**Introduction to Education (EDST1001)**

Professor Robert Wight College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services (CECH)

Story By: Merrill Warren (fall 2014)

If you think you want to be an educator and you are enrolled in the University of Cincinnati’s College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services, Educational Studies 1001 is an undergraduate course you will be required to take.

This course is designed to provide knowledge about the development and structure of education in the United States. It further investigates the profession of teaching, school governance, socio-cultural and philosophical foundations of education as well as current educational reform. Students are required to participate in 10 hours of field experience outside the class.

Robert Wight, Adjunct Instructor and Educational Studies Ph.D. candidate, is now in his third semester of teaching the course.

Wight said the field experience is required to make sure students know what they are getting themselves into. Some people think they want to be teachers, but they may realize it is not for them. “This class really introduces people into education from a historical and philosophical point of view, specifically in this country,” Wight said.

Some of the current community partners are Reds’ Urban Youth Academy, Hughes High School, the Arlitt Child and Family Research Center and Girl Scouts of America. In these settings undergraduate students are given an opportunity to build relationships with the K-12 students.

They may merely observe the classroom activities, or they may be actively involved in the educational process. This is dependent upon the teacher or individual in charge.

“These service learning opportunities help to take this to the next level because students will be in a real classroom. They’ll see how teachers are dressed, how they interact with the students and how the teacher manages their classroom and deals with behavioral issues. Students really get a taste of what it’s like to work in the real world,” Wight said.

Zoë Anderson, middle school education language arts and social studies major, has already been part of the Bearcat Buddies tutoring program. Bearcat Buddies is an important program of the Center for Community Engagement (CCE). A Bearcat Buddies tutor is assigned a specific time slot (an hour) once a week at a specific CPS location. The tutor is then assigned a student with whom they work with for the duration of the semester. She has done this for several semesters. This semester Anderson went to Rees E. Price Elementary where she worked with a second grade boy on reading and math skills. They spent the first 15 minutes on math and the remaining 45 minutes on reading.

Anderson said she enjoys the classroom discussion and how it cover a variety of issues you may deal with in the real world.

“The biggest thing that I take away from this course into the rest of my life is that one can never underestimate what baggage a student brings to the classroom. Their position in life determines more than the teacher’s lessons ever will. The focus of education, therefore, is reaching one's students in ways that are relevant to them,” she said.

Wight expects his students to construct a twenty-page portfolio of personal experience and 10 thinking journals about their service-learning experience. While this is very labor intensive for an introductory level class, Wight explained this is preparation for the amount of paper work required of teachers.
Anderson said working at a school where 97 percent of the students live below the poverty line presents many challenges. The tutors have to figure out ways to reach their students.

“These students are often not receiving educational help at home, so you as the tutor have to fill that role to some degree. It’s a lot of pressure, but the most important thing is making a positive connection with the student. If I can relate to the student and help them see that their education is important, then I feel like I'm filling my role,” she said.

Wright said people in general learn better through doing, through performance, through action. In addition to class work, Wight always tries to include guest speakers and field trips. In the past he has taken his class to Hughes High School to talk to teachers about what it is like in a classroom setting. Students get to hear different opinions and have multiple discussions with educators.

“It is good practice not to rely just on one mode of knowledge creation or transmission,” he said. “We don’t want them to just go back to their high schools in the suburbs necessarily. We want them to be exposed to different contexts,” Wight said.

Some of these students are going to be teachers, some of them will not be teachers. The goal is to get them into schools or out into the community.