

## **“Through the Eyes of a Student”**

**By: Dave Bills, Michigan State University Intern Teacher at CAP**

Second chances are rare in life. The Center for Alternative Programs is the home of second chances. Every member of our family has a story to tell. When I first arrived here, as an intern teacher, I had no idea how much each of these stories would resonate with me personally or with the other students. Some of our stories are well known, much to our chagrin. Some of us keep our stories hidden from the world, clinging desperately to the hope that if we keep our secrets hidden from the judgmental world our secret pain might just go away. CAP is a place that embraces our differences and allows us to be ourselves, all the while focusing on growth in our academics and within ourselves.

Most of us come to CAP from a standard classroom environment that simply did not fulfill our needs, myself included. Whether it be our educational differences or experiences in our lives, our needs were too great to be met in the standard way. CAP has found a way to meet us halfway and use our experiences to empower us to move forward and accomplish what we might not have otherwise.

Both as a student and now as a teacher in preparation, I have struggled with an aging curriculum and instructional style that emphasized rigor at the expense of student retention and understanding. Disheartened and defeated, I left a teacher preparation program that I knew I both needed and wanted to complete. Many of the other students here at CAP identify with this story because they too have struggled in a traditional setting.

Over the next several years I continued to work within the field of education. I worked as a substitute teacher, an assistant kindergarten teacher and as a student advocate for an online high school program. As an advocate, I worked with some of the most disenfranchised students one could imagine. Each student in that program had their own story, similar to those in CAP. It wasn't until working as a student advocate that I realized I needed to continue the teacher preparation program.

Upon returning to the teacher preparation program and being lucky enough to find a home at CAP, I identify with my students more than ever. Sometimes we need a second, third or fourth chance

to discover what it is that we truly want for ourselves: Success. Here, the teachers deliver a rigorous curriculum that meets the needs of the students. Today, as alternative programs continue to fade, I am glad that programs like CAP are still here. Because the day that we give up on individual students to maintain the status quo is the day that we have failed our students.