

Retiree Lachelle Williams Helps Set Osborn Students Up for Success

Osborn High School Jobs for American Graduates (JAG) School-Based Lead Instructor LaChelle Williams started class one Tuesday morning with instructions on how to apply for a Detroit job program. Students worked at computers with posters promoting jobs, internships, and training programs in careers ranging from construction to plumbing tacked to the walls above their heads.

Williams' work is more than just filling out job applications; she helps set students up for career success through JAG's career and college readiness curriculum.

Williams retired from DPSCD in 2015 after serving in the District for 31 years as a substitute teacher, teacher, assistant principal, and principal. Soon after her retirement, Williams returned as an instructor for the JAG program. We talked to Williams about her role and how her work benefits students.

JAG Program

Can you give me an overview of the program?

The JAG program is a career and college readiness program. We do resume writing and interviewing skills. We help students and promote the completion of the FAFSA for them. We like to introduce them to job shadowing. I like the fact that we try to motivate them and do a lot of different things for them. When the kids go off to college, we try to give them gift cards and a college readiness pack.

Our main goal is to help them get jobs. For example, I have 25 seniors who graduated from Osborn last year. It's my job to keep in touch with them at least once a month for a year. Are you in school? Are you looking for a job? Is there anything that you need because sometimes we get special funding that helps us pay for things like rent, a driver's license, a down payment on a car,

and car repairs. We have special funding that comes in. So that work readiness is really, really nice.

A major thing that we do that's really nice is the Detroit Workforce of the Future construction skills training program. Basically, they'll come in, they'll introduce the program to our students. They interview and they select them, and then students start training. They expose them to different careers. And then when school gets out, they go and work in different work sites around the city of Detroit.

So, they can get hands-on experience doing different things. Then, the company says we want students to come and do an internship with us. We're going to pay you and if that works out well then we're going to actually hire you. We also have a great partnership with DTE. They come in and they interview our students as well. If they're under 18, they have to do office training, but if they're 18 or over they can go outside and learn the line work. And of course, both of those things pay very, very well and the kids enjoy it.

We do competitions with other JAG schools. In April, we have our Career Development Conference where the key is to compete with one another on how well you can interview. How well can you market a product? How do you solve problems? We also have one in Washington, D.C. It's with all JAG schools and I think it's 30 different states. We have a legislative day where students go and meet and talk with legislators.

How does the JAG program benefit DPSCD students?

It exposes students to careers that they didn't know anything about. They'll say, 'Oh I didn't know that. I think I would like to try that. That sounds like a very interesting occupation.' And because some of them are not college bound, it gives them the opportunity to just learn a trade without having to worry about the money to go to school. We're a shortcut. We're a connection piece for them. We're linked to a possible career for them.

A Rewarding Career

What made you want to work for DPSCD again?

When I retired, I didn't retire to sit at home. I really feel like I still have a lot of energy and I still feel like I have a lot to offer. I actually know a counselor who retired from DPS and who did this job and he told me all about it. And that just sounded interesting to me, something that I felt you know, it still gave me the opportunity to work with kids, which is something I've always wanted to do.

What's the most rewarding part of this job for you?

One, seeing the kids graduate and being a part of it. They say, 'Miss Williams, you coming to graduation? Ms. Williams, you coming to prom? Ms. Williams, you coming to the send-off?' And the other is, helping them get that employment. Or just giving them that final push because sometimes you have to work with the parents to help kids get what they need to get into college or to get a job. The kids either are in school or working, so they're different goals.

And the ability to contact former students every month. And to hear them say, 'Ms. Williams, this is going well for me, and thank you so much for how you helped me accomplish that.' This is a rewarding program.

Is there anything you want to add?

I know there are more schools that want the program and I think it will be beneficial to the District if it were in more schools.

[Jobs for American Graduates](#) is a national public/private partnership comprised of leading governors, c-suite executives, and national community leaders. The organization provides young people with career preparation and support so students can be successful in the classroom and in their future jobs. It's organized into state affiliates, which deliver the JAG model across middle school, high school, and out-of-school and collegiate young adult populations.

The JAG program is available for primarily 11th and 12th graders at Osborn, Cody, and Pershing high schools. Interested students should talk to their guidance counselor about enrolling in the course, which is taught as an elective.