



KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Undeniably Christian. Academically Excellent.

A dog at school? If you've seen Beau around, you've probably seen me, April Thielemann too. Beau and I get the opportunity to support students and teachers through one-on-one, small group, and whole class times of learning together about our emotions and how to honor God with our choices. I am available to support students in and out of the classroom through the school day, and I get to be a part of fulfilling our school's mission of "Equipping, Inspiring, and Challenging our students to love and serve Christ in the world". We define equipping as "nurtur(ing) students academically, emotionally, and spiritually so they possess the necessary knowledge and skills to be productive, Christian citizens of the world." My new position at the 12th Street campus this year is the Behavioral Specialist, which combines the role of student counselor that we've had in past years with a new role of support for students and teachers in the classroom.

As the Behavioral Specialist, I work to support students and families in equipping students emotionally with the skills to handle their emotions and choices in a God-honoring manner. When I work in classrooms or meet with students in small groups or individually, we consider that God created all emotions, emotions are neither bad nor good, and that our emotions (and choices) can be used to glorify God. Acquiring knowledge of emotional regulation (the choices we have based on the emotions we feel) throughout the day helps children prepare for learning and establishes a pattern of healthy emotional well-being. Emotional regulation can be linked to academic success, providing an environment where all students can learn.

A little about me: I have been a classroom teacher for sixteen years. Through my teaching experiences, the link between non-regulated emotions and lack of academic success that I saw in the classroom led me to become certified in trauma-informed education. After seeing success with students using trauma-informed principles to become more successful in their academic and social choices, I felt called to further my education to support students more. I began a master's program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Cornerstone University last year and also began training a therapy dog who currently visits the school twice a week. My approach is first to help students understand their feelings and then how to express them using Biblical principles. This method helps build emotional self-awareness and resilience in the classroom and provides life-long skills for each child.

I am excited to work in this new role to equip students to grow emotionally and academically this school year! If you have questions or wonder about how I could support your child, send me an email at athielemann@kcsa.org.