



Teach, Earn & Learn Is Helping Scott Bell Make the Career Switch From Factory Worker to Teacher

After earning a bachelor's degree, Scott Bell planned to further his education in order to become an English and theater teacher who also coached football.

"Life happened, I got married, had a family and needed to pay bills. So I really didn't have the money or the opportunity to continue my education at the time," Bell explained.

So the 2008 graduate of Cleveland State University worked some retail jobs before taking a permanent position in manufacturing. For 10 years he worked at Superior Roll Forming, located in Valley City. The company is a tier 3 supplier for Ford, Chevrolet, General Motors and Honda auto corporations. There's a chance you sat on a car seat that was made with a roll-formed steel part from Superior or drove a vehicle with the frame work on its chassis made there.

Years of working in the factory did not diminish his desire to teach.

"Once my kids were old enough to be in school full time, my wife went back to work and was able to support the family," he said. "That was the point where we said, 'Now I can go back to school.'"

He expressed his gratitude to his wife, Amy, for helping him meet his career goals. "I couldn't have done it without her," Bell said. The two are the parents of 8- and 11-year-old boys.

Bell had considered enrolling in the 14-month MUST (Master's of Urban Secondary Teaching) program years ago. When the time became right to go back to school, he attended a MUST information session and learned about Teach, Earn & Learn. TEL enabled him to earn as a substitute teacher while pursuing his master's degree in education and eventually obtaining his teaching license. He will graduate this summer.

"Here is the opportunity to get paid while you're doing your student teaching, while you're doing the program," Bell stated. "As somebody who has a rather full plate and with boys who just won't stop eating," he joked, Teach, Earn & Learn was the perfect fit.

Bell was a student-teacher for three days a school week and a building substitute teacher for the remaining two at New Tech West in Cleveland. As a substitute teacher, he taught a variety of subjects that included English, Spanish, math, history and computer science. Bell's long days began when he left his Medina home at 6:50 a.m. to arrive at the school at 7:30 a.m. He packed a lunch and dinner on days he left New Tech West for evening courses at Cleveland State's Julka Hall.

How did he get through those long days?

"I drank lots of coffee," Bell said. "I was fortunate that I could lean on my wife for support, sometimes literally, when I came through the door."

"Sometimes it was a struggle. We knew going into this that free time was going to be at a premium," he said.

One of the biggest strengths about being a substitute was being able to experience the different cultures teachers create in their respective classrooms, Bell said. He taught three different classes with the same students. Their behavior changed depending on the culture of that particular classroom.

As a substitute, he also learned the importance of teachers communicating with their students, Bell said.

"I worked with students who had a wide range of backgrounds and cultures, expectations and needs. Every single one needed something different from me, but all of them needed me to understand what they needed and respond to that," he said.

"I may not do a good job of listening to my wife at home, but I've learned to listen to my students," said Bell, a jovial man with a quick sense of humor.

To prepare Bell to substitute teach, he and other TEL students took courses such as Psychological Foundations of Education, Teaching and Management in Secondary Schools and Educational Research.

"Studying why things get done the way they do was nice, but where I really did the learning was when I stepped through the doors of the school," he said.

There were students who gave the substitutes a difficult time. "I was fortunate that as a building substitute I got to know the students on a first name basis," he said. He left detailed notes to teachers on the conduct of their students.

"Only in the classrooms where there weren't expectations — I was just there to be a babysitter or a warm body and there wasn't anything expected of me — is where I had the most trouble," he explained.

In those instances, Bell always had work for his students to do. He sometimes allowed them to complete assignments he had given them in his English class where he was a student-teacher.

Students and Bell benefited when teachers left assignments in their absence. He recalled a 10th-grade biology teacher, who kept a rack of science magazines in her classroom. The students were required to read an article and write a summary of it. Bell plans to do that exercise once he becomes a teacher.

Bell as well as other students and educators around Ohio were affected by Governor Mike DeWine's stay-at-home Order in March because of the novel Coronavirus.

"The shutdown was really rough for me as a substitute. I haven't had a paid day since the last week before the schools closed. I'm grateful to my wife, who has been shouldering the weight of financial responsibility for our family for a while now, and even more so since the virus closed things down," Bell said.

As a student-teacher, he continued to work with his mentor-teacher Daniel Drake conducting virtual classes.

"He's a great teacher, passionate about both his subject and his students. I learned a great deal from him about not only managing a classroom and planning lessons, but about how to be successful within the professional structure of the school system," he said of Drake.