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## Helping Hand for Home-schoolers

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# HELPING HAND FOR HOME- SCHOOLERS

BY HEIDIE RAINE '23



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It's been an academic year like no other. Concerns about the coronavirus pandemic have shifted much of the focus on education to the home. Cedarville teacher-candidates have been a part of this massive shift. But the University's commitment to home-based education can be traced far beyond the current crisis.

Cedarville has a faithful and rich tradition of supporting homeschooling parents with events and classes that strengthen and reinforce their educational investment in their kids.

## MATH DAY

Homeschool math day, created in 2011 by Lori (Brown) Ferguson '98, Assistant Dean and Assistant Professor of Education, is one popular and growing example of these educational enrichment events. At the event, homeschoolers from

### It's really a win-win.

*Lori (Brown) Ferguson '98*

preschool to eighth grade rotate between six stations over a two-hour period, led by Ferguson's senior education students. Each station focuses on different age-appropriate math-content areas, and students fill take-home bags with prizes and educational materials to help continue the learning at home.

"When I first started teaching at Cedarville, I had a desire to include what my students were learning with experience in a way that could also benefit homeschool families in the area," Ferguson noted. "It's really a win-win. My students get to practice teaching while the homeschool students get to learn from multiple teachers in stations that spark interest."

## MULTI-AGE PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Teresa (Cooper) Clark '75, Associate Professor of Kinesiology, and students in her Multi-Age Physical Education (MAPE) course serve homeschool kids ages 5 to 12 each spring. Their homeschool physical education courses have been a community favorite for the last decade and a half, running from early March to late April.

“The children come to the Callan gym and are divided into four groups by age, which our Cedarville students rotate in teaching for a total of 21 sessions,” Clark shared. “The great social and physical aspects of organized learning and playing with peers has made this course grow. We had to cap our enrollment at 120 students in spring 2019, and we continually receive amazing feedback from parents.”

## READING TUTORS

As part of Megan Brown’s reading tutoring program, which operated on a one-on-one basis this year via Zoom, Cedarville education students provided 10 half-hour tutoring sessions in October to seven first- through third-grade homeschool students.

“Our sessions included two assessment periods so students were able to design and implement the most effective tutoring plan,” Brown, Assistant Professor of Education, said. “Findings showed that our homeschool students were reading more fluently, were more excited about reading than before, and were reading more sight words. It’s an excellent opportunity for parents and their kids to discover new educational ideas and to learn from someone else.”

Brown’s students also host a family literacy night each semester in local public schools that mirror Ferguson’s math nights, and this year’s was specifically for homeschool families, following a solar system theme with seven stations of reading-based activities.

## COLLEGE NOW

Reaching beyond the local and younger homeschool community, Cedarville’s dual-enrollment College Now program provides seventh- through 12th-grade students from all educational backgrounds the opportunity to enroll in online college courses at a discounted price.

“Often, homeschool families struggle with how to fill their older students’ schedules,” Stephen Buettell '14, Director of College Now, shared. “We have an advising meeting with every student in our dual-enrollment program to help them pick the right courses to build their schedules and get ahead.”

The educational benefits of College Now are noteworthy: Students who dual-enroll in high school statistically have better GPAs their freshman year of college.

“But there’s more than just the academic benefit,” Buettell added. “Some of the things we communicate with the students are familiarizing themselves with new standards, working on set deadlines, and growing in self-advocacy.”

## CONTINUED SUPPORT

While COVID-19 has certainly reshaped education, deferring some of Cedarville’s homeschool events and moving others online, the University’s commitment to supporting home educators has never been higher.

Kevin Jones, Dean of the School of Education, has interacted with public, private, and homeschool students in his diverse pedagogical experiences, both professionally

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*Kevin Jones*

and personally. When the virus hit in March, he and his wife, Demica, led a six-week Zoom session to guide new and seasoned home-educating parents alike in understanding their children, the rhythm of learning, and grading practices.

“My family is personally homeschooling this year, and we are working to find needs and fill them,” Jones shared. “We’re reaching out to homeschool families to see how we can best serve them. Different families will cling to their preferred philosophies and curriculum, but we just want to ask the question: ‘What are they using, and how can we help them with it?’”

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