

Building a positive foundation

Dedication, enthusiasm key to student and staff success at Nicklin

BY JOHN HAUR

For the Daily Call

PIQUA — It takes a lot of energy to keep up with a five year-old. Imagine what a person needs to keep up with 300 five-year-olds. Nicklin Learning Center principal Loretta Henderson looks forward to the everyday challenges and adventures of her building's kindergarteners.

Henderson grew up in Enon and graduated from Greenon High School in 1983. She was very busy being a member of the school newspaper, the German Club, and Future Homemakers of America. "Music was always my passion," she said. "I liked singing and acting in the school musicals."

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— Loretta Henderson



She combined her interests in music and the school newspaper and enrolled at Franklin College in Indiana to major in journalism and minor in music. "After a year and a half, I realized that I wanted to concentrate on music," she said. "I transferred to Wittenberg University to earn a degree in music education." Henderson received her bachelor's degree in 1988. Later, she completed a master's in educational leadership from Antioch McGregor University.



MIKE ULLERY/STAFF PHOTO

Nicklin Learning Center principal Loretta Henderson checks out paperwork in her office last week.

Henderson landed her first education job as a music teacher at Clark Middle School. She was there for seven years until financial problems hit Springfield City

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schools, and she was rified. Next, she worked for two years at Clark State Community College in the Early Childhood Education Center as a lead teacher and mentor for Clark State ECE students. She switched to Dayton Public Schools and taught music K-6 for four years at the Lincoln School for Arts.

During this time, she became the choral director for the Kettering Children's Choir. This led to a job with Kettering City Schools where she taught vocal and general music for six years at four different schools. Henderson was asked to join the district's Leadership Group. "Teachers were nominated by building principals to participate in this program," she said. "We learned skills necessary to become leaders and building administrators." The group worked on book and curriculum studies and problem solved different situations encountered by building leaders.

In 2008, Henderson accepted the building principal's job at Washington Intermediate School in Piqua. "I had three wonderful years at Washington," she said. The district realigned administrators, and Henderson was named the principal at Nicklin for this school year.

Henderson appreciates the differences between her 4th to 6th graders she had at Washington and her kindergarteners at Nicklin. "We have great students in Piqua, and I am truly enjoying the Nicklin students," she said. "The students have an endless supply of energy and enthusiasm."

She credits her staff with meeting the needs of the whole student. "The Nicklin

staff is very dedicated," she said. "Everything they do is for the benefit of the children. We have a commitment to our students to build a positive foundation for the remainder of their years in school."

Special programming happens throughout the year for students. The school year begins with the Careful Corners program which is four days of safety training where the students learn about bus safety, healthy habits, stranger danger, and fire safety. Community helpers such as police officers and firefighters, as well as our school nurse and bus drivers are guest presenters at this event.

Each month, students are recognized at a reading assembly. "We celebrate birthdays, Star Students who have demonstrated the monthly social skill, and students who have met their Family Reading Goal of 30 or more books in a month," she said. "Our students get excited about what they have accomplished." During these assemblies, the students are introduced to a new social skill through a skit performed by the staff. "Last month, the emphasis was on the importance of raising your hand to get the teacher's attention," Henderson said. "This month our focus is on following directions the first time."

At home, Henderson enjoys reading, hiking, and visiting any beach anywhere. She and her husband Rick, a web designer for Curtis Wright Controls, have been married 22 years. They have two daughters. Kayla is a student at Sinclair Community College, and Mara is a student at Studebaker Middle School in Huber Heights.