

Building Bridges:

CECH and Princeton School District Partner to Prepare Tomorrow's Teachers

CECH is blazing new trails with a unique program that gives Middle Childhood Education majors an in-depth head start on their professional careers. Inspired by a partnership between the CECH Secondary Education Program and Hughes High School, the School of Education is partnering with the Princeton City School District to embed MCE majors in Princeton Elementary and Middle School across their junior and senior years.

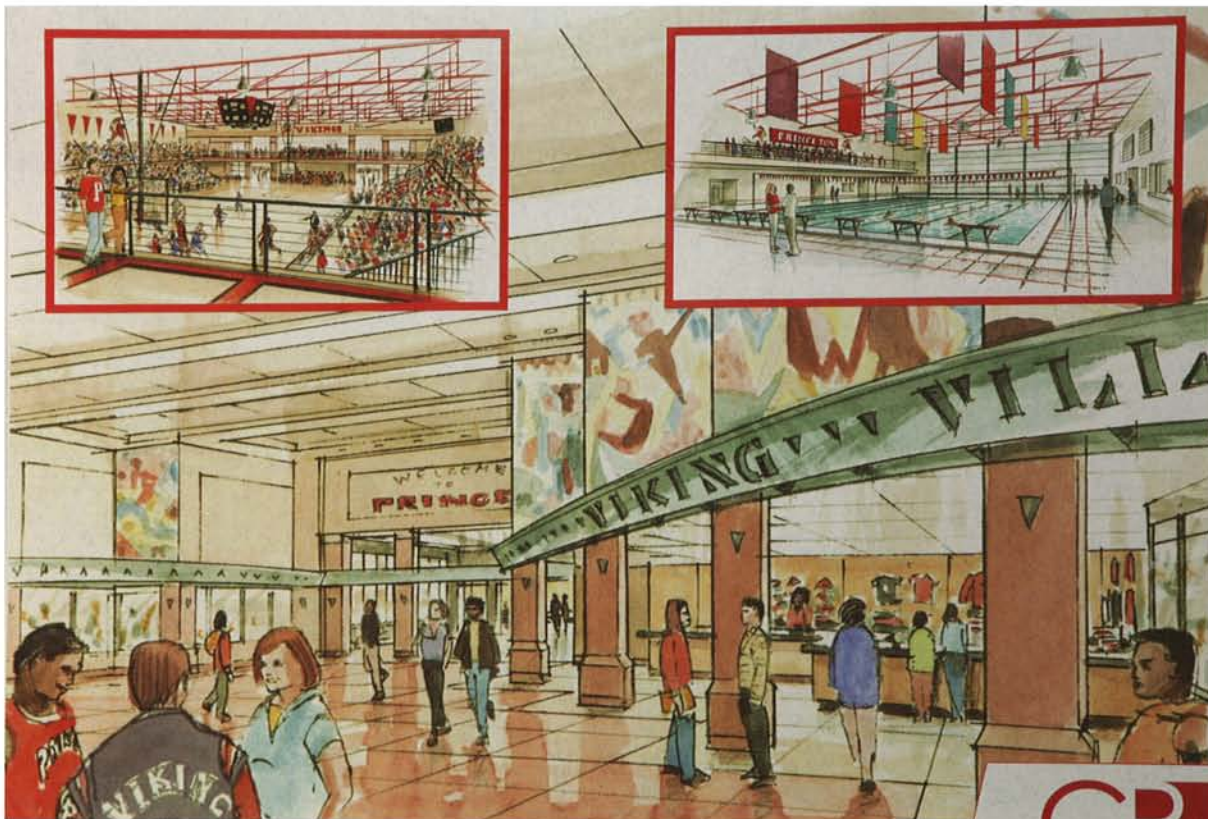
Playful partners: Carla C. Johnson (CECH Program Coordinator), William Sprankles (6-12 Principal), Marni Durham (6-8 Principal)

Previously, students were dispersed across the Cincinnati region for field and student-teaching experience. Program Coordinator, Dr. Carla C. Johnson, says the Middle Childhood Education (MCE) program wanted students to have more common field-based experiences in an authentic,

high-quality middle school setting. The partnership was spearheaded by Dr. Amy Crouse, Assistant Superintendent, William Sprankles, 6-12 Principal, and Marni Durham, 6-8 Principal, as well as support from Dr. Gary Pack, Superintendent and the Princeton Board of Education.



Because Princeton is one of the most diverse school districts in the Cincinnati region, Johnson calls it "a great setting for students to get a feel for the range of students they'll encounter when they become classroom teachers." Each year, 60-70 School of Education students pair up with 30 of the school district's best teachers, providing a ratio of two students for every one teacher. Students will be placed in Princeton for either their junior field experience or their full year student teaching placement in the senior year. The program provides Princeton middle school students more individualized attention, while giving MCE students a great mentoring experience with master teachers, a boon



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to both UC and the school district in light of increasing classroom sizes and a growing diversity of students, some of whom speak English as a second language.

"It's a win win for both Princeton and for UC. Our students get a high-quality experience and the teachers within the Princeton system get more support in the classroom," says Johnson. "The partnership provides more opportunities to have context for the different strategies and concepts they learn in their coursework."

Johnson credits CECH Field-Placement Coordinator Karen Haring and Associate Dean Holly Johnson for their tireless efforts to make the partnership a reality and a success. Starting next year, the success of the program will reach new heights. Princeton is building a new middle school that will feature a dedicated classroom where many CECH- MCE students will spend their entire senior years fulfilling coursework requirements—a very rare

and unique arrangement for schools of education. The enhanced collaboration will provide invaluable curriculum-development and classroom-management experience for School of Education students. What's more, CECH will continue to provide professional development for Princeton middle school teachers related to implementing problem-based learning and curriculum development.

Princeton associate superintendent, Dr. Amy Crouse, says the collaboration helps kids become constructive, innovative 21st century learners and can put college within reach of the school district's racially and socioeconomically diverse student body. "What higher education can bring in is the big picture, the research behind it, the *'have you thought about'* kind of application piece that we often don't have the time to slow down and think about," says Crouse. "I think there's always a synergy that happens when you're dealing with an outside organization that has a similar mission but with a

different take on it."

Having been on the other side, Crouse, a CECH alumna, identifies with the overall benefit to UC student teachers. The School of Education "can start to prepare teachers for the way we (a diverse district like Princeton) need it. It gets (CECH) students actively involved with students of today, so it buys credibility."

Johnson has also worked with Princeton administrators and teachers to develop curriculum for an "innovation" course to be taught at the Middle School for the first time this fall. Additionally, Johnson has loaned the school district iPads for every student in the course to expose them to technology to which they might not otherwise have access.