
7-14-2022

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 14, 2022

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Managing Multi-Language Classroom Motivates Start of New ESL Program

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Developing a new English as a second language (ESL) program was never what she had in mind, but Ashleigh Stout is proving that the most foreign experiences can oftentimes be the most fulfilling.

[Linguistics](#) graduate Stout from Salem, North Carolina, entered her freshman year at Cedarville University envisioning herself becoming a sign language interpreter or Bible translator, never seriously considering a career in education.

"I wanted to be a teacher when I was in first grade," said Stout. "Then I got to high school and saw how other people treated teachers and thought otherwise."

After encouragement from several of her professors to concentrate on her degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), Stout began to realize a love for not only teaching but for language. This was catalyzed by her senior year field experience teaching in ESL classrooms for adults.

"I fell in love with the program," said Stout. "I loved trying to manage a classroom where one student speaks Swahili, one Chinese, one French, and another Spanish. It was really cool to experience such variety."

Despite her newfound passion, Stout remained sure she would never teach kids. God had other plans, and it was not long before Stout found herself applying for an ESL teaching job at St. Anthony's Catholic School in Belmont, Ohio.

"I found the principal's email and sent my resume," said Stout. "I received a response that day, was interviewed the next and a week later I was filling out my intent to hire forms."

Within days, Stout found herself accepting a position starting the ESL program at St. Anthony's, teaching kindergarten through eighth grade children how to speak English so they can succeed in other classes.

"When I interviewed, they told me my primary role would be teaching phonics," Stout noted. "I had just taken phonics as an elective at Cedarville. The Lord really laid the foundation for me to go in this direction, from my education to being hired in less than a week."

This fall, Stout will begin developing the school's first ESL program, with over 30 students needing language assistance.

“It's not like a typical teaching job where you can always plan in advance,” Stout added. “I need to be able to adapt to students’ needs and struggles. Every day will be different.”

Over the course of next year, Stout will begin to chip away at the struggles that prevent ESL students from having the best educational experience.

“My hope is that students can look back on next year and see how they have grown,” said Stout. “I want to help them feel more acclimated to the school system, make friends and feel confident in who they are.”

To accomplish this, Stout will be relying on the Lord to continue directing her unexpected mission.

“I cannot develop this program on my own,” said Stout. “I am relying and depending on the Lord to continue making his plan clear, how I got here in the first place.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,715 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including the Bachelor of Arts in [linguistics](#), strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit cedarville.edu.

Written by Alex Boesch

Photo captions:

- 1- Linguistics graduate Ashleigh Stout has started a new ESL program at St. Anthony’s Catholic School in Belmont, Ohio.
- 2- Stout practices teaching skills in one of her Cedarville University classes.

Photos by Ashleigh Stout