

Math, Science, and Kids! -

Teachers Needed

KEEPING YOU IN THE LOOP & ON TARGET FOR YOUR TEACHING LICENSE

WINTER 2008 ISSUE

FLUKY PATH TO TEACHING – NO REGRETS

DIAMOND OAKS MATH TEACHER Myrtis Smith's corporate experience as a mechanical engineer has served her well in the classroom, yet she appreciates the management skills of career teachers.

"When I first came into education, I wanted to bring [my] business [experience] in," Smith says. "But what a career teacher has learned and can do, and make a student do is amazing. It's easy to want to change the world, but career teachers who've figured it out have a lot to offer. And, when we work together, students are the BIG winners."

She was immersed in that "synergy" as a long-term substitute at Ross Local School District when paired with an experienced teacher.

THE OHIO STATE ENGINEERING graduate had an inkling she was more suited to education, but honored her decision and landed a job with Andersen Consulting. She moved from computer programming into human resources, where she tapped her teaching instincts in orientation and training.

Then – boom "after four years I was laid off. In school I had thought teacher's didn't make much money, but it was more than when you are not working," Smith can now joke. "It really has been a blessing."

After stints career coaching, long-term subbing, earning a master's of education, and teaching as an adjunct professor at Cincinnati State, Smith began to investigate obtaining her teaching license. The doors seemed closed: the traditional route was too lengthy given she had a master's, an alternative program was cost prohibitive and, she was initially told a University of Cincinnati grant had ended. She called anyway and discovered she had two days to meet the application deadline.

SHE ENROLLED IN SPRING, took online and in-class courses

over the spring and summer, and landed a job by August. "I had interviews at three or four schools and accepted with Great Oaks,"

Smith says.

The TeachOhio Grant (similar to Teachers Needed), a state program of alternative licensure, paid Smith's expenses, provided courses, "and a lot of nice extras like help with the Praxis exams, on-line courses, and the network of other teachers going through the same thing you are." One of the most crucial aspects, she says, was classroom observing. "I learned the most sitting in on others' classes."

What she calls a "fluky path – I could not have planned this" – has brought her something

a paycheck from the corporate world could not. "You get to see and touch your product every day. When kids stop back after graduating, it makes you feel like you have contributed. You don't get those strokes in the corporate world."

WHAT HER PREVIOUS experience outside the classroom has added is:

CONFESSIONS OF A TEACHER AND FORMER ENGINEER

PATIENCE. *Arguing is not going to get you anywhere. You can't demand your way. It's a two-way relationship.*

FLEXIBILITY: *Lesson plans never turn out as expected*

OPENNESS AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING. *You know that cliché? Well, it's true: students don't care how much you know, but how much you care. When you share about yourself and listen, students feel heard and respected.*



MYRTIS SMITH WITH DIAMOND OAKS SENIOR WILLIE MARSHALL

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CENTER OFFERS ENTREE INTO SCHOOL CULTURE

Workplace savvy does not necessarily translate into easy navigation of the classroom. Nor does it automatically connect you.

"One of the biggest hurdles career changers face is finding their way into a new culture – the culture of schools," says Dr. Ted Fowler, founder and co-director of the Southwest Ohio Center of Excellence in Science and Mathematics Education. "Schools

(who do watch the bottom line, but are not working for profit), unlike corporations, have to be sensitive to the needs of students and parents."

That is one of the main tools the Southwest Center (SWC), located at the University of Cincinnati and closely tied to the Teachers Needed state grant, offers those making the transition from other careers into teaching

math and science.

While developed to strengthen math and science education in Ohio schools and colleges, an offshoot of the SWC has been to secure a variety of partnerships in raising public awareness. Those relationships are an invaluable networking resource for individuals outside education, but on track to becoming new teachers.

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PRAXIS UPDATE

With so many options, it's always best to check the Praxis website (www.ets.org), however, we have included an encapsulation. As you may already know, we encourage testing in your content area as soon as possible – while the information is still fresh. The Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) portion is typically completed after all coursework.

Happy studying and navigating!

TEST DATE	REGISTRATION DUE	LATE REGIST. \$45 LATE FEE	EMERGENCY WEB REGIS./\$75	SCORE REPORT MAILING
3/15/08	2/14/08	2/21/08	3/7/08	4/15/08
4/26/08	3/27/08	4/3/08	4/18/08	5/27/08
6/14/08	5/15/08	5/22/08	6/6/08	7/15/08
7/26/08	6/26/08	7/3/08	7/18/08	8/26/08



TOP 10

In order to keep this newsletter fresh, we'd like your input each issue to compile a "Top 10" David Letterman style. For the next edition, please respond to:

- **What profession are you leaving?**
- **What brings you to teaching** [always wanted to, inspired by a teacher, tired of the grind, want to make a difference, etc.]?

