

## New Kindergarten Teacher Loves Her Job at School

by Jim Link

Three salient impressions quickly emerge when one is talking with Dawn Reichle, rookie kindergarten teacher at Greenbelt Elementary School.

Reichle is a paradox. She loves her new job. Yet her new job frustrates her enormously.

Paradoxically, although Reichle has only three months' experience as a full-time teacher, she can rely on an enviable amount of prior experience to help get her sea legs. Even before she graduated from the College of Notre Dame (Baltimore) in May 2010, she nannied autistic pre-school children (3 to 5 years old, pre-verbal) for four years. "I loved it," she says. "I could do my college schoolwork while the children napped."

Reichle also counseled children for several summers in Howard County summer camps. Then she became pregnant during her time student teaching at Hillcrest Elementary School in Baltimore County. Her son Jonathan is now 15 months old.

Furthermore, Reichle substitute taught "everywhere" for a full year in Howard and Prince George's Counties. "I learned so much, saw so much, was exposed to so many different instructional

strategies. I taught in so many different classrooms and worked under a variety of administrators. I was very fortunate," she says.

In Greenbelt Reichle loves her endlessly curious, creative, squirmy kindergarten students. She is very grateful to her "team" – her co-kindergarten teachers. "I get a great deal of support and they have lots of different ideas." One of these excellent ideas is the Thanksgiving feast – turkey in the cafeteria – they were planning to throw for their 20 kids.

Reichle also admires GES's new principal, Monica Gaines. "She's very open-minded and flexible," she says. "Her policies are not etched in stone and she's not afraid to think outside the box." She especially likes Principal Gaines's motto, "Teamwork is the Dreamwork," and the "College Hallway" Gaines has established. "It's designed to inspire our kids to go to college," Reichle says. "I like to think that, as a rookie like me, she's still sorting things out."

The frustrating aspect of her job is what Reichle call the "poli-

tics of teaching" or teachers' mandatory responsibilities related to satisfying county rules and regulations. "Before I became a full-time teacher I did lesson plans and created bulletin boards, of course, but I did not expect so many quasi extra-curricular duties, so to speak."

In addition, taking attendance, filling out report cards, keeping a daily log and attending numerous meetings – these are a constant effort. As one example, Reichle cites the challenge of planning a field trip. "You (the team teachers) have to collect money, get chaperones, get security clearances, collect medical forms . . . . The pace here is fast and furious."

Teaching first and fourth gradés was mellow by comparison. With "no down time" in kindergarten, she smiles broadly as she adds, "I wish I had a maid 24-7 in the classroom."

After giving me this new appreciation of the complexity and demands of teaching, Reichle bursts out laughing before commuting home to Columbia. "Now I have to pick up Jonathan and do it all over again!"



**Dawn Reichle**

