

# Comet Alumni Spotlight

## Cecilia Ryon Class of 1998



### Educational Background:

I went to Gingerbread House pre-school right down the street from St. Thomas and to Peoria Notre Dame for high school. I attended St. Louis University where I received a Bachelor's degree in Education and Webster University in St. Louis for a Master's degree in Communication Arts. If we're throwing around our credentials, I'm also a National Board Certified Teacher.

### Recent Achievements:

I'm an Instructional Coach at a middle school in Lake Forest, Illinois. That means that I work with other middle school teachers to support them in providing the highest quality education to our students. My mission is to help teachers turn their WHAT (pedagogy) into HOW (practice).

Last spring, I received a peer-nominated award alongside a group of 5th grade math teachers. We noticed that students were struggling with their number facts (a byproduct of Covid), so we developed a fun "Math Cup" competition that supported students in strengthening their math fact fluency.

I LOVE working in schools. Being an educator is an honor, a privilege, and so, so much fun! The BEST part of being an Instructional Coach is getting to be in so many classrooms with professionals who are talented in a variety of highly skilled ways. It's incredibly rewarding to work side-by-side with teachers as they bring their ideas to life. But, my FAVORITE part of my job is working with school and district administrators to plan and facilitate professional development (PD). If you're looking for any hot PD tips, check out my Instagram account: @Pedagogy2Practice. I started this account last year as a way to make my coaching more visible.

**Family:** St. Thomas was a family affair for me. My sister, Annie, and my cousins, Meghan, Kyle, and Molly, all went to school with me. How lucky am I! And, now some of their kids go to St. Thomas, too! Currently, I live in Chicago, Illinois in the same Bucktown neighborhood as my sister. We break into each other's houses to steal clothes, food, and sometimes furniture. It's the best!

I am also lucky to have friends from St. Thomas who are like family to me. A couple of them even came to my parent's house for a birthday slumber party last spring. It was pretty much like grade school - we had Avanti's and Trefzger's - but minus the parental supervision.

### Favorite experience as a St. Thomas Comet:

What I loved most about St. Thomas was the loving and supportive community it provided me - where I felt safe to take educational risks. My experience at St. Thomas was extremely open and welcoming. I was appreciated and accepted for who I was. I understand that is an incredible privilege that I have, and I am sad to think that might not have been the experience for all students who have walked through the doors. When I talk to my family and friends who are now St. Thomas Comets, those same values ring true. I challenge the entire Catholic community to ensure that every child and every family feels as open, welcome, and as psychologically safe as I did.

### St. Thomas teacher who made an impact on you:

Okay, so I hate it when people say to teachers that it's not what you say, but how you make people feel that matters. It sounds so cliché and trite. And yet, here I am about to tell you that I remember very little from grade school - except how my teachers made me feel. Mrs. O'Toole used to read out loud to us. She was a trailblazer for the Science of Reading. She intuitively knew what researchers are sharing today - that students can orally comprehend more challenging texts in elementary grades. I remember how I felt challenged and engaged during those read alouds. Mrs. Crawmer is who I hope to be as an educator. She was so kind, warm, and caring. I remember feeling ownership over my learning and motivated to get better for the sake of being better - not for a grade. To be in her classroom was to feel loved.

### Piece of advice for current Comets:

(for the adults) → Follow @Pedagogy2Practice on Instagram ;-)  
(for everyone) →

👉 "Many hands make light work." When we all take ownership and responsibility for making the world a better place, we have the capability to move mountains. Don't wait for someone else to do it.

📖 Stay informed. Know the difference between an opinion and a fact. Ask questions. Think critically. Be willing to change your mind. Vote.

💕 Work toward the greater good and don't lose hope.

🚫 Don't scroll Tik Tok before bed.

☀️ Wear sunscreen.