

***National ACE Adopt-a-Classroom Teacher:***  
**Kala Jo Grice-Dobbins**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Grade STEM Teacher, Sparkman Middle School**  
**Toney, AL**

**M**s Grice-Dobbins learned about CAP at a teacher conference in 2019 and was hooked on the possibilities for her students. As part of her membership benefits, she has taken her free CAP Teacher Orientation Program (TOP) flight and also tried the 6<sup>th</sup> grade ACE program for her 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at [Sparkman Middle School](#) and it has been a great fit!

Ms. Grice-Dobbins is a firm believer in advancing her students and holding them to high accountability. Her school is a Title 1 school in rural Alabama and although they live on the outskirts of Huntsville (Rocket City), the students are rarely exposed to the same resources and experiences as the city school system. Ms. Grice-Dobbins spends countless hours writing grants and trying to offer her students access to any and all opportunities for them.

Ms. Grice-Dobbins tries to teach lessons that will be useful in the real world and are cross curricular in nature. When she heard about the CAP ACE program, she inquired if her 8<sup>th</sup> grade students could work with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum, and was told she could try. She did try, and the lessons worked well, with some adaption to meet her grade level content.

She then, also, requested to become a part of the new [CAP Adopt-a-Classroom program](#) and found she was the first teacher to apply and assigned to a CAP squadron, the SER-AL-199 Redstone Composite Squadron. She was excited to speak with the local squadron Aerospace Education Officers, Capt Dan Anderson and Lt Julie Anderson, and work with them to adapt lessons to reach an 8th grade level for her students.

"I was shy about contacting my local CAP and AFA units for help, but they are the nicest, most helpful people I have met. I am SO excited to be working with them on this journey."

-- Kala Jo Grice-Dobbins, Alabama AEM



Due to COVID restrictions, most of her students were either hybrid or virtual during the year, and not in class full time. Thus, since her students did not have adequate supplies at home, she really had to alter lessons to make them work; only using lessons that could be accessed online or easily adapted for home use.



As a part of the [ACE Academic Lesson 2- Target](#), a related activity for the students was making and flying paper airplanes at home and charting the distance and speed they flew. The students had to measure how many feet their planes flew (using their own feet to roughly count if they did not have a tape measure or some other measuring device at their homes). They also timed how long it was aloft (in the air from when it left their hands until it landed). They could remake the plane up to 3 times before the final test. They kept an excel document of their statistics and a google doc of their reflections.

Then, when the CAP squadron adults and cadets came to the school, they also had a CA P paper glider lesson to conduct with the students. This was an excellent connector to the students' home activity, but the CAP members extended instruction of the principles of flight and quickly enhanced any teaching she could do.

After her TOP flight, where her pilot flew her assistant principal and her over their school with the students outside observing this, she was able to connect STEM concepts to aviation in a realistic manner that the students could enjoy and learn from.

When she heard about the Search and Rescue missions the CAP does, she was excited to have the CAP present that information to her students, as well. She wanted her students to see how technology is utilized in the real world to aid in Search in Rescue. The cadets spoke to the students about how they use drones to fly over areas to aid in searches which helps save time and energy that could be utilized in other ways during a rescue mission. Some of her students even showed an interest in joining the local CAP after just the first lesson with the cadets.



Electives at Sparkman Middle are required to work on Social Emotional Learning throughout the year. Some of the lessons in the ACE program were right on point with the SEL lessons Ms. Grice-Dobbins was asked to teach her students, such as the Character lesson, *Should You Judge a Book by Its Cover*. The cadets also helped with this aspect of the curriculum, as well.

Another ACE lesson enhanced by the CAP mentors was the ACE Character lesson, *Let Your Character Take Flight*. Ms Grice-Dobbins had taught about character through the SPHERO Empathy lessons that were in her curriculum. When the CAP members talked to the students, they emphasized having good character as a part of the cadet program. So, everything seemed to connect in a meaningful manner.

Ms Grice-Dobbins teaches rocketry each year and she used the CAP and AFA members to help her students build and launch rockets at the end of her unit.

Ms. Grice-Dobbins feels she has really been rewarded by joining forces with the CAP and the local AFA chapter. The AFA TN Valley Chapter sponsored her students' ACE shirts and selected her as the chapter AFA Teacher of the Year. She pushes herself to learn new things constantly to make her classes feel as though they attend a prestigious school that has unlimited resources. This partnership has certainly aided the students in feeling as if they are special and worthy of such attention and support.

Due to Ms Grice-Dobbins's program enthusiasm, she was asked to share her experiences with the ACE program and the *Adopt-a-Classroom* program. Her story is found on the CAP AE webpage [HERE](#). Ms Grice-Dobbins explained the impact being adopted has had on her students. "This program has allowed my students to get a new view of how STEM is used by other young people their age in the local squadron. It has also allowed them to see how things, such as drones, are not just used for play but can be utilized for real jobs such as search and rescue as the CAP conducts. This is the best part of the program, the adult and cadet CAP members teaching the students how things they learn now can be used in their futures in the real world."



**For her willingness to accept the partnership with CAP and the AFA in the ACE program's associated *Adopt-a-Classroom* program,  
CONGRATULATIONS, Ms Kala Jo Grice-Dobbins!**