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Class Act

Skills, attitude and encouragement lead the way to education for Piqua native Anderson

**BY JOHN HAUER
For the Daily Call**

PIQUA - Walking into the office of High Street Primary School principal Teresa Anderson, you will notice a picture of her standing in front of the White House in Washington, D.C. She is in a group of educators who were named National Distinguished Principals for the year 2011. It is rewarding to do a job that you love, and it is very nice to have others recognize your success in that job.

Anderson grew up in Piqua and graduated from Lehman Catholic High School in 1985. She was in National Honor Society, on the yearbook staff, played flute and oboe in the marching and concert bands, and was a member of the tennis and basketball teams for the Cavaliers.

"Mrs. Parnell, a friend of my mother's, encouraged me to become a teacher," Anderson said. "She was a teacher at Nicklin School, and she thought I had the skills and attitude to be a good teacher." Anderson entered Wittenberg University and majored in elementary education. "I chose Wittenberg because of the small, friendly campus," she said. In 1989, she earned her bachelor's degree. Later in 1995, she received a master's degree in education administration from the University of Dayton.

Anderson worked hard at Wittenberg and was awarded the Best Senior in Education when she graduated. She landed her first job with Fairlawn Schools teaching 4th grade for three years. Anderson coached basketball for the Jets, and also, coached tennis back at Lehman Catholic.

Changing school systems, Anderson was hired by Piqua as a kindergarten teacher at Nicklin. "It was very interesting that I was teaching in the same room where I was a kindergarten student years before," she said. She was in the classroom for five more years, then, was named principal of Nicklin in 1998. "At the time, Nicklin was a K-5 building, but we were in the process of redistricting, and Nicklin would become a kindergarten-only school," she said.



Mike Ullery/Staff Photo

High Street School principal Teresa Anderson listens to students from Mrs. Garrett's first-grade class as they work on their reading skills in the school library last week. Pictured with Anderson are, clockwise from bottom left, Carli Tucker, Cheyenne Miller and Emma Pierron.

"It was a year of meetings and collaboration with staff and community to make the change. It was an exciting time at Nicklin." In 2011, Anderson switched to principal at High Street.

Early childhood education is a passion for Anderson. "I truly believe that the early years are the most critical times for a child," she said. "We need to put as many resources as possible into educating our youngest students." Anderson emphasizes the importance of the parents since they are their child's 'first' teacher. She was part of a group who brought the Parents as Teachers Program to Piqua. "Through funding from the United Way, this free program provides resources and services for families with children from birth to age 5," she said.

While at Nicklin, Anderson helped develop several new programs, including the Pre-K program. "It was during a time when students as young as four could start kindergarten," she said. "Some of these youngest students did not have all the readiness skills needed for kindergarten, so we developed a two-year program to allow additional time for them to gain the skills they needed to be successful in school."

The Unified Arts program was started to teach kindergarten concepts through music, movement, and art. Mrs. Morgan was the Unified Arts teacher who creatively provided relevant and fun activities for the students which made this a favorite class for many children.

Anderson credits her staff at High Street and those she worked with at Nicklin with wanting what's best for the students. ""We are fortunate to have very dedicated teachers in Piqua who continually work for the success of each student," she said. "I love working with the children. We have great students and a very supportive community."

In 2011, Anderson was named one of two Distinguished Elementary Principals of the Year for the state of Ohio. "We went to Washington, D.C. where we learned about national issues in education and were able to exchange ideas with principals from all over the United States," she said. "The highlight of the trip was a tour of the White House and a reception at the State Department. The whole experience is a highpoint of my career."

At home, Anderson and her husband William, a retired educator and former principal for Huber Heights, have been married seven years. They have two sons, both seniors at Piqua High School. Cody Congdon plays golf for the Indians. Brad Anderson is a member of the golf, bowling, and baseball teams. The family lives in Piqua.