

College Students Benefit from District's ESL Program

There's a similarity between Mount Morris ESL* students and the Houghton students who worked with them this spring. Both groups of students have to take what they learn in the classroom and apply it to the real world. Both seemingly different groups worked together during the spring semester to help one another with a very similar problem.

Two years ago, ESL* teacher Gloria Dancause received a

call from Dr. Jan Buckwalter from Houghton College. Buckwalter was interested in having her TESOL** students observe the Mount Morris ESL program and participate in teaching our English Language Learners (ELL). Dancause invited the students and Buckwalter to work with herself and teacher Theresa Gall. Fast forward two years, and Houghton students are still benefiting from their observations and interactions with MMCS ELL students and faculty.

According to Buckwalter, her students learn more course material by working with Dancause than could have been taught in just a college classroom. In working in an actual classroom, her students are able to ask more in-depth questions.

"My students have the opportunity to create and implement lessons and receive valuable feedback," said Buckwalter. "Gloria not only shares materials, websites and methodologies, but also provides feedback, insight and interactions that help my students move forward as pre-service teachers."

While visiting Mount Morris Central once a week, Houghton students Nuk Kongkaw, Catherine Bennett, and Laura Iseminger observed Dancause through a variety of activities which covered skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing at various levels of proficiency.

"I always wanted to be a teacher," said Iseminger. "I realized how much ESL is needed. I'd love to help students learn English so they can survive in America."

The guests also created lesson plans and did some teaching. They used simple low text, high picture books to instruct and used objects as a way to connect words with visuals.

"I like that it's so interactive and such a small group," said Bennett. "It's very purposeful. Mrs. Dancause does a good job of making



Laura Iseminger (left), Nuk Kongkaw, Gloria Dancause, and Catherine Bennett work with students.

sure the students are on the same page as she is."

Kongkaw has seen the benefits of ESL programs first hand. As a young child, she and her family emigrated from Thailand. They later returned as missionaries to help their native population.

"English is seen as an international language and everyone in Asia is trying to learn it. Students in rural areas [in Asia] are at a disadvantage," she said. "I've been given so many

advantages that I wanted to share them with others."

All three agree that the time has benefitted them by giving them a chance to apply what they've learned in the classroom to a real world setting. Bennett said they've learned about the theory of teaching TESOL, but now they can put their knowledge to use.

"I want to make connections about what I'm learning and my experiences here," said Bennett.

Dancause has discussed with the three students the developmental English skills needed to become proficient and the importance of meeting various benchmarks that lead ESL students to having independence in mainstream classrooms. Dancause said the goal is to take the ESL students forward, which in a way, is also the goal for the Houghton students looking to gain experience in the field.

"Any opportunity to engage in real time active learning is beneficial," said Dancause. "To have worked with another culture, classroom teacher, tools and materials is a great way to develop insight on the gifts that a teacher develops over time."

*English as a Second Language

**Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Winners Announced in Skills Competition

Students demonstrated a wide array of technical and career-related skills during the Annual Skills Competition on March 3 at the Genesee Valley Educational Partnership (BOCES) Centers in Mount Morris and Batavia. Among the contests was a Chili Cook-off in Culinary Arts, Electronic Portfolios in Computer Information Systems, Speed Burning in Metal Trades, and Woodsmen's Events in the Conservation program. First and second place winners were awarded medals.

Cosmetology student Jamie Follett placed first in one of several Mannequin Styling competitions. Charles (Nick) Bonner, a Metal Trades student, took second place in the Speed Burning competition. Congratulations to Jamie and Nick for their accomplishments!