

## **BROTHERS REFLECT ON TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

ATHENS, Ohio, May 30, 2012 – When brothers Josh and Noah Straus both decided to study education at Ohio University, it did not seem unexpected – their mother Cindy had done the same decades before. Nor was it a big shock that both became successful educators in unique and important ways. What did come as a surprise to both of them was the fact that they would end up working – and living – only five minutes apart in Logan, Ohio.

Josh (B.S. Ed, '00) is the assistant principal at the high school in the Logan-Hocking school district, while Noah (B.S. Ed, '05) teaches seventh grade world history and is the varsity wrestling coach. Both acknowledge The Gladys W. and David H. Patton College of Education as having a big influence their success. “I really was happy with the education that I got at Ohio University and the college of education, and I have no complaints whatsoever, because I felt like I was prepared for the job when I got out. I can say that I could hit the ground running,” said Assistant Principal Straus.

Coach Straus credits one professor in particular with helping him to understand fully how to teach. “Perianne Bates really did make an impression on me, as far as you don’t know what students are bringing to your classroom, and you really should try to find the good in the student, as hard as it is.” The lesson was especially useful for Noah in his early career, when he was doing special education work with juvenile delinquents and emotionally disturbed students, before getting his master’s degree in 2009. This is his fourth year teaching seventh grade history, and his wrestling team holds the league championship this year. “Honestly being the head coach, it’s more (about being a) psychiatrist than anything, finding out what motivates the individual kids,” he said.

Josh also studied special education in college, and he attributes Professor Scott Sparks with emphasizing that, “This is what you’re choosing to do, and it’s good. You’re making a good choice by going into education.” He says he greatly appreciated everything his professors did for him to help him to get through the program and to continue his education with graduate school.

The Patton College emphasizes experiential learning, and Noah uses this “hands-on” approach with his own student teachers by giving them real teaching experience and encouraging them to reflect deeply on what they’ve learned. He tells his professional interns, “I’ll be here to answer any questions you have, but you need to figure this out on your own.” He says this technique forces them to take more responsibility and not use the cooperating teacher as a crutch. His current professional intern, Logan Siegle, couldn’t agree more.

“Noah has been an awesome cooperating teacher. He has allowed me to be in control of the classroom this whole time, so I get experience being in charge on my own, but at the same time is there for me when I have concerns or questions,” Siegle said. “He has given me great advice regarding his teaching experiences and how he has handled situations. He is a great person to learn from.”

Student teaching is one area that both brothers get to see come full-circle. While Noah is a cooperating teacher for Ohio University professional interns, Josh hires some of them for full-time positions. “Most of our student teachers come from O.U. They do a good job here,” he said. “We don’t have a lot of jobs available right now; since the funding was restructured at the state level, money’s tight.” Still, he said, “We just hired an O.U. grad to teach English next year, and we’re excited to get her.”

Growing up outside of Steubenville, Ohio, the Straus brothers did foresee ending up in the same city, let alone in the same school system. “I imagine our relationship was not unlike any other brothers’ – there were a lot of disagreements growing up,” said Josh. Today, while still admittedly extremely competitive with each other, they are much closer. As Josh puts it, “We’re less than five miles apart. I mean, that was not the game plan. It’s just the way it happened.” The students in the Logan-Hocking school district can consider themselves lucky that it did.