

Making the grade

A 1996 alum's passion for education has led to a career beyond the classroom.

National board certified teacher and award-winning math instructor Jason Franklin '96 of Mahomet, Ill., prides himself on being a “real world” teacher. “If it’s not in the real world, I won’t teach it,” Franklin says. “Kids need to know how they’ll use what we’re teaching them, and if we’re teaching things they don’t need, that’s our problem – not theirs.”

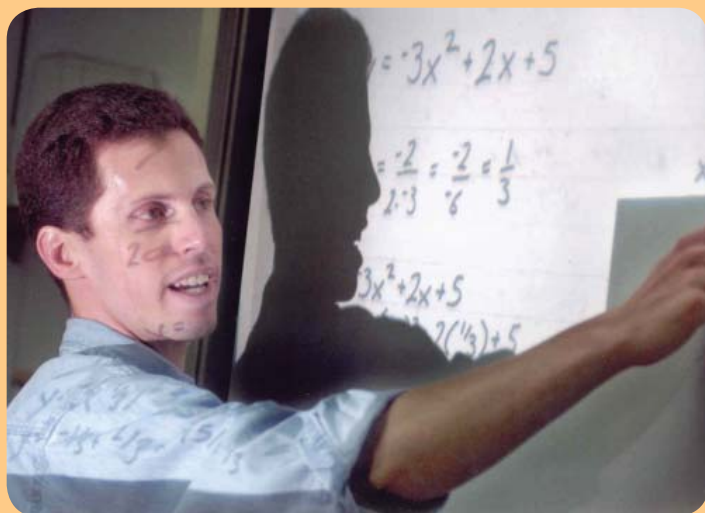
As a result, Franklin developed his own curriculum for his algebra II classes at Champaign Centennial High School, using business models to teach concepts. Students write business plans, run a small business and host a year-end business conference.

His students interact with business professionals who volunteer their time and serve as speakers for the conference.

“This is the first time many of these students have been in a professional environment,” says Franklin, “so they’re learning about things like eye contact, shaking hands and appropriate business dress.”

Franklin recently received approval from the district to start a new college algebra class for juniors. The class focuses on real world business applications and teaching concepts used on the ACT exam – another area where Franklin has experience helping students excel.

As test prep specialist for his business, Better Test Scores, Franklin has taught more than 4,000 Illinois students over the past 15 years using an ACT prep curriculum he designed. According to his business’ website, bettertestscores.net, higher test scores translates not only into admission to the college of



Jason Franklin '96 helps prepare high school students in Illinois for the ACT exam, a required test for college admission.

choice, but also thousands of dollars in additional scholarship money.

Franklin tells of one student who raised her ACT score from 24 to 28 after taking his prep class. Because she was able to raise her score, she was offered a \$40,000 scholarship package to a private institution, a \$24,000 increase from the previous offer she received with the lower score.

Franklin found this second calling when, as a track coach at Mahomet-Seymour High School, he became acquainted with a young athlete whose ACT score was too low for admittance to college.

“I helped her prepare to retake the test by using some of the same principles I used to coach her, and her score went up,” Franklin explains.

Her parents told other parents, and eventually Franklin was asked to organize an ACT prep class.

“This all came from working to help athletes get higher test scores,” Franklin says. “It’s kept growing because of parents and word-of-mouth. So many parents were looking for a way to help their kids, and there was nothing out there like this.”

Demand for his ACT prep services continues to grow, and he now teaches 10 to 13 prep classes a week at numerous Illinois locations, including Champaign, Danville, Bourbonnais, Peoria, Springfield, Bloomington and on Millikin’s campus.

Like his business, Franklin’s family has also grown. He and his wife, Amy, welcomed their fifth child this February, contributing to Franklin’s decision to retire from the classroom after this school year.

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Giving voice to Lincoln...

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department in 2004.

The book's final version contains a variety of styles; many poems are in free verse, while others still retain some characteristics of sonnets or more structured poetry. The poems range in topic from Lincoln's barber ("Billy the Barber"), to his days as a lawyer ("Geese in Shelby County, November 1851" – see sidebar) to his courtship of Mary Todd ("Love is Eternal"), and include three poems about his assassination and death: "Contents of my Pockets, April 14, 1865," "Bullet in my Brain, April 15, 1865," and "Alternate Ending."

Published this April, the book has already drawn praise from historians and Lincoln experts, including William Furry, executive director of the Illinois State Historical Society. "Guillory channels Abraham Lincoln through the ages and into the moment, breathing fire and wit and soul into his marbled memory," Furry said. "The results are audacious and inspired."

Guillory will read excerpts from "The Lincoln Poems" at a special Lincoln authors event to be held at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Ill., on Feb. 12, 2009, in celebration of historic president's 200th birthday.

"The Lincoln Poems" is available from Mayhaven Publishing (www.mayhavenpublishing.com) and at Barnes and Noble stores. ●

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Saying that he's leaving the Centennial classroom for "the Franklin classroom," Franklin explains that he and his wife home-school their children, and with their new addition, more help is needed in the home classroom.

"I love Centennial, so this is the hardest decision I've ever made," Franklin says. "I really had to choose between my children and my school. I love them both, but I want the experience of being a teacher to my children."

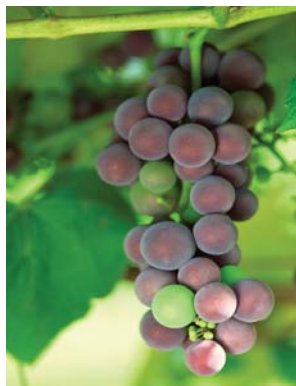
And apparently, the feeling was mutual. Franklin received the Mellon Award this spring, naming him Champaign Centennial Teacher of the Year.

"It's a big honor in our district because students select the teacher," he says.

Additionally, through a nomination by a Centennial student, he received The Claes Nobel Educator of Distinction Award from the National Society of High School Scholars.

Besides helping on the home front, Franklin also plans to continue teaching Illinois' young people how to get into the college of their choice by way of better ACT scores.

"I love teaching – that's what God wanted me to do," he says. "The ACT business is just an extension of my passion. As long as kids keep improving their scores, I'll keep doing it. It's all about helping students learn how to learn." ● *by Margaret Friend*



Through the grapevine...

We're proud of our alumni and like to keep track of their accomplishments. So periodically, we'll publish a list of some of our alumni, hoping to find out what they have been up to. If you have heard through the grapevine of any of the people listed below, please circle the name and complete the form. Thanks!

The last I knew he/she was:

(please include our missing alumni's current address or the name of a person who may know it.)

My Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Please return this form to Millikin University, Alumni Relations Office, 1184 West Main Street, Decatur, Ill. 62522-2084 or e-mail to alumnews@millikin.edu.

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 Charles P. Cox '81
 David W. Cox '78
 Jean C. Rice Cox '60
 Justin P. Cox '01
 Renee M. Dubuque Coyer '89
 Mary D. Crain '77
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