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## Current Issue

by Janice Harvey  
Story Created: Feb 06, 2013  
(Story Updated: Feb 06, 2013 )

I knew something extraordinary was in the works when I walked into the teacher’s cafeteria at North High. There, I spotted students Mugisha and Antoinette, munching on chicken Caesar wraps from Struck Catering. That was odd enough on Friday-is-Ack!-school-pizza day, but that wasn’t the weirdest part. “Moogie” and “Angel” — the American nicknames they acquired once they arrived here from Tanzania — are brother and sister. Having taught both in the past, I can tell you that they make oil and water seem simpatico. Yet there they were, sitting together, smiling, chatting. Who says miracles can’t happen every day?

The event that brought the battling siblings together was coordinated by Erin Baffuto, Regional Program Manager for the Lanza TSTT Institute, or “Today’s Students, Tomorrow’s Teachers” program. TSTT operates in 40 high schools in four states. In Massachusetts, TSTT can be found in Andover, Arlington, Brookline, and Lexington; in Worcester, North is the only high school that offers the program. Last Friday, 30 kids who have their sights set on careers in education took part in North’s first daylong Technology Conference. Dressed in their crisp white TSTT shirts, they sat spellbound while keynote speaker Kate Guertin, the senior assistant director of admissions at Lesley University, stood before a screen filled with images of college life, touting the great variety of activities that await them should Lesley be their choice. Many of the students in the auditorium were former members of my English Language Arts classes. To see the same kids who were once fidgety freshmen on the verge of spontaneous combustion sitting with their eyes riveted to the screen was enough to make my jaw drop.

TSTT students begin training in the 9th grade. Working with school districts, colleges and businesses, the aim is to prepare tomorrow’s educators through job shadowing, internships, scholarships, academic support and career workshops. From her office overlooking what will eventually be North High’s athletic fields, Erin Baffuto spoke of the importance of programs like TSTT and the conference she coordinated.

“When they reach career and college age, they are often expected to have technology experience under their belts, and we as a school system can’t always provide that. This conference helped bridge the gaps in their technology exposure.”

The TSTT tech conference offered participants more than just speakers and yummy noshes from Struck – breakout sessions included workshops that explored current trends in online teaching and learning, how to create a website, and the importance of understanding the concept of a digital footprint. This presentation was particularly important for the kids who weren’t always aware of the trail they leave behind when they enter the cyber world. For a student like Antoinette, the opportunity to explore and master technology was not taken lightly. When I first met her two years ago, she was carrying her books on her head, a skill she acquired fetching water jugs from a

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ago, she was carrying her books on her head, a skill she acquired fetching water jugs from a nearby river back home.

Given the current climate regarding education and the enormous pressures placed on teachers to right the bulk of society's ills, it was heartening to see students inspired to someday teach. In light of the bad press North has garnered of late, it was refreshing to know that WPS Technology Focused Instructional Coach Julie Keefe was impressed by the North students' level of engagement, their "willingness to step out of their comfort zone and take academic risks, as well as their depth of respect for a teacher they never met before." For those of us who teach at North, we already knew that for every kid bending the rules, there are three more with their noses in their books, doing the right thing.

For Antoinette, aka Angel, the girl with the perfect posture, the day was a special one. "We learned all about new technology — the proper way to use it, and how you leave a trail behind with everything you say or post," she explained in her usual breathless manner, her dimpled grin wide with excitement. "You have to be very careful. It's better to learn this at an early age to prevent yourself from making bad decisions."

Was the day a successful one, even though her brother was part of it? Oh yes, she said, even the presence of little brother Moogie couldn't dampen her enthusiasm.

"For me, it was simply an amazing day."

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**morgan** said on Thursday, Feb 14 at 9:57 PM

Another story about North High?

**Anonymous** said on Thursday, Feb 7 at 9:41 PM

SO so so nice to read a positive story about some of the really great kids out there...thanks!!!!

**-Q** said on Thursday, Feb 7 at 12:19 PM

It is great to see the positives students do day in and day out rather than always (as some other publications are all to willing to run with) publicizing just the bad.....

**Erin** said on Thursday, Feb 7 at 7:48 AM

Thank you for highlighting some of the awesome work our students are doing in their pursuit to become Teachers one day!

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