Making a Difference for English as a Second Language Students

Barbara J. Reinken

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/colleagues

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/colleagues/vol1/iss1/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colleagues by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.
According to Suzanne Richards, Director of Curriculum of Godfrey-Lee Public Schools, numerous English Language Learners live in their district and need additional opportunities to enhance their language learning. The Grand Valley State University College of Education faculty and students teamed up with Godfrey-Lee this past summer in an effort to meet these needs and help English as a Second Language (ESL) students further their English literacy skills.

The ESL Summer School program was the first of its kind for the College of Education. Dr. Barbara J. Reinken created the program and served as the principal and university coordinator. The three-week intensive program was housed in the Godfrey-Lee Early Childhood building and served Godfrey-Lee ESL students from grades 3-12.

The focus of the program was to extend communication skills — oral and written. The student to teacher ratio was very low — two students per teacher so the ESL students received both small group and individualized instruction. The result was an amazing amount of progress in learning English communication skills.

The ESL students were there every day at 8:30 a.m. and ready to learn. They worked hard and were asking for books to take home and read at night. On the last day of the program, parents were invited in to help celebrate the learning that had occurred. The students performed a Readers Theater they wrote, read books that they authored and explained reading/writing strategies they learned.

This program also provided an exceptional opportunity for the GVSU students in the Master’s of Education in Reading/Language Arts program to serve the community in literacy development. Graduate students enrolled in the practicum demonstrated their knowledge, skills, and dispositions as quality teachers and reading specialists.

The GVSU graduate students experienced working with students whose first language was not English. Many of the GVSU students had not experienced this type of interaction in their professional careers. While the experience was intense, the students felt that this summer program was one of the best learning experiences they have had. Neither the GVSU students nor the ESL students wanted the program to end. Both the district and GVSU were thrilled by the success of the program.

At the current time, plans are underway to return to Godfrey-Lee in the Summer of 2006. Discussions with the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) graduate program have begun. The hope is that TESOL will join the Reading/Language Arts graduate program to support even more ESL students who are eager to learn English communication skills.