



Early Childhood Education Model of Success

Lehigh Carbon Community College

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Lehigh Carbon Community College Fowler Model

The Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC) Fowler Model is unique physically and philosophically. Housed in the multi-million dollar Fowler Education Center, the Early Childhood Education, Education, Special Education, Paraeducator, and Early Childhood/Early Intervention majors have dedicated Teacher Education classrooms that are home-bases for courses. Dedicated classrooms, common areas, and hallways afford the opportunity for rotating displays of students' work and model documentation panels about student learning and department-wide projects. Students' classrooms are connected to our on-site Early Learning Center preschool laboratory through a real time camera system and one room houses a wall of one-way glass windows. Starting in their first semester, Early Childhood Education students who are not employed in the field do two hour labs per course in the Early Learning Center.

The Fowler Center was designed with auxiliary rooms that are used for break-out sessions for student classes and are utilized by the children. These rooms include a Community Room (for large gathering events including monthly Town Hall meetings for all Teacher Education majors), a Fine Art Studio (includes a recycling station for student use), an Assistive Technology room (features exemplary multi-level assistive technology), a Performing Arts Studio (floor space for movement and creative dramatics), an Open Air Classroom (outdoor space for classes to meet and to explore nature), a Culinary Cove (a kitchen where students and children do cooking and nutrition lessons and students bake for charitable events), and a large Research/Resource Room (houses hundreds of theory and curriculum books, children's literature, computer stations, and die cut, laminating, and book-binding machines). This Research/Resource Room is a hub of intellectual learning and social bonding among students who use it between classes, in the evenings, on Saturdays and during class time for specific projects (three hour class scheduling blocks often affords this hands-on time). Another unique Fowler Center feature is one office suite for all Teacher Education faculty, full- and part-time; faculty in all disciplines meet regularly as a cohesive unit.

Implementation Dates

2007 – Present

How the Model is Innovative and/or Unique

Philosophically, the Early Childhood Education (ECE) department infuses literacy “Leading with Literacy” into every course. Connecting to the Reggio approach, a department-wide topic of study is employed for each year and is interwoven into various aspects of each course. Another unique aspect is mentoring by faculty. Through the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, LCCC has been awarded several personnel preparation grants, the most recent to fund ECE/Early Intervention degrees (Project SET SAIL). As part of these grants, students participated in small group mentoring programs that have shown a statistically significant impact on retention and GPA. Without funding, LCCC continues this program by connecting students to each other and to faculty through small group participation in advocacy and charity events. Students work in small groups with faculty for events such as the preparing for the Lights of Hope cancer benefit, adopting of a Miracle League baseball team, baking cookies to send to former students in the military, making literacy bags for a local family agency, and volunteering at professional conferences at the college. Because of these endeavors and because of the Research/Resource Room where faculty and students engage informally, close bonds are formed. Because of this philosophy, alumni come back weekly to work to meet other alumni and faculty and to plan lessons in the Research/Resource Room. The utilization of this room to lead theory to practice and this connection of faculty, graduates, and current students truly make LCCC special.

Indications of Success

The success of this model has been verified by NAEYC. The Early Childhood Education and ECE/Early Intervention A.A.S. degrees were accredited by NAEYC’s Commission on Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation in March 2009 and the children’s Early Learning Center was re-accredited by NAEYC in July 2011.

How the Model is Replicable

LCCC strives to model high quality early childhood education in an environment where students and children thrive. The Fowler Education Center was opened in fall 2007. The Fowler Education Center’s funding was secured by private donations that is an avenue that could be pursued by other institutions. However, the philosophy has been developing for over 20 years and was in place when Early Childhood Education was housed in one classroom that also contained cabinets for resource books. Without funding, this model could be replicated in other colleges by seeking to set aside dedicated ECE classrooms so that projects can be displayed and students have a gathering place. Colleges can also offer mentoring opportunities in and out of class time for small group work with faculty. The LCCC Fowler Model is philosophically different; the physical environment is beautiful but it is the student learning and the relationships within the space that make the model truly unique.