

# Alumni Spotlight: Q&A with Annie Dyke '12



*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

*--Nelson Mandela*

*Annie Dykes graduated with a B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Special Education in 2012 and later received her M.Ed. in Special Education from GA College and State University. The former Middle Georgia GLRS Special Education Impact Award recipient is currently employed at Mary Persons High School in Forsyth, GA as a Special Education teacher.*

## **1. What attracted you to Middle Georgia State College/University?**

I was attracted to Middle Georgia State University it feels like home. It has charm and a small community feeling. The campuses are always blooming with life. It was always a joy to see beautiful gardens and people enjoying the weather around campus in the various leisure areas. The professors get to know you and build mentor relationships. It is easy to say that your professors become family and continue to care long after you've graduated.

When I considered the colleges on my wish list, I looked at who had the best programs with the highest success rates. MGA was the outstanding choice. I knew I could receive an education in a variety of fields after finishing my core classes. From the business programs to the education programs, they offered the best programs in the region

## **2. Why did you choose to study education?**

My choice to study education came from a recommendation by a professor in human services. The professor took the time to learn who I was and saw potential in me that I didn't see in myself even if that meant losing a human services major, but recommended me to the professors in the education department. The care of my professors has led me to a fulfilling career in the field of special education. Once in the education field, I encountered yet again wonderful professors that encouraged out-of-the-box thinking.

## **3. What teacher impacted you the most?**

Many teachers impacted me while I attended MGA. However, one professor who has left the biggest impact on my life is Dr. Loleta Sartin. Dr. Sartin takes an interest in all of her students. She teaches others the love of learning, the excitement of engaging students in the classroom setting, and the passion of being a teacher. She invests her time and energy into making each of her pupils exceptional teachers. She even kept abreast with our lives outside of the classroom and worked to make sure we knew we had greatness in us. It is this passion that has led me to be enthusiastic each day I walk into my classroom. After graduation, Dr. Sartin continued to provide support to her students as they navigated the first years of teaching. Dr. Sartin is not only a professor, but an extraordinary mentor as well.

**4. Since you graduated what career path have you chosen? Why?**

I pursued a career in special education. I have taught special education in a self-contained classroom at the high school level for the past five years. I have had the privilege of teaching students with autism, intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments, emotional behavior disorders, and other physical disabilities. Each day I learn from my students how to persevere in life, no matter what life dishes out to you. I look forward to waking up in the mornings so that I can inspire the passion and love of lifelong learning in my students. This is the same excitement that I felt while a MGA while under the guidance of Dr. Sartin. The devotion I received from my professors has pushed me to be dedicated in my own classroom.

**5. How has an education at MGA benefited you professionally?**

The education I received at MGA has lifted me up from an ordinary teacher to a teacher that reaches a little higher and a little further each day. From the first prerequisite education class I was enrolled in, I received the knowledge of what a great teacher does verses a good teacher. It has paved the way to greatness in the form of assessments and learning opportunities. As an education major, my peers and I were held to high expectations and was provided networking opportunities. We were taught to be competent, accountable, reflective, and to make our work engaging. This care set us apart from other education graduates in our field while pursuing jobs as teachers.

**6. What advice would you give someone who would like to pursue a career in your field?**

When deliberating about going into the teaching field, some people would say it's too hard, the pay is not good, but I say go for it! As Nelson Mandela says, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Teachers are leaders of change, we change the way children see the world. Teaching is a rewarding job. If you love learning and want to make a difference in the world, the teaching profession opens the minds of children and inspires greatness in the lives of students. There is no other job that I can think where you wake up every day and have the ability to impact and inspire hundreds of people to be the best that they can be.

**7. Has there been some obstacles you've had to overcome in pursuit of your educational and career goals?**

Overcoming the first year of teaching has been the greatest struggle since graduation. However, I knew I had a network of peers, teaching mentors, and former professors that I could count on. The relationships I built while at MGA helped me make it through my first year. Now that I am in my fifth year of teaching, I am thankful for the same network built while at Middle Georgia State. I am proud to be an alumni.

**8. Finish this sentence: Greatness means (to you) .....**

Greatness to me means seeing the remarkable beam of a student's face after their hard work pays off. Greatness is seeing the students with disabilities in my class achieve their goals and learn in the same setting as their non-disabled peers. This greatness will help lead to positive change in the world of disabilities long after I'm gone.

**9. What is your lasting impression of MGA?**

My lasting impression of MGA is the care and attention paid to each student. Without an abundance of great professors at Middle Georgia State, I would have missed my calling in life. Without these same professors I might have not made it through my first year as a teacher. Because of the mentoring I received, I was able to succeed. It is the care and attention of my professors that still drive me to be the best I can for my students each day.

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