

'Authentic learning'

Milligan ed. students learn teaching skills in Lake Ridge Elem. classroom

MILLIGAN COLLEGE, Tenn. (Dec. 15, 2016) – Field experience often is the ultimate test for an aspiring teacher—a time to turn lessons learned in the college classroom into real teaching skills.

For Milligan College junior Corinne Dorst, her field experience this semester at Lake Ridge Elementary School in Johnson City, Tennessee, changed her teaching goals.

"When I found out I had a kindergarten placement, I was nervous," said Dorst, from Cincinnati, Ohio, who initially wanted to teach older elementary students. "However, those kids stole my heart. The teacher did such an amazing job with instruction that I ended up loving kindergarten."

Now, that grade level is where Dorst hopes to teach after graduation.

Lake Ridge's assistant principal, Dr. Josh Simmons, said that while learning theory is very important, a field experience like Dorst's gives college students an "authentic learning" experience that is priceless for their teacher education.

"They're getting that real life experience," said Simmons. "When you're in a college classroom, there are a lot of hypotheticals, but once you get in the class you see a diverse set of needs. It gives the students an up-close view."

Dr. Tausha Clay, Milligan's associate professor of education, said the college's emphasis on field experience, in addition to learned research-based strategies, is what makes Milligan's teacher education curriculum so strong.

"Field experience is incredibly important for any aspiring teacher, and Lake Ridge truly was a model example for Milligan students," said Clay. "They got to see the research-based teaching strategies they learned at Milligan put into practice in the field at Lake Ridge. It made it relevant for our students."

For Lake Ridge students, the experience was just as beneficial. By dispersing the Milligan students throughout the school, Lake Ridge teachers were able to divide the classrooms into smaller groups, giving the elementary students more one-on-one attention.

"Because of that, we were able to better meet needs of our students," said Simmons.

For Lake Ridge pre-K teacher Kami Preston, helping Milligan students in the field is a way to pay it forward.

"So many wonderful mentor teachers invested in my own education," said Preston. "I'm always happy to pass along whatever I can to the next generation of teachers in turn."

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MILLIGAN COLLEGE is a Christian liberal arts college in Northeast Tennessee whose vision is to change lives and shape culture through a commitment to servant leadership. The college offers more than 100 majors, minors, pre-professional degrees and concentrations in a

variety of fields, along with graduate and adult degree completion programs. To learn more about Milligan College, visit www.milligan.edu or call 800-262-8337.