

New staff joins District 20 faculty

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Low staff turnover means that only two new professionals have joined the Gothenburg Public School staff this year.

Danielle Nyguyen is the new staff pyschologist and Blake Erickson will teach a section of first grade.

With the departure of long-time school psychologist Gwen Fecht a year ago, the district used an Educational Service Unit 11 professional for psychology services the past year.

Erickson will fill a position left by first-grade teacher Bobbi Arnett, who moved to eastern Nebraska.

Nguyen, who is orginally from North Platte, completed a school psychology practicum at Minden Public Schools in May.

Because she's still an intern, and working on an educational specialist degree from the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Nguyen will be supervised by a field supervisor from Educational Service Unit 10 for a minimum of two hours weekly.

Nguyen has an undergraduate degree in art history and anthropology but a personal experience piqued her interest in special education and working with kids at risk.

After some research, she decided that a school pyschologist position could allow her to work one-on-one with students, parents and administrators and also bring about systemic change.

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She took the job at Gothenburg because Nguyen said she feels it's a grassroots school where she can be a team member.

Strengths she brings to the position, Nguyen said, is that she's incredibly proactive and passionate about working with students.

"I will work hard to understand each individual's perspective rather than stereotypical perspectives," she said. "I'm looking at the long term and as a positive individual who looks at the glass half full."

Nguyen said there are often many barriers such as socio-economic ones for kids.

"I'm proactive about problem solving and never giving up," she added.

During her leisure time, Nguyen does yoga, reads (especially books students are interested in) and cooks (she spent six months in Italy and learned the country's cuisine).

A native of Campbell, Erickson graduated from Doane College in 2011 with an elementary education degree and a middle-school endorsement.

He student taught at Grand Island Central Catholic High School and York Elementary School.

Erickson said he accepted the job at Gothenburg Public Schools because "it seemed like the school had everything going in the right direction and the faculty seemed supportive."

In addition, he said the community welcomed him.

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In addition to teaching first grade, Erickson—who played football at Doane—will help coach junior-high football.

Erickson said he brings excitement and enthusiasm to the classroom and is prepared for all kinds of situations, whether it's class management or adapting to situations as they change.

“I also work well with other people,” he said.

Leisure activities include “anything outdoors” such as hunting, fishing and playing outdoor sports.

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