

Practical experience key to success



MIKE ULLERY/STAFF PHOTO

Lori Westerheide helps some of her class through the lunch line at High Street School last week during the annual Thanksgiving Feast.

BY JOHN HAUER

For the Daily Call
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PIQUA — It is an ever changing world of technology that everyone must adapt to. That even applies to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders at High Street Primary School where Lori Westerheide has been the intervention specialist for the past five years. "We are learning to use touch screen laptops, ELMOS, Smartboards, and electronic Slates," she said. Many of the kids already know how to use this new technology because they have computers, iphones, and Wii games at home."

Westerheide graduated from Minster High School in 1998. She was a member of the Future Homemakers

of America, French Club, Yearbook Club, National Honor Society, and of course, the Future Teachers of America. "I went to the Ohio State University to major in special education," she said. "My older brother and sister had gone there, and my sister Amy had earned a degree in special education."

During her OSU years, Westerheide gained a lot of practical experience working part-time jobs. "For two years, I worked as a teacher's assistant at the OSU Day Care Center," she said. "I would work 7-10 am, then go to classes, then go back and work 3-6 pm. I learned a lot about early childhood education and had hands on experience with the kids." She also worked for the Easter Seals for four years as a personal care attendant



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for an individual with multiple disabilities and as a private nanny for two years.

She earned her bachelor of science degree in special education in 2002, graduating with Magna Cum Laude honors. Westerheide stayed at OSU and completed a master's of education degree in special education a year later.

Westerheide landed her first job as an intervention specialist with Columbus Public Schools working in a self contained Emotional Disturbed Resource room for grades 3-5. "It was a very challenging three years," she said. When her husband switched jobs and started working as an engineer at American Trim in Sidney, the couple moved to Troy. Lori was hired by Piqua City Schools in 2006, and

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became the intervention specialist at High Street.

Today, Westerheide co-teaches reading and math in inclusion classrooms to grades 1-3. Inclusion classrooms have a mixture of students with and without Individual Educational Plans. She also pulls out individual students for pre-teaching and re-teaching activities as well as administering tests.

"I co-teach with three fabulous teachers — Libbey Leininger 3rd grade language arts, Lisa Tabler 2nd grade, and Jennifer Everett 3rd grade math. I also have students in Jill Miller's and Becky Garrett's 1st grade classrooms," Westerheide said. "The biggest challenge is figuring out a schedule and a common planning time, so students can receive appropriate accommodations and succeed in the general education classroom." Westerheide likes co-teaching in different grades. "I get to see the best teaching practices and techniques from a variety of teachers," she said. "I feel lucky that I get to work with the same students for three years while they are at High Street. I already know their strengths and weaknesses at the beginning of each year and just pick up where we stopped at the end of the previous year. It is amazing to see their progress."

Recent technology grants have resulted in the latest equipment being placed at High Street. There are Smartboards in the class-

rooms and laptops that are inexpensive and very user friendly for the young students. "I use the Smartboard every day," she said. "The notebook software is easy to use and makes lesson planning and grading simple." Students complete activities and then print their results instantly. "The students get excited and are very engaged during these lessons," she said. "It motivates the students because it is not just another worksheet. My students have quickly learned how to use the Slates since it is similar to things they have at home like the Wii."

Away from school, Westerheide and her husband Jeremy have been married six years. The couple has a son and a daughter. Isabel is four years old, and Ian recently turned two. This past summer, they coached Isabel's YMCA preschool T-Ball team. The Westerheides have spent a lot of time updating their home in Troy. "We have remodeled the kitchen, the basement, and replaced almost everything," she said. "Over the last six years, we have become quite the do-it-yourselfers."



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