Keep submissions short and sweet; provide a first name and e-mail address; send to: Cathy Barney, cathybarney@the-nose.com.

TEACHERS NEEDED grant newsletter is published under the auspices of the Southwest Ohio Center of Excellence in Science and Mathematics Education. For program information, contact coordinator Kathie Maynard-Sund, sundk@uc.edu or 513-576-3536. For newsletter input, contact Cathy Barney, cathybarney@the-nose.com or cathybarney@hotmail.com.

FLUKY PATH

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

– A confidence she may not have had early in a career;

– “I can give real-life examples from the work environment and it gets kids’ attention – they can tell I’m talking from experience;”

– That an overwhelming first year “that might have thrown me before” could be approached “just like a major presentation;”

– Flexibility and “learning to roll with it; someday you realize math is just not that important and, instead, you build a dialogue and trust;”

– Diplomacy and tact in dealing with parents and kids “who try to be tough, but are still kids.”

Smith was least prepared “for all of the emotional stuff kids bring into the classroom. They say things because they want help. Beyond math, they also need to feel like there is an adult in their life they can talk to. It’s a fine line.” One Smith seems to have successfully tiptoed across.

“I have NEVER regretted the change, she insists. “Everything has been kind of flukish, but this is EXACTLY where I am supposed to be.”

ADVICE FOR SWITCHING

Myrtis Smith offers advice for those changing careers to teaching:

1) Tell everyone you know; talk it up.

2) Keep looking. “When I first started, the doors were closed. No grant, too expensive, more school.” But she persevered and “everything fell into place. I could not have planned this.”

3) Respect the profession. Yeah, teachers have the summer off, “but we work every night and weekend ‘til then. One of the things I found important were the teachers already there: their experience and classroom management.”

ENTREE INTO SCHOOL CULTURE

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Fowler’s most important work at the SWC has been connecting a diverse group of individuals, organizations and businesses under the mandate of improving math and science education. That’s a bonus for those entering teaching.

“We’ve established partnerships with educational centers such as the Cincinnati Zoo and Cincinnati Nature Center, but also business and industry,” Fowler says. “However, the most important tool we can offer is access to education service centers in Hamilton, Clermont, Warren and Butler counties.”

These entities, not well-known outside of education circles, are jointly funded by the state and county and assist local school districts with professional development and curriculum.

“These education service centers (ESCs) have such a keen awareness of what’s going on in schools – openings, issues and problems – and are very attuned in a general way,” according to Fowler.

The Southwest Center also maintains partnerships with individual school districts. “Just two days ago, I received an e-mail from Oak Hills stating they’ll need seven new science teachers next year,” the SWC co-director says.

Those are the types of robust resources soon-to-be teachers need to find the best job fit.

By establishing and maintaining these relationships as well as sponsoring workshops and face-to-face meetings open to partners, career changers and undergraduate education students, “we are able to most fully serve those in the Teachers Needed program,” according to Fowler.

Fowler sees himself as a “go-between, a sort of negotiator and wheeler-dealer. This [network] is not a natural system and has got to be stitched together and maintained.”

In addition to all that-behind-the-scenes connecting, Fowler and the SWC offer professional development, grants and search for funding sources. “There really are inexhaustible resources with math, science, education, industry and business.”

One of the most challenging lessons any new teacher faces, Fowler says, is learning to get along: “How to talk to kids, function in the classroom AND interact with administrators. If you can’t do that, you’ll be miserable and not keep the job. Our partnerships with the ESCs and schools make it easier to ease into that situation.”

Those relationships often foster the environment for induction experiences, which, sometimes, end with a job placement.

As a University of Cincinnati education professor emeritus, Fowler knows something the state may not. “It was the assumption of the state legislature that people would be losing jobs and stepping into the classroom. In reality, they are not losing their jobs, or, only temporarily. “Teachers Needed” people have made a life values choice and really want to be teachers. It sounds like a cliché, but they want to give back. Many are in the profession for altruistic reasons.”

As a longtime math and science cheerleader, Fowler is most fond of “seeing quality people be successful in the classroom – people like Myrtis Smith [SEE RELATED ARTICLE].” Or the young man struggling to find the right career and turning his life around when he earned his teaching credentials and secured a position. “He had gained confidence and maturity.”

So plug yourself into networks, opportunities and insider knowledge. Visit the center at 4146H Edwards One on campus or online at www.excellentmath.org.