

St Thomas Comets- *Meet our Inspiring Leaders*

First Grade Teacher- Mrs. Angela Birge

Educational Background: I am a proud alumna of St. Thomas School and Peoria Notre Dame High School! I then attended Eureka College and earned my Bachelor's of Science degree in Elementary Education with endorsements in language arts and social sciences.

Why I teach in a Catholic School: I get asked this question by friends and families from time to time, and it's a great question. The answer is quite simple. I truly enjoy teaching religion! Sharing God's message of love and His plan of salvation with my students is my favorite activity every day. We work hard to grow our love for God every day and to have a relationship with Him. He is our source of strength, joy and peace.

Who inspires you: My parents, Roger and Ellen Umdenstock, inspire me the most. Their faith and dedication to family is evident in all they do. They instilled a good work ethic in my brother and me. They sacrificed and worked hard for us so we could receive our education in Catholic schools. They wanted to have that great foundation of faith instilled in us. I am forever grateful for the gift of my Catholic education. My students inspire me as well! Their excitement, academic growth, perseverance, and love for Jesus remind me of why I love teaching! I know I am the teacher, but I learn amazing things from my students, too!

My favorite teacher was: This one is a tough one! I have had a few teachers that made a positive impact on my life and inspired me to become a teacher. If I had to choose one, it would be my kindergarten teacher, Miss Cleary (now Mrs. Dawson). She embodies the perfect example of what a teacher should be! I remember having so much fun in her classroom with learning and her love for teddy bears! She was good at drawing, and I learned to draw from her at a few St. Thomas summer art camps in the old church basement. In fact, she is a family friend to this day! I was chosen to be an altar server at her wedding when she got married, and then she attended my wedding a couple years ago! She also provided me with my first pet, a beta fish from the classroom, which we had named "Little Rainbow".

I do want to give shout outs to a few other teachers as well: Miss Hertz (second grade), Mrs. Pfeiffer (fourth grade), Mrs. Bahnsen (fifth grade), Frau Brogan (high school German teacher), Mr. and Mrs. Steinbeck (college professors). Thank you to ALL of you for inspiring me and believing in me!



Hobbies/Interests: I love spending time with my husband, two cats (Joy and Binx), family and friends most. My husband and I enjoy a variety of sports and have coached a Peoria Notre Dame youth softball team for the past three summers. Go Irish! We are a divided house when it comes to baseball. He is a Cubs fan and I am loyal to my Cardinals. We both claim the Packers as our favorite football team, though. I love crafting and baking when I have the spare time, too!

Dream meal: My dream meal would consist of a steak grilled by my husband, seasoned baby potatoes, grilled Texas toast, and a vegetable. Dessert would be a groovy cookie (skillet cookie) from One World! A glass of Two Berry wine from Kickapoo Creek Winery would be amazing, too!

Outside of school I: enjoy spending time with my husband, family and friends. I like to help my husband cook new meals he finds recipes for. I am more of a baker, so I play the role of sous chef when it comes to meals. Sunday dinners with family are a favorite as well. I am a proud auntie to my nephew (Vincent) and niece (Oaklyn). I like to get together with friends for lunch, dinner or coffee dates at Starbucks or CxT. We will find fun activities to do together such as ax throwing, the I Spy Make a Wish scavenger hunt, and most recently, solving a murder mystery in downtown Peoria.