

Ford sees teaching kids as a privilege

BY JOHN HAUER

For the Daily Call
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PIQUA — The banner on the wall in the front of the classroom says it all 'Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.' This sums up Bennett Intermediate School 4th grade teacher Nikki Ford. "It's a hard job, but it's a privilege to teach these kids," she said. "I couldn't see myself doing anything else."

Ford grew up in Piqua and graduated from Piqua High School in 1991. She sang in the choir and played baritone in the band. "I knew I wanted to become a teacher since I always loved



school," she said. "Even when I was young I had an old desk, and I forced my two younger brothers to play school for endless hours." She

"I couldn't see myself doing anything else"

— Nikkie Ford



MIKE ULLERY/STAFF PHOTO

See Ford/Page 11 Nikki Ford reads to her class at Bennett Intermediate School.

Ford

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credits two of her teachers with inspiring her to get into education. "My 5th grade teacher Mindy Fulks showed me that

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learning can be fun," Ford said. "Gail Melgaard was my junior high language arts teacher and neighbor growing up. She motivated me and got me thinking about teaching."

After high school, Ford went to Bowling Green State University and earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education in December 1995. Later, she received a master's degree from Wright State University in the Teacher Leader program. "I chose BG because they are well-known for their School of Education," she said. "I joined a sorority and learned a lot about leadership doing public service activities."

Ford started subbing for the remainder of the school year in January. She became a long term sub at High Street School where she was a Title I reading teacher for the 1996-97 school year. The next year, she was hired full time as a 1st grade teacher at South Street School. After one year, Ford transferred to 4th grade and then moved to Bennett when South Street closed and has been at Bennett ever since.

"I love teaching fourth grade," she said. "The students get excited about school and learning, and of course, every day presents new challenges and rewards." Ford's mentor at Bennett was the late Kathy Rank who was Ohio's Teacher of the Year in 2004. "Kathy helped me grow as a person and as a teacher," Ford said. "She showed me how to develop the skills to

be an effective teacher."

Ford brags about her fellow staff at Bennett. "We work well together, and we are concerned with the whole student, not just their grades," she said. "I'm very lucky to work with such a dedicated group of people."

"My fourth-graders enjoy doing anything hands on," Ford said. "They can relate to all the new technology we use such as the Smartboard, and they still get into an old favorite like making a salt map of Ohio." The students make another map of their own town. "They really get creative about what's in the town, and how it is laid out."

Ford relates the assignments and projects to what the students know in their everyday lives. "It is very special to see their eyes light up when they realize that this is something they can relate to," she said. "It is like

they are saying 'oh, now I get it.'"

Outside the classroom, Ford is co-chairperson of the building's Intervention Assistance Team, which deals with students who may need a little extra help in different areas. She is also a co-advisor of The Leadership Club which works with students to develop their leadership skills with community service projects. Ford is a coordinator of Bennett's Business Partnership with Hartzell Propeller.

At home, Ford lives in Piqua with her cat Louie. Ford's hobbies are reading and going to the movies. She enjoys volunteering as a youth adviser for her church's youth group on Sunday. She spends quality hours with her nieces and nephews Spencer, Addyson, Elleana, MaKenzie, and Cooper who are her kids away from school.