

Defiance College has a rich tradition of educating teachers. For more than a century, the College has prepared and graduated teachers who not only teach, but who become principals, superintendents, and other leaders in the field. That tradition took a giant step forward with the introduction of DC's collaboration in the Defiance City Schools, creating a new model of hands-on education for DC's education students.

A recent report by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education cited research identifying clinical preparation as a cornerstone for preparation of effective teachers. Defiance College's partnership with Defiance City Schools allows students to connect what they are learning in their areas of study with actual classroom experience throughout all four years of their college education.

Michael Struble, superintendent of Defiance City Schools, views the initiative as distinctive by nature of the college's small, manageable size and close proximity to the school buildings. "Using the actual public school buildings as a 'lab' setting is fantastic for both DC's faculty as well as the college students," he says. "You can study educational philosophy, hear lectures on methodology, and read about the history of education, but to practically apply what you learn is critical to the development of a teacher, and student teaching is not sufficient by itself."

DC students are tutoring or assisting teachers in the classroom, while other placements include such activities as playground, lunchroom, or bus-boarding activities, things that aspiring teachers need to see and experience. As they gain knowledge and skills, they take on increasing responsibilities for their own students' learning.

Much attention is paid to monitoring and evaluating the college students' experience. The DC students are encouraged to think, write, and talk about issues such as technology and its uses, diversity in the schools, instructional strategies used by the teachers, and challenges faced by teachers, counselors and administrators. ♦



Connecting *with* Students

Field experiences are an integral part of the Defiance College Teacher Education Program. They are designed to support teacher candidates by providing a meaningful transition from theory to practical application of what is learned in a classroom. Working in collaboration with college professors and mentor teachers in a variety of school sites, students enhance their knowledge, skills, and dispositions and learn to reflect on their own impact on student learning with diverse populations, in real world settings.

According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning, (November 2010), the preparation of teachers must be "fully grounded in clinical practice and interwoven with academic content and professional courses." The Defiance College Teacher Education Program emphasizes the role of clinical practice by providing an average of 805 clinical hours for every teacher candidate in our program. Early clinical experiences begin in the freshman year and continue through the sophomore year, providing broad exposure to the classroom. In the junior year, candidates enroll in Beginning Methods courses that provide structured observations and opportunities to develop and implement units of instruction. In the senior year, Advanced Methods courses provide more intensive experiences in planning and teaching. Finally, the internship at the end of the senior year provides a full time teaching experience that is supported by a weekly on-campus seminar and expertly trained faculty and field supervisors.

All field experiences are arranged by the Coordinator of NCATE and Clinical Experience to ensure that candidates have experiences with diverse populations in grades appropriate to the licensure they are seeking, and to allow them to demonstrate that they have met the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession upon which our clinical experiences are based.

"At Defiance College, we believe that students majoring in education need to receive a balance of theory, practice and implications. To do this, we offer our students multiple practical experiences that progress in length and intensity. These experiences, and the related in-class discussions and assignments, are designed to help students create critical connections between the theory they are learning in the college classroom with its applications in the K-12 classroom. However, we don't stop there. Our dedicated, experienced faculty help our students to understand and consider the potential implications connected to the application of those theories with students. These practical experiences provide our students concrete, authentic examples to draw from throughout all of these discussions."

Joshua Francis,
assistant professor of education

"When I went out into the classroom and saw how the teachers taught, all of the technology, it really opened my eyes about how the education system works. The teacher helped me to work on lessons, grade papers, and work with students who missed class. It really helped me to apply some of the things I was learning in my classroom into the high school classroom. It also introduced me to people already in the field. I made some really good connections with people. A woman who's been teaching for 34 years related her experiences, what I could expect, the ups and downs of it all.

"This year I've been exposed to different activities I can do to make my classroom better. Even just having to get up early and go to the classroom prepared has been a good experience. Having to 'dress the part' has made a big impact on me because I realize it all comes with being a teacher. It's really been preparing me for my fourth-year teaching practice because now I have an idea of what to expect – of the problems that may come up and some of the things I need to work on as a person and as an emerging teacher. I'm really glad we have this exposure. It's been an eye-opening experience."

Melissa Russell,
integrated language arts major

