

# education

## A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

*A high percentage of teachers in Northwest Ohio and beyond got their start in the DC education program*

The Teacher Education Program at Defiance College has a tradition of excellence, producing quality graduates for many decades. A high percentage of DC alumni are teachers and administrators in schools throughout Northwest Ohio and beyond.

One of the largest majors on campus, the program strives to put the best teachers out in the field by creating a curricular framework that aligns with the College's mission of community engagement and responsible citizenship. This emphasis, coupled with a strong foundation in the liberal arts provided to students in all academic programs, allows the Education Division to remain a strong and vibrant program. As evidence that its

approach to preparing future teachers works, the division boasts a 100 percent pass rate for the Praxis II, a part of the teacher licensure and certification process. Overall, the Education Program represents DC well.

"The Teacher Education Program continues to be an area of great strength for Defiance College," says Dr. Jo Ann Burkhardt, associate professor of education, head of teacher education, and coordinator of the Master of Arts in Education program. "The combination of highly trained and committed teacher education faculty, skilled partners in the public school system, and students who are motivated to become teacher-leaders is a powerful one."

Superintendents who hire DC graduates

consistently observe that DC students are well prepared to meet the challenges of today's classrooms. Students are required to take multiple methods classes and are continually evaluated on their progress. An education council, consisting of professors in the education major as well as professors from other divisions, evaluates students from a holistic perspective. This, coupled with state and federal guidelines, helps to keep the program at its peak level.

Burkhardt, who has led the program for three years, wasn't always sure she wanted to be in higher education. Originally from Cleveland, she first came to the Defiance area in 1976 to teach special education in the Northeastern Local School District. After serving as principal of two high schools - Fayette High School and Ottawa Hills High School in Toledo - Burkhardt wanted a break from education and embarked on another career path.

Burkhardt enrolled at and graduated from the Pittsburgh Culinary Institute and started her own business doing high-end catering. She first connected with Defiance College when she taught a research and design class as a part-time instructor in 1999.

"I loved how everyone at Defiance was very serious about the mission of the college," says Burkhardt. "So when a full-time position opened up, I applied." She's been helping to sustain the Education program at DC ever since.

Burkhardt explains that Defiance College works with 25-30 school districts in the four-county area to place students for observations and internships. DC faculty members have cultivated a good rapport with area school districts, which provides optimal opportunities for aspiring teachers to receive real-world experience from highly qualified teachers and coaches.



*Dr. Jo Ann Burkhardt, head of teacher education at DC, is also a McMaster Fellow to Cambodia.*



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*Education students held their second Family Fun Day this spring to promote literacy.*

DC faculty and supervising teachers stress to student teachers the impact, both positive and negative, they can have on children. “Students entering the education profession have a tremendous responsibility. Teachers work with a very vulnerable population,” says Burkhardt. “Who hasn’t been affected by a teacher, whether good or bad? We remind students when they go out into the school system that their actions not only affect themselves, but also the students entrusted to them, the college and the education major.”

Not only does the Education division produce quality teachers, it has also been at the forefront of the College’s service learning and civic engagement initiatives.

“It’s important that students realize the importance of service and civic engagement

within the classroom,” says Burkhardt. And they have. Defiance College students organized a project to help kindergarteners improve their reading skills and simultaneously meet the needs of residents of senior centers and elder care homes who didn’t get many visitors and were starved for company. The project incorporated both groups by having the kindergarten students read to the seniors, thereby meeting two community needs.

On a broader scale, faculty and students in the Education program have been actively involved in projects through the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity. Burkhardt, fellow faculty member Diane Kaiser, and Education students began a McMaster School project in 2004 that focused on the educational needs of the Guatemalan

community of Chiquimulilla, a small town located near the El Salvador border. While in Chiquimulilla the group identified access to educational materials as a significant issue.

They observed that several students would either share a book or were taught without books because texts were not available. This wasn’t a problem just for Chiquimulilla, but a contributing factor to the high percentage of illiteracy in rural populations throughout Guatemala. The faculty and students worked with the community of Chiquimulilla for several years, eventually opening a library in 2007 with 100 starter books and bookshelves that would serve not only the school, but also the community.

Education faculty members and students have also been involved with the McMaster School project in Cambodia for five years now. Dr. Burkhardt and Dr. Fred Coulter have conducted teacher trainings, and Dr. Tim Rickabaugh has worked on health education.

Student projects have included teaching pedagogies around algebra, geography, and literacy. “It’s important that our students and faculty are involved in the McMaster School,” says Burkhardt. “We are fortunate to have the tools necessary to excel in this work. It’s a rewarding experience to help others.”

Alumni of the Education program have excelled in their professional lives. Defiance College boasts college presidents, deans, division chairs, professors, teachers, administrators, coaches and many others who work in the education profession. Successful alumni display the qualities of a Defiance College education, and prospective and incoming students find these successes proof of an outstanding academic program. ◆