

2006 HONOREE

Deanna Pendergast

The Ridge School of Montgomery County, Rockville, MD
Special Needs Education • 6th-8th Grade



Years Teaching: 7

Average Class Size: 12

Classes Taught Per Day: 6

School's % of ESL Students: 5%

School Type: Hospital, Other

Type of Class: Self-contained

“The teaching in my classroom extends far beyond imparting knowledge and analytical skills. My students are emotionally-disturbed middle school male sex offenders who live in a locked-down psychiatric hospital. The boys come to the facility by court order and are aggressive, dangerous, and undisciplined. They are the product of growing up in an unsafe neighborhood or with absent or violent families. Oftentimes, their parents are drug addicted, incarcerated, or dead. This greatly increases the risk for violent classroom behavior. On the street, these children do not carry book bags and basketballs, they wield guns and knives and they will proudly show off their physical battle scars to prove their toughness. Therefore, my first goal is to establish a safe, positive learning environment. The key to building a safe learning environment is fostering teamwork among the students, an especially difficult task since a sex offender is characteristically a loner. I am the primary, constant presence in their lives. I build their trust and confidence through positive expectations and positive reinforcement. My students quickly learn my three goals: to behave appropriately, to work hard, and to perform to their abilities.”

“To be a part of a team that can work with aggressive, hostile, dangerous teens and watch them make significant positive lifestyle changes so they can re-



turn as safe, productive members of society – now with ambitions for vocational school or college – is a most rewarding experience. My boys are teaching me that the foundation for change and education is a safe, positive classroom with consistent rules and expectations. It is a place where learning is fun and activities require working together as a team. It is a place to build trust in others and confidence in themselves.”

“I have supervised Deanna for over three years and find her to be a special educator of the highest quality. The Ridge School of Montgomery County primarily serves students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Our students have experienced a very low degree