

Addison Masters

From Custodial Artist to History Teacher

Caleb Slater, Editor

Addison Masters left Merrill Middle School after a long day of student teaching, to go work his full-time job as a custodian (“custodial artist”, as he puts it, jokingly) at Roosevelt.

He recalled one of his few embarrassing stories from that job. “Roosevelt got tee-peed, and my supervisor made us go out there and clean it up in the rain,” he said. “Right when we were cleaning up the toilet paper, some of my seventh-grade students who I was student teaching were walking down the street.”

He had tried to avoid these students, to prevent them from finding out about his full-time job. “They found out later, but it was at the beginning of the sixteen weeks of being a student teacher and working.”

He had no idea how his students would react to their student teacher being a janitor, and he had no intention of finding out their reactions this soon. “That was just the icing on the cake, I was about to quit right then and there,” he laughed, referring to the stress

of working full time and student teaching middle schoolers.

Masters grew up on the North side of Des Moines and even graduated from North High himself. He has a wife and two kids, and enjoys biking whenever he can. He’s halfway through his first-year teaching at North High School, but his path to a career as a teacher is a tad bit unconventional.

“If I was still in high school, and you would’ve told me that I would end up being a custodian for five years, I would’ve not said that was the plan.” But does anything ever really go according to plan? Masters says they didn’t for him.

“Right after I graduated high school, I wanted to start my own business.” Masters has an associate’s degree in business from DMACC, as he originally wanted to become an entrepreneur.

He began taking college classes for teaching out of curiosity, but decided to opt out of them early on. “I went for Intro to Education, but I dropped that class after two classes,” he recalled. “I dropped it because the teacher taught at a school during the day, and then that class during the night, and



Photo credit: Cielo Castillo

she just didn’t make teaching seem that appealing.”

“I also have an associate’s degree in liberal arts,” he mentioned. However, his brief affair with Intro to Education didn’t stop him from further pursuing teaching. “I transferred to Grandview and received my bachelor’s degree in secondary education.”

“It’s definitely an experience,” he said, describing his first year at North. Despite having occasional challenges, he believes it’s nothing he can’t overcome. “Sometimes I hear the barrel rolling down the hallway and the custodians, and I think, ‘Man, I wish that was me,’ but other times, it’s great and I love it.”

Masters said part of his drive to becoming a teacher had to do with how he was treated as a custodian. “There were some times where teachers made some condescending remarks to me,” he said. “I didn’t need to take that from somebody.”

However, he maintains the belief that education does not determine a person’s intelligence or

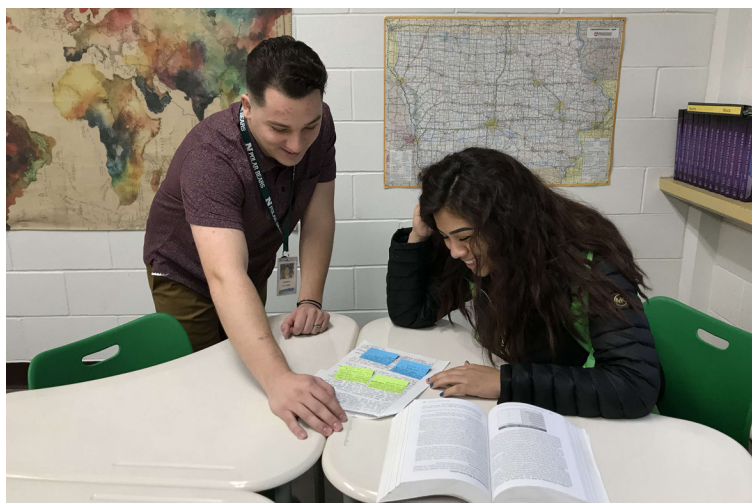
worth. He further explained, “One of the most intelligent people I’ve ever met was a custodian who I worked with from Vietnam.”

“I’ve had some more intellectual conversations with some custodians than I’ve had with teachers, so I definitely wouldn’t say formal education decides intelligence level,” he said.

Finally, he described what he called a pivotal moment he’d recently experienced while watching the North basketball game at Roosevelt.

“I was laying in bed on my birthday, and I was home with my kids and stuff, streaming the basketball game at Roosevelt, and I was like, ‘You know what? Last year, at this time, I would’ve set up that basketball game, and I would’ve been waiting for the game to be over so I could sweep up the bleachers, and I would’ve been working until midnight.’

“And now, here I am in the comfort of my home, watching my own students play a game — winning by twenty points — on a court that I used to clean.”



Masters answers Joanna Espitia’s (11) questions in his AP U.S. History class. Photo credit: Cielo Castillo

Feature

Design: C. Slater