June 5, 2014

Book Ends Program is a Win-Win

Karen C. Waters, Sacred Heart University
Book Ends Program is a Win-Win

Connecticut Literacy Specialist Program candidate Ann Stiltner and Nicolas Miguel read together as part of the Book Ends program.

News Story: June 5, 2014

Karen Waters, a clinical assistant professor of education at Sacred Heart University and director of the Connecticut Literacy Specialist Program, has been giving back to the community through an initiative she began back in 2008 called Book Ends. The Book Ends program was first developed in response to a state requirement for state literacy certification for aspiring teachers pursuing advanced reading certification in Connecticut. Candidates needed to fulfill a 36-hour clinical experience by working with diverse struggling readers. The Book Ends program uses tutors, who are certified teachers and are enrolled in Sacred Heart’s CT Literacy Specialist program. They help children in grades 1-6 from the surrounding area.

“Book Ends is as much a required course for aspiring reading specialists as it is an outreach program to the community,” said Waters. “We have been able to establish a positive connection with the students and the parent community in this area.”

Book Ends is a site-based University reading clinic that provides a nurturing and interactive environment that empowers children to increase their reading achievement through multimodal and research-based practices in literacy. Trained to administer multiple assessments, certified teachers pursuing advanced literacy CT State Certification provide one-on-one instruction that considers students’ interests and strengths while targeting the foundational skills of the common core state standards and the comprehension anchor standards. Each child is partnered with a certified teacher who shares the philosophy that children learn to read by reading and that success comes from many opportunities to practice. Weekly tutoring sessions last 90 minutes, and the children receive take-home materials to practice newly acquired skills at home.

“Book Ends not only satisfies a state clinical requirement for candidates enrolled in the University reading certification program, but it provides a necessary and valuable service to the community,” said Waters. “This program provides outreach and tutoring to struggling readers for the purpose of advancing their reading achievement. At the last class session, the students were
so sad to say good-bye. They loved the idea of “going to college” once a week. They realized that they had important work to do and that their tutors were there to help them become better readers.”

Waters hopes to expand the program to SHU undergraduate students who are planning to pursue initial certification in elementary education. Expansion of this program would allow the program to run beyond the scope of the academic year and provide summer programming for area children who are having difficulty with reading.