

“I teach...to change my students’ lives.”

Dr. Kenneth Stefan Lawrence
Assistant Principal, Aaron Cohn Middle School
Masters of Education, 2012



I came to Columbus State as a student-athlete. I was a member of the CSU Men’s Basketball Team as a point guard. Athletics is what *brought* me to CSU, however, what *kept* me at CSU were the relationships I built, and the academic challenges rendered by world class professors.

I played for the namesake of the court in the Lumpkin Center, the late Coach Herbert Greene. It was Coach Greene who introduced me to the challenge of college versus that of high school. This was not solely confined to the court. We were expected to uphold standards and were held accountable by consequences. Coach Greene was especially tough on his point guards. His reasoning was simple: wings are purposed to shoot and defend, posts are purposed to score and defend, and point guards are purposed to *lead*.

My extra-curricular life in basketball paired perfectly with my studies in the College of Education. There, I found my true purpose in life: to improve the lives of children placed in my charge. I obtained my B.A. in English/Secondary Education in 2009 and immediately went to work as an English teacher and basketball coach at G.W. Carver High School in Columbus, GA. I had a great rookie year and was inspired to return to Columbus State and obtain my M.Ed. in English/Secondary Education in 2012.

The Graduate School at CSU is what really bolstered my pedagogy. We discussed data, social issues, and systemic issues in more depth, and it opened my eyes to all the boundless possibilities of a 21st century classroom. With my master’s degree, I became the Advanced Placement Coordinator at my school and won state recognitions for eliminating barriers that restricted students’ access to an equitable education. I won several region titles and tournaments as a basketball coach. Most notably, I was named the Muscogee County School District Teacher of the Year in 2016 and was a finalist for Georgia Teacher of the Year in 2019. Currently I serve as the Assistant Principal of Aaron Cohn Middle School and, in my first year, our school improved our state grade from a 79 to a 93 and ranked the #1 non-magnet middle school in the State of Georgia.

None of these things happened without the amazing experiences and education I received at Columbus State University. The Graduate School did the job of testing both my patience and drive. Through this crucible, an educator was forged with zeal and a lifelong dedication to his craft, prepared for the challenges of his career field. A graduate degree from CSU does much more than simply bolster your bank account – it dramatically improves your abilities as a craftsman in your profession. And to the first time cougars – you’re path to prosperity begins NOW!

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