



MY HCC

# about HCC

Home :: About HCC :: Campus News :: In Early Childhood, Education Gives an Edge

- About HCC
- PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
- COLLEGE INFORMATION
- GETTING AROUND
- CAMPUS NEWS
- CAMPUS HAPPENINGS
- EMPLOYMENT AT HCC
- DEPARTMENTS & ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
- STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- Programs
- Admission
- Life at HCC
- Campus Resources & Library



## Campus News

### In the field of Early Childhood, education gives an edge

Studies have indicated that early childhood teachers who earn their associate or bachelor degrees provide better quality education to pre-K age children, and advance more quickly in their careers.

Recent Holyoke Community College graduate Kathleen Stark, of South Hadley, might be the perfect example of just how powerful an edge education can provide. Stark earned her Lead Teacher Certification at Holyoke Community College, and in May graduated from HCC with an Associate in Early Childhood Education.



After receiving her degree, Stark's career soared and her approach to teaching children changed considerably. "I went from a teachers' aide to the director of a center and now to the coordinator of a school age program at the Valley Opportunity Council in Chicopee," Stark said.

Stark is one of seven HCC participants in the Developing Early Childhood Educators (DECE) program, a program facilitated by the Regional Employment Board and funded by a grant from the Workforce Competitive Trust Fund. Of the four participants who graduated in May, three are continuing their studies here in the fall.

Rosemary Hernandez, program manager for DECE, said HCC is one of eight area colleges participating in the collaborative. The program, which provides a variety of supports including financial assistance, has helped more than 190 early childhood educators earn their credentials or degrees.

"HCC offers the educational opportunities, the flexibility and the programs needed to help these early childhood educators understand the college system and earn their degrees and credentials," Hernandez said. "Most college programs are based on the needs of day students. This program was tailored to individuals already in the workforce."

Many of the participants who attended HCC knew in advance of its successful Early Childhood Education program under the direction of Education Department Chairman Tricia Kiefer. In addition, participants said HCC's Preschool Enrichment Team career counselors provided much-needed guidance and support.

As for Stark, she said HCC's tutoring programs in the Math and Writing Center helped her get through challenging classes. "I loved everything about the program at HCC," said Stark, who worked full time while attending HCC full time. "Going back to school at age 48 was very hard, but I didn't feel intimidated at HCC."

As for changes in Stark's teaching style, she uses more creative tools, patience, and understanding in educating children with special needs such as attention deficit disorder or autism, and she understands better the important role that cultural norms play in how children learn and adapt to the classroom setting.

Stark now plans to enroll at Springfield College to earn her bachelor's degree.

Along with four associate degree graduates, 14 people also earned their Lead Teacher Certification after attending classes at HCC. The certification is credential secured from the state Department of Early Education.

For certification, participants were required to take seven courses, which were held in the evening. The cohort of 14 went through extensive testing, including the College Placement Test course. HCC staff and Preschool Enrichment Team career counselors provided support, and HCC's tutoring services were offered.

HCC adjunct professor Sheila St George said participants in the cohort were focused on achieving academic success.

"They actively participated in discussions and made going to class a great experience," said St. George, who is also a principal of John Ashley School in West Springfield.

*Photo: Kathleen Stark in her cap and gown after the May 2010 Holyoke Community College commencement services. Stark was one of four participants in the DECE program who graduated from HCC's Early Childhood Education program.*

[More news...](#)

#### CONTACT US



For information on campus news, please contact [JoAnne Rome](#)



| Holyoke Community College 303 Homestead Ave. Holyoke, MA (413) 538-7000