



First Fridays in Downtown Greensboro

By Eric Ginsburg

Wednesday, September 4, 2013

TOP-NOTCH TEACHER CONCERNED BY EDUCATION FUNDING

By Eric Ginsburg



Ms. Monica Doyle, Alg I Teacher/ Varsity Cheer Coach at High Point Central High School

eric@yesweekly.com

Twitter: @Eric_Ginsburg

A small circle of students forms around their classmate's smartphone, doubled over in laughter and unable to believe that there's actually an online video of their 24-year-old, blonde, white math teacher rapping.

"Play it again, play it again!" one of them says when the clip ends, hands on his knees as he crouches over his friend's shoulder in the cafeteria.

Monica Doyle, the cheerleading coach and freshman math teacher at High Point Central High School, knows her students are laughing at her, and she's glad.

Something like the scene above will play out after her in-class rap performances imbued with lessons on things like exponent rules, with incredulous students mocking her and watching their amateur video of their teacher a good dozen times before class the next day. That was the plan, and it worked.

Math is boring. Doyle gets that, and doesn't consider herself particularly nerdy, but she's always had a propensity for it and enjoys teaching it. Rapping isn't the only way she engages her students who — if they're anything like me — probably aren't particularly thrilled about Algebra I. By relating subject matter to the students' everyday lives, like teaching perimeter and area with a fitted hat, Doyle's found a way to engage these new high schoolers.

Doyle just began her second year as a teacher, and the Guilford County school system dubbed her Rookie Teacher of the Year for 2012-13.

Teaching is more than a full-time job, she said, emphasizing that people who love teaching think about it constantly and are always working on something related to their profession. Yet even for an outstanding educator like Doyle, this job is not enough. She supplements her income by teaching fitness classes to afford gas.

Doyle grows close to her students over the course of the year and they are like her own kids, she said — like other teachers, she sometimes buys them supplies like binders and three-ring paper that they can't afford — but if she actually had a kid of her own, Doyle said she would look for another job.

"I can't imagine having a child right now and being a teacher, and that's sad," she said. "Every year you say surely it can't get any worse and you can't take anything else away, and it does."

Decreased funding for education and educators is a signal of the state's priorities, Doyle said, and it frustrates her that many of the best teachers she knows feel they need to leave the state to get by.

North Carolina's recent decision to eliminate higher pay for teachers with master's degrees is a huge blow to students and teachers, she said.

"It was really sad to me to see all my friends leave the state because they felt they couldn't afford to teach in North Carolina," said Doyle, who has a master's from Wake Forest. "You want to say that people don't want to get their master's solely for money but it is an incentive to make people want to do it. I have a hard time seeing the best teachers, the teachers who want to improve themselves, wanting to stay somewhere where they don't get an incentive for a master's degree."

Funding education isn't just about teachers' pay, she noted, pointing out that the room next to hers isn't equipped with any of the technology she has access to in class. While Doyle doesn't have plans to leave the classroom or state anytime soon, the trajectory of public education in North Carolina scares her.

"When you put money somewhere else, it's basically a way of saying we care more about something else," Doyle said. "The kids that are in my class right now, that's the future of this country and the future of North Carolina."