

Finding the Right Path



Katie Brown '98, who was named Washington state's 2014 Teacher of the Year, displaying her pride in Shuksan Middle School, where she has taught for 11 years.

Clark College '98 alumna Katie Day Brown was named Washington state's 2014 Teacher of the Year in an awards ceremony held on September 23 in Seattle.

Brown (whose last name was Day when she attended Clark) says that Clark was a crucial part of her educational journey. A graduate of Fort Vancouver High School, she began college at the University of the Redlands in California but realized that it wasn't the right fit for her. However, her intended transfer destination—Western Washington University—wouldn't accept her out-of-state credits.

"So I went back home and thought of Clark," she says. "They

immediately said, 'OK, we can work with you.' They got my credits to transfer and I was able to start as a sophomore. I don't really know what decision I would have made if Clark hadn't worked with me. It really helped me continue my education without any interruption."

Brown adds that Clark was where she took her first anthropology class. "It was one of my favorite classes," she says. "That's what sparked my interest in anthropology."

Indeed, after receiving her associate degree with honors from Clark in 1998, Brown went on to earn a bachelor's degree from WWU in anthropology in 2000. Originally, she didn't plan on becoming a teacher, but found herself drawn to the profession after what she calls a "series of aha moments": volunteering at a high poverty school in college, playing soccer with kids while studying in Costa Rica, and listening to Alaskan tribal elders teach young people about their history as an AmeriCorps volunteer. She returned to WWU to earn a teaching certificate in 2003 and then earned her master's degree in education from Seattle Pacific University in 2009.

Brown now serves as the English Learner Learner specialist at Shuksan Middle School in Bellingham, Washington, where she has earned praise for her ability to collaborate with her colleagues to respect diversity and serve students who may be experiencing language barriers.

As Washington state's Teacher of the Year, Brown will serve as an ambassador for the teaching profession in 2013-14 while continuing her work at Shuksan. She also will be considered for national Teacher of the Year, which is awarded by the Council of Chief State School Officers. President Obama will announce the winner in a special ceremony at the White House in the spring.

Brown says that she remains a strong advocate for community colleges. "Here at Shuksan, whenever we talk about college, I

make sure to include community college in the conversation," she says. "It can be a really great option for the right student."

Photo courtesy of Katie Day Brown