

Excellence in Teaching

Linda Cress

Teacher Education

Division Chair, Dr. Gwenda Rice says of Linda, "You have been an exemplary mentor to the students in your Professional Development Seminar (PDS). I always know that if a student is in your PDS, he or she will be well taken care of and nurtured. On behalf of the division, thank you all that you do for our students. They are very fortunate to have you as their PDS leader."

Linda joined the Western Oregon University faculty in January 2001. She loves teaching at Western because she sees WOU as a place where students realize their dreams. Linda is committed to public education and is thrilled to help students attain their goals. She says, "I love the students at Western. As PDS (Professional Development Seminar) leader, I have a chance to teach and mentor students for a full year while they are in the Education Program. We develop a close bond during this time, and it's so much fun to watch them blossom into confident, professional educators! I enjoy hearing from former students, now teachers, who update me on their professional and personal lives."

Linda currently teaches three courses -- Assessment and Instruction (ED 418), Authorization Specialty and Classroom Management (ED 450), and Content Pedagogy III (ED 436) -- in addition to a seminar in the undergraduate Education Program (Professional Development Seminar, ED 426). She also supervises students in their field experience in Salem area schools. Prior to joining the faculty at WOU, she taught in the Educational Curriculum and Instruction program at Texas A & M University. Linda has also taught at private and public elementary schools in Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia. She has a M.S. in Education from the University of Virginia and a B.S. in Education from the University of Idaho.

Linda brings a fresh enthusiasm for teaching and a collegial spirit her colleagues appreciate. She enjoys being part of the team in the College of Education.

Why I Love Teaching

I have the opportunity to impart teaching skills and then to observe my students putting these same skills to use in the classroom. I strongly believe that enthusiastic teachers who provide engaging and challenging hands-on activities will promote optimum learning in the classroom. Whenever possible, I try to model such teaching for my students. It is both very humbling and satisfying to realize that I not only have an impact on WOU students but also on young students in today's (and tomorrow's) classrooms. I believe I am part of the most important profession on Earth! As such, I need to do my very best to help our students feel prepared for their teaching careers.

Occasionally I will hear from students I taught in elementary grades many years ago in other states. Just this past year I received a letter from one of my first graders in Texas in 1978. She told me that she had always wanted to be a first grade teacher like me and that she was finally changing careers in order to pursue her dream. Another student (my former third grader) contacted me to tell me she was almost finished with her education program in Louisiana. I certainly didn't realize at the time that I was serving as a career role model. My students could see how much I loved teaching, and I feel very proud to have influenced them to consider this career. That is extremely rewarding!

What students say about Linda

Students value Linda as a mentor. Her student evaluations of teaching and the many cards and letters she receives from them, demonstrate the impact she has on future teachers.

(2002 – From a student evaluation)

PDS is fun with Linda. She is like a mom to each of us, and she genuinely cares for us and our progress in the Education Program.

There is no way Linda could be any more helpful! She has been very understanding and empathetic towards us. She has made fun situations out of a stressful term.

(2003 – Ashley Jaqua)

I have really learned a lot about myself and particularly my writing ability with you as my PDS leader. Writing has never been a strong ability of mine and I know that I still have places that I can really improve on, but I wanted to thank you for keeping on me and helping me improve. The rationales for my Term I Portfolio were not horrible, but you knew that I could do so much better and you called me on it. Not only did you ask me to rewrite them for Term II, but you assisted me in how to improve the rationales and encouraged me to be able to accomplish those rewrites. Thank you for pushing me and guiding me to be better.



(2005 – Student evaluation)

Linda is incredibly organized and prepared. She is very helpful and a good resource.

(2006 – Notes from my PDS)

Abra Litvin wrote:

Thank you so much for all of the wonderful things you have done to be an awesome PDS leader! I am thoroughly sad that we are losing you next term, but I know no one can fill your shoes.

I will miss your kind, sweet nature and amazing understanding (letting us turn in work samples up until midnight)!

You have done so much to make this a fun, enjoyable experience and I'll never forget all you have done. Thanks a million.

Kelly McMahon wrote:

Where do I begin? You have been such an amazing PDS leader. My teaching has been greatly improved by your influence. You have been more than a mentor; you have been a friend and colleague. Thank you so much for the impact you've had on my life. I hope we stay in touch in the years to come because you mean so much to me!

Megan Farnsworth wrote:

You have been so patient with all of my questions and thoughts. I definitely feel very lucky to have had a PDS leader who cares so much. Your demeanor and dedication are an inspiration to us all.

I'll always remember you and I hope we always keep in touch. Good luck with PDS's of the future, and thank you so much for everything you've done.

Stephanie Brewer wrote:

I just want to thank you for all the love and support that you've poured out on us over the last term! Your dedication to your students is clearly evident; you put so much time into making our lives easier. I really appreciate how you are so willing to put in the extra effort to improve the ED Program and to support your students. You provide an excellent example of what a good teacher should be.

I am so excited that we will be able to work together again next term—the blessings just never end! With your help and guidance, I know that I can improve as a teacher so that I can better serve my students, which is what teaching is really all about. Thank you so much for your continual love and support.

