

COLOR MOST PLEASING TO YOUR EYES?

Pink

As a high school student, I believed I would go on to complete college and become a school psychologist. I have always been passionate about working with children and knew that some day I would be working in the field of education in some capacity.

~Crystal Sessoms
Special Education Teacher



Staff Highlight Crystal Sessoms

“Crystal epitomizes motivation,” said Karen Rachetta, DeWitt Middle School Special Education Department & Committee Chairperson. Crystal Sessoms is a special education teacher at DeWitt. “She hopped on the fast track when she came to Ithaca City School District. I don’t see her stopping any time soon. In four years, she has earned tenure, her master’s degree, and her advance certificate for educational leadership. She not only seeks to accomplish her own goals, but inspires her students to accomplish theirs. She has completely immersed herself in our community through coaching, tutoring, and volunteering to help underrepresented students in our district.”

“With regard to teaching, Crystal is a “pied piper” or “beacon” of light to her students - who seek her out throughout the school day for academic and emotional support,” Rachetta said. “She connects with families and caregivers to advocate, with passion, for the needs of her students in their educational aspirations. She makes her lessons relevant to the students’ lives and takes the time to listen when a child is in need.”

“Crystal has taken and given workshops to perpetuate the cycle of learning,” Rachetta said. “She collaborates with colleagues to build on the collective wisdom of the team and maximizes the

communication, intervention, and success of her students. She accesses resources in and outside the school building. She has become more knowledgeable about resources and services available to students and their families each year she has lived here, and as different situations have occurred.”

Rachetta said, “Crystal is a go-getter. She will continue to grow as an educator and become a visionary leader.”

Q: What led you to your current position?

SESSOMS: After completing graduate school and earning my master’s degree in literacy, I attended a teacher recruitment day event in Rochester, NY, where I had just graduated from Roberts Wesleyan College. At that time, I had no intention to stay in New York State to teach. Most of the options I considered to move were warm places. However, Dr. Claudette James, who at that time was working in human resources at ICSD, changed my mind! I met her at this teacher recruitment day event. She asked me a few questions, her questions led into conversation about my philosophy of teaching and learning. Dr. James extended me an invitation to visit schools in ICSD. I visited in May 2012, interviewed in June 2012, and was hired a few weeks later. During my time in ICSD, I have been supported by my colleagues, administrators, and have grown to love the Ithaca community. I spent my first three years of teaching also working as a girls basketball coach. In addition to my current position as a special education teacher, I am an equity mentor and most recently completed my administrative internship. It is my aspiration to serve as an educational administrative leader in ICSD.

Q: What’s surprised you most in your job/work?

SESSOMS: How much I love middle school. I thought that elementary school would be my niche, but I absolutely love the middle school - especially seventh grade.

**VISUAL CHAT OR
HANDWRITTEN LETTER?**

*Handwritten letter
- there is something
nostalgic about it.*

**FACEBOOK
OR TWITTER?**

Twitter

I am resolved to have no control over the things that I can’t control. I can’t control anyone’s actions, thinking, or feelings and I do not wish to control those things. However, I can impact and play an influential role in regard to those things. That’s exactly what I will do, when applicable. I believe it is part of my duty here to serve others and help to contribute to the lives of the children and families I work with.

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**WHAT THROWBACK GADGET
WOULD YOU BRING BACK TO
THE MASSES IF YOU COULD?**

Beepers/Pagers!!

LAPTOP OR DESKTOP?

Laptop

Q: Hidden talent?

SESSOMS: Not so much hidden, but I play basketball. I played through college at the Division II level.

Q: Do you see future colleagues among ICSD students?

SESSOMS: I have had the pleasure to get to know students beyond the classroom, and have a perspective on their life and goals outside of the walls of DeWitt Middle School. There are many students whom I see as potential future colleagues. There are students at the high school with whom I have had many conversations. Some of them have gone to college and are pursuing education-related fields. It could be that one day they will return to ICSD to give back to their former learning community.

Q: Bagel or muffin?

SESSOMS: Bagel! I'm a New York City girl and almost every morning before walking to high school, I would have to grab a bagel from one of the corner stores in our neighborhood. There is something about the bagels in NYC.

Q: Coffee or tea?

SESSOMS: Coffee - Hazelnut, 3 creams, 3 sugars. I know, it's terrible. I am working on this and becoming more of a tea drinker! Or, if I do drink coffee, I'll try not to load it up with cream and sugar.

Q: Describe the most pressing challenges of your job/work.

SESSOMS: The most pressing challenges of my job/work are the aspects of my job/work that also motivate me. These challenges include the need to be innovative in effort to address the challenge of "time crunch," these challenges also include the lack of equity and access, which both ignite my passion and challenge me to determine how we can better serve our students and families.

Q: Nickname?

SESSOMS: Princess. This has been my nickname given to me by my family from my childhood. My mom still calls me her princess and probably always will!

Q: Outline the goals of your job/work.

SESSOMS: My goal is to help prepare well-rounded thinkers and learners, to help build their character and teach them to be their own best teacher!

Q: iPhone or Droid?

SESSOMS: Droid (currently). I'm considering an iPhone. I haven't been too happy with my cellphone battery life and I hear iPhones have better battery life.

Q: How do you prepare for each new day?

SESSOMS: I prepare for each new day by reminding myself that it is exactly that - a new day. It is an opportunity to build on what I started and to improve.

Q: Are you a morning person or night owl - and, how does it influence your day-long goals/challenges on the job?

SESSOMS: This has changed over the years. I definitely used to be a night owl. Now, I would consider myself to be more of a morning person. It feels good to wake up early, get my day going, workout - sometimes (wink), and prepare for the work day.

Q: Favorite all-time book?

SESSOMS: One of my favorite childhood books is "Mama, Do You Love Me?" by Barbara M. Joosse.

Q: Share the top three obstacles ICSD students will face regardless of how well they prepare for success in school.

SESSOMS: Transition into the real world - from being a teen to an adult.

Q: How do you complement the principal and/or the other staff?

SESSOMS: DeWitt Middle School is a special place. I truly feel like it is a family. Our personalities are all very different, but the one thing that brings all of us together is the respect and care we have for one another and how much we value each other.

Q: What have you always appreciated about yourself?

SESSOMS: I have always appreciated my extrovert personality.

Q: What's the most inspiring part of your job/work?

SESSOMS: The children are the most inspiring part of my job/work.

Q: Hit the gym or wear down the couch?

SESSOMS: The gym, unless I decide to workout at home or go for a run!

Q: How were you involved in co-curricular and extracurricular activities?

SESSOMS: In addition to basketball, I also ran cross country my senior year! I volunteered in my community, my church, and was a member of Global Kids Leadership Program throughout high school. ([Learn about Global Kids.](#)) I participated in a cultural exchange program through my neighborhood community center, and spent two weeks in Denmark after graduating high school but before leaving NYC to attend college in Rochester, NY.

Q: Favorite all-time song?

SESSOMS: I LOVE music, mostly rhythm & blues, Motown, hip-hop, and jazz. I don't have just ONE all-time favorite.





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This issue features students sharing what they look forward to next school year and, if they are going to a new school, what they will miss about their previous school. Follow links from INSIDE above, student pictures and school names on page 2, and blue text throughout the Insider. ICSD wishes you a safe, healthy, happy summer.

