

2006 HONOREE

## Rebekah Mae Stathakis

Butler Junior High School, Oak Brook, IL  
Middle School Humanities Education • 6th-8th Grade Spanish



**Years Teaching:** 4

**Average Class Size:** 18

**Classes Taught Per Day:** 6

**School's % of ESL Students:** 0%

**School Type:** Public, Suburban

**Type of Class:** Inclusion

“Because students bring so many different experiences and interests into the classroom, I need to focus on each student individually as well as working with the group; therefore I use Learning Centers, individualized student goals, extensive conferencing, and activity stations to differentiate the curriculum. Technology is a fantastic way to engage students while making learning fun and appealing. I found that some of my students dreaded learning grammar; they thought that grammar was the ‘hard’ part of Spanish. I focused on the grammar components for each chapter and worked to make grammar interesting and exciting. For example, while studying indirect object pronouns, I had students write sentences with indirect object pronouns. Then, during class, we attempted to act out the sentences and take photographs with a digital camera. The following day, I put the pictures into a PowerPoint and the students traded slideshows with my other section. I was thrilled when the students literally ran into class asking, ‘Are we going to write indirect object pronouns for the other class? I get IOPs now!’ Once the students were engaged in the process of learning, I was able to guide their understanding.”

“One of the most important beliefs I have about education is that learning can be, and needs to be, fun. Learning that is fun entices students to engage in the class; from there, they embark on a journey of discovery



and are able to learn and perfect new skills. As students experience success in learning and the thrill of discovery, they crave more opportunities to learn. I also believe that learning needs to be student-centered. I need to discover their ideas, interests and abilities. These beliefs shape my classroom practice and have led me to incorporate a number of innovative and unique practices.”

“I can honestly say that I have not met or worked with a more creative teacher than Mrs. Stathakis. What is most significant about the creativity in her lessons is the degree to which the students are genuinely learning. Furthermore, students are learning the content with tremendous depth. In addition, Mrs. Stathakis strives to celebrate the student diversity present in her classroom and is responsible for two time-intensive extra-curricular sponsorships outside of her teaching responsibilities. For all these reasons and more, the students in Mrs. Stathakis’ classes show extraordinary academic achievement.”

— Edward J. Condon, principal,  
Butler Junior High School

### OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

Adviser, Viking Voyager, Butler’s first national award winning yearbook • Founder/adviser, International Club, celebrating the diversity of our student population while improving our global society • Member, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Illinois Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Journalism Education Association, National Scholastic Press Association