

Student focusing on education needs

By [Carla Nodi](#) | 04/22/12 10:45pm



By [Lukas Burch](#) / The Eastern Echo

“Everyone in this world has to encounter a teacher in order to advance themselves,” Savannah Charles, a senior at Eastern Michigan University and secondary education major with a focus in English. “They may not ever need a banker, or a huge corporation, but chances are they will encounter a teacher.

“I plan to teach middle school students, possibly high school, but because I look so close to their age, I think I will stick with middle school,” Charles said.

She aspires to get a master’s in administration in the hopes of becoming a school principal.

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This past year Charles was offered a job with 826 Michigan as the after-school program assistant at Ypsilanti Middle School after three years of volunteering. 826 is a non-profit, founded by Dave Edgers set up to help students with their writing and literacy skills.

826 publishes students' writing and helps them in all areas of academics, offering tutoring and writing workshops for children in our community. Savannah has become the go-to person in the middle school, working with parents, teachers, students and tutors four days a week.

"Working with these students has allowed me some of the best pre-teaching experience," Charles said. "They show me how to reach all students despite their differences from me."

The students I work with also show me how to be patient and they definitely keep me connected with their age group."

In addition to her work at 826 Michigan, Charles studied abroad with Teach and Learn Korea and had the opportunity to teach children from a completely different culture.

According to Charles, "Without this college experience I would not have been able to study abroad in South Korea and create friendships with people on the other side of the world."

To date it was the best, scariest thing I have done."

Savannah's experience in South Korea gave her insight into teaching that you might not find in your hometown.

"One great lesson I learned was you do not have to look like a person to reach them; you just have to care." Charles said. "I saw that this trip had much more purpose than to add stamps on my passport."

After working in South Korea, Charles found that a change needed to be made in the school systems we have in place.

"When I taught in Korea, as a teacher I was respected like that of a physician," she said. "I think a similar standard should be linked to educators in this country."

One major problem Charles sees in schools is "the lack of respect from students. I see it as a given, but teachers need better pay. Society does not respect the job of teacher so why should children?"

Charles also plans on going to law school, because a law degree could help her advocate for school systems and the children in the schools.

"I work in a middle school everyday and watch things that transpire," she said. "If I were to continue my education in administration and further with a law degree I would change things from dress code to mandatory parent/guardian involvement."

Charles would emphasize the importance of literature and history as well as math and science, which are typically championed in schools today.

According to Charles, "If students knew more about history and their pasts and how people fought very hard to make it so they have the opportunity they do, I believe they would have more respect and appreciation for their education. Students need to be reminded of the events and people within them that shaped how we lived today."

In addition to that, "literacy is a must. If students cannot read and effectively communicate then they are at a disadvantage. I would strongly encourage reading and communication skills."

Charles has big plans not only for the curriculum, but for school policy.

“I think having a dress code and actually enforcing it are two very different things,” Charles said. “It’s a little change that with time will change children’s outlook and what actually matters in a school and that is learning.”

Charles would also stress parental involvement to improve education as we know it because “as children age their parents get further away from their educational experience. If children see that their caregivers are invested in their education it will create healthier learning environments that follow them home.”

By actively involving parents in the learning process, students have a better chance to grow.

“The best part about working with children is the growth that I get to witness,” Charles said. “I have been volunteering at [the middle school] for three years and I have come to know these students very well. Even the children I just met this semester, I have been able to see how much they have matured and academically excelled.”

EMU has provided a similar learning experience for Charles, allowing her “to mature and network,” Charles said.

“Things I thought I would never do, I’ve done, and perceptions I thought would never change, changed.

Despite changing over her college career, “I have always aspired to help people, and be adventurous. And to this day I still want to have a life full of adventure where I am able to help people,” Charles said.