Over the course of my tenure as teacher, I have stepped into a variety of roles aside from my duties as a teacher: varsity softball coach, stage manager for school plays, newspaper advisor, team member for mentorship program, and committee member for professional development. Over the past two years, however, I have taken on several leadership roles that I feel have made significant impact on my department.

Two of my leadership roles come from my love of writing and literature. I am the sponsor for two competitions: Poetry Out Loud and the National Council of Teachers of English Writing Competition for juniors. For both competitions, I work to actively involve other teachers in recruiting students and incorporating the competitions into their classrooms. I also help to judge the entrants as well as help our school-level winners prepare for the next level of competition.

My biggest role at Lake Braddock, however, has been being asked to step in as the team leader for the ninth grade English collaborative learning team. Because I was new to the school (it was only my second year teaching at Lake Braddock when I was asked), I was hesitant to fill the role, but my team members and administrator assured me they felt I was a good fit for the position.

Although we have a large team with very different personal philosophies, together as a team, we’ve made great strides in establishing norms for identifying at-risk students and creating intervention strategies and agreeing upon SMARTR goals for grammar instruction. Further, we’ve moved towards digital collaboration as I’ve established a website where we share resources as a team through Google Apps for Education, along with a Blackboard site where we share ideas for blogs and discussion boards, which have helped us meet our goals. We also utilized Google Forms to administer a pretest at the beginning of the year and establish baseline data for incoming ninth graders, which I then used in discussions with the middle school department chair about vertical alignment.

I also worked with the other Honors 9 teachers to create a new summer assignment. I wrote rationales for three new book selections which my team worked together to identify in order to allow students timely and engaging choices in their reading. I then suggested and worked with the other teachers to design an assignment where students self-enrolled in an open Blackboard class. They then were responsible for participating in online discussions over the summer with other students reading their books, ensuring they weren’t reading in isolation. At the beginning of this school year, we were then able to reference students’ shared reading experiences and build off of both their content knowledge and practice using the discussion boards for the upcoming school year.