am also professionally certified through the state of New York in Early Childhood (Birth – Grade 2), Childhood (Grades 1 – 6), Students with Disabilities (Grades 1 – 6), and Adolescent English (Grades 7 –12) after having obtained my Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from majoring in Childhood Inclusive Education with an English Language Arts Middle School Extension Concentration at Fredonia State University.

Having the opportunity to study and teach abroad in England has provided me with the opportunity to realize the importance of our future citizens (students) to become a part of the global community at large. Due to the fact that the future is rather unpredictable, making it almost impossible to predict the necessary skills and talents our children need to master in order to be successful in their adult years, one aspect in particular has demonstrated its significance in just the last ten years which is the ability to observe and interpret the cultures and practices of others in order to appreciate the diversity of our ever changing world. Within our classroom we will acknowledge these many differences, recognize the cultures represented in our own class, report on local, national, and international news stories, and will have numerous opportunities to communicate with other students from countries I have had the opportunity to teach in while working on my Doctoral Degree in International and Comparative Education. In the past, my previous students have had the opportunity to communicate with one of my previous classes in Plymouth, England through the use of SKYPE technology and letter writing, an opportunity in which I hope to extend to those enrolled in 6th Grade ELA with me. I feel as if it will be a great asset for students to partake in such a hands – on learning experience so that they may in return further appreciate their own nationality and respect for the freedoms and opportunities prevalent in the United States of America. (More information and parent permission slips will be distributed at a later date.)
In addition to teaching, I am very passionate about taking on numerous opportunities to become further involved in a school's extra curricular activities. Therefore, I can't wait to share my personal gifts and talents with the Westfield community. In the past I have been an iPad and Nook Club Director, choreographer of two school plays: Annie Jr. & Peter Pan Jr., and the founder/coach of two dance teams (one competitive dance team for grades 3 – 5 and one non-competitive dance team for grades 2 – 5) specializing in the genres of pom, jazz, and hip-hop. I am pleased to share that my competitive dance team took first place at the Contest of Champions Dance Team Nationals held at ESPN's Wide World of Sports Complex in Disney World in the Elementary Pom Division!

Again, I look forward to teaching your child and working with you to help them achieve their fullest potential. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Ashley Nicole DeJohn
MS. DEJOHN’S CLASSROOM WEBSITE:
http://www.wacs.wnyric.org/Domain/159

This website has been designed to inform Westfield faculty, parents, students, and the community at large of the 6th Grade ELA program offerings for the 2015 – 2016 school year.

Teacher Bio – This section of the website will provide you with information in regards to Ms. DeJohn’s background and her master schedule for the 2015 – 2016 school year.

Calendar – Our classroom calendar will feature important dates such as school and district wide events, culminating learning celebrations, field trips, sessions with guest speakers, etc. Please note that each event posted has the ability to be made into a hyperlink providing you with the ability to access additional images, links, or files related to the designated event.

Classroom News – For every unit of study, you will find a brief description of the corresponding activities and culminating learning celebrations written by a student participant.

Parent Information – Within this tab you will find information in regards to requested supplies for the course. This section of the website will also be utilized for parent volunteer requests. Parents may be asked to share personal knowledge or experiences in direct correspondence to a unit of study, assist with classroom experiments, culminating learning celebrations, lesson material/supplies preparation, etc.

Project – Based Learning: Individualized Enrichment – This Type III enrichment experience involves students who become interested in pursuing a self-selected area and are willing to commit the time necessary for advanced content acquisition and process training in which they assume the role of a first hand inquirer. Upon completion of an application and parent permission slip, students can submit an action research proposal outlining their topic of interest and project specifics. Near the end of the school year, a “Showcase Gala” will be held providing all with the opportunity to share their work with the Westfield learning community at large. Please use this section of the website to download the necessary permission forms and expectation documents for participation.

Classroom Resources/Link Library – Depending on the designated topic of study, various electronic resources such as apps, websites, virtual field trips, links to Prezi presentations, or interactive games to increase comprehension, etc. may be uploaded for student use.

Suggested iPad Apps – As iPhones, iPads, and iPod touches become more integrated into the daily delivery method for academic instruction, it is apparent that these devices can help automate current classroom processes or present new ways to learn that previously had been unexplored. Within this section of the website you will find a list of apps for Apple devices that I consider to be noteworthy.

Donation Requests – Throughout the duration of designated units of study, there may be items that could have the potential to further enhance instruction and the overall learning of student participants. Items listed in this section of the website can range from tangible supplies to expertise that could possibly coincide with a parent or family member's background, training, or professional expertise.

Academic Competitions – Throughout the duration of the year, I will consistently update this section of the website in order to provide you with up to date opportunities for your children to participate in enrichment experiences outside of the classroom. Some experiences are in direct correspondence to a competitive atmosphere where students will have the opportunity to share and compete their interests, passions, and talents with like-minded learners from all over the country.

Requested Supplies for 6th Grade English Language Arts
• 1 One – inch WHITE 3 – Ring Binder with Inside Pockets and a Clear Outside Viewing Pocket
• 1 Package of Tab Dividers for the Binder (At Least Five Tabs)

OPTIONAL:
• 8 GB USB Flash Drive
• Ear buds
• 1 Pencil pouch (to clip inside binder for flash drive & headphone storage)

Please detach and complete the lower portion of this letter before returning it to Ms. Delohn.

Parent Signature: ___________________________Student Name: ____________________ELA Section: Lights/Camera/Action

Parent/Guardian Email Address: ____________________________________________(Please circle one: Mother/Father/Other: ________________)

Parent/Guardian Email Address: _____________________________________________(Please circle one: Mother/Father/Other: ________________)

Do you have any special skills, interests, or hobbies which you would be willing to share with our class this year? ___________________________