

CEHS Teacher of the Year Celebrates Variety in Her Students | CEHS

08/14/2015



What some might view as a mixed bag, Dr. Sarah Tulane sees as beautiful variety.

She works with students who are young and not-so-young, online and face-to-face. She prepares her students to work in the fields of gerontology, community education, graduate school, marriage and family therapy and many other careers. This spring, she was named the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services Teacher of the Year.

"I couldn't ask for a better job. It really feels like a dream job," Tulane said.

She is an assistant professor in the Family, Consumer, and Human Development department. She has taught a range of courses, including Balancing Work and Family, Human Development across the Lifespan, Infancy and Child Development, Middle Childhood, Adolescence, Research Methods, and Family Life Education Methods. And she loves it.

Whether she's teaching in person or online, Tulane strives to deliver a quality education. Her primary responsibility

is online, which means that she and her students will be working at different times. She tries to compensate by responding promptly to their questions.

She provides opportunities for her students to chat by phone, pose questions online and start discussions with fellow students. In one class, she had her students develop teaching outlines and upload video clips on a class wiki page. They were asked to explain why they chose their videos.

"I learned a lot of ways to become an effective communicator, listener and presenter," wrote a student who took her Family Life Educators course. "She pushed me to get outside of my 'bubble' and explore different teaching methods."

Students also learn from each other. "My students are resources," Tulane said. "One thing I really love about online classes is the variety of students I get in there. ... It would be such a shame to let that go to waste in my class." They come from all walks of life, from different points on the lifespan. Some are parents, who can comment on raising children or going through childbirth. If she has graduate teaching assistants, she finds out what their specializations are and encourages her students to ask questions.

"It makes discussion awesome," Tulane said.

Even among such a diverse group of learners bound for various careers, there are things they all need to know. They have to learn to deal with diverse populations, recognize their biases and overcome them, be prepared to deal with burnout, make ethical decisions, respect boundaries, work with people whose values are different from their own, and recognize needs.

Along the way, students gain experience in a field Tulane truly loves. "It's just so fascinating to me," she said. "You can learn about play, and then you can go and play... I'm just so lucky I get to do what I do."