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Office of University
Communications

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GWU School of Education Classes Collaborate with Teachers and Students at Washington Elementary

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – The Gardner-Webb University School of Education is working with a local elementary school in Cleveland County, N.C., to provide meaningful learning opportunities for future teachers prior to their student-teaching experience.

a GWU student reads to a kindergartener

Each week, three GWU classes travel to Washington Elementary School near Waco, N.C., during their normal instructional time on Mondays and Tuesdays. Dr. Lane Wesson's Language Arts Methods class, Dr. Cindy McKinney's Fine Arts Integration class, and Dr. Jason Parker's Social Studies Methods class are each involved in the collaboration, which helps provide much-needed classroom exposure to pre-service teachers well in advance of their 16-week student-teaching experience.

As GWU School of Education Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, Parker believes the partnership is proving to be tremendously valuable for teaching majors. "Clinical experiences are already built into every course in the education curriculum," Parker noted. "But this expanded partnership offers a comprehensive, up-close interaction between our majors and the students and teachers at a school prior to the student-teaching semester."

Gardner-Webb alum Dr. Chris Bennett serves as principal at Washington, and he agrees that the partnership has been

3rd graders at Washington Elementary

mutually beneficial. "Our students have enjoyed working with the Gardner-Webb students," Bennett offered. "Our focus is on small-group work, and the School of Education students have jumped in during their time here to help students grow and become more successful. Beyond the curriculum, the student-to-student interaction furthers the relationship building through formal and informal conversations."

GWU students have received observational and hands-on experience with guided reading and math groups, and they have witnessed a variety of methods for integrating the arts in a range of subjects. In addition, the partnership includes professional development for

teachers, presented by Parker and Dr. Kelly Clark, assistant professor of education. Leaders at Washington Elementary and Gardner-Webb expect that the partnership will continue to grow and evolve as it is further refined.

“This will be a continual work in progress as we provide real-world experiences for the GWU students and help them to become great educators—hopefully here in Cleveland County,” Bennett stated. “We are very appreciative of their work with our students during the course of the week. Our teachers have enjoyed the professional development opportunities offered each month and we are looking forward to watching the partnership continue to grow. We have great students, staff and a wonderful school community, and we are very appreciative of Gardner-Webb’s work with us as we seek to become one of the top schools in the area.”

Parker shares Bennett’s sentiments. “The GWU School of Education appreciates our partnership with Cleveland County Schools,” he shared. “We are grateful for their willingness to provide valuable clinical experiences to our pre-service teachers as they work to acquire useful techniques and strategies for the classroom and develop stronger skills in communication and personal relationships.”

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university that prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective leaders and compassionate servants in the global community. Emphasizing a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics, Gardner-Webb ignites learning and service opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.