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For Immediate Release

When Teachers Teach Teachers, Students Learn Better

University Park, October 25, 2006 - Samantha Reda loves her job. She is the Literacy Facilitator and reading teacher at Bloom High School in Chicago Heights.

"This is my dream job. I wanted to stay in the area and I wanted to impact students' lives the same way my life was impacted by my teachers."

Reda grew up in the community and graduated from Bloom Trail High School. "Some of the teachers I work with now were teachers when I was in school. I wanted to come back and be a part of the good work that goes on here."

While Reda currently lives in Bourbonnais, much of her life revolves around the high school and the students. Her husband, Joe, is the Bloom High School District 206 Athletic Director.

"There is always a game or school function. We are here so much. Sometimes we feel as if we live at the school, but we would not have it any other way."

Becoming a better teacher and helping her colleagues gain effective skills are important to Reda. Since graduating from the University of Iowa, she has earned her master's degree in reading from Saint Xavier in Chicago and is currently taking advanced CRISS training at Governors State University in University Park. Not only is Reda able to use the CRISS strategies in her own classroom, she is also learning how to train her colleagues.

According to Dr. Connie Mietlicki, Assistant Professor of English and Secondary Education at GSU and Director of the Teacher Quality Enhancement Partnership which sponsors the training, "CRISS (Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies) is a program that increases student learning through enhanced teacher effectiveness. The focus is on the student becoming more involved and active in class. The training improves teacher quality from which the students benefit."

Reda witnessed the positive effects of CRISS methods in her own classroom at Bloom. "Reading scores jumped an average of four grade levels in one year. This leads to improved attitudes about learning and school. Students are excited about learning."

One reason Reda believes that the CRISS training is so effective is the ease with which it can be used in the classroom.

"After a two-day training session at Governors State, I can use the strategies in school and see the results. These methods are easy to incorporate in the classroom and easy for students to learn."

According to Reda, students gain learning strategies that they can use from one subject to the next when teachers use CRISS strategies in the classroom. "These skills are not limited to reading. They are useful in math, science, history, and English. We teach students to understand their thinking process to perform better at all grades and in all content areas."

Because of the effectiveness of this program across subject areas, Bloom School District encouraged Reda to become a level one CRISS trainer. As a trainer, she will be able to train other district educators in the CRISS strategies.

"Teachers need professional development opportunities that are accessible and effective. As a trainer, I can bring a proven program to my colleagues."

Reda also noted that CRISS training is useful to parents as well. "I am able to give parents information and methods that help them assist their children at home. Everyone knows how stressful homework can be. Providing parents with good tools helps their children learn at home."

The extensive CRISS training Reda received was sponsored by the Department of Education funded Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant at GSU. "The TQE Grant Program shows how dedicated Governors State University is to keeping our community strong. It is great to see the collaboration between the high schools and the university to help teachers and students succeed."

"Fifty percent of all teachers are not working in classrooms after five years. They often leave for lack of training and support," explains Mietlicki. "Through this program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, we are able to work with teachers and offer them effective training, increased communication, and avenues of support."

For more information about the Teacher Quality Enhancement Partnership and CRISS training at Governors State University, call (708) 534-6975.

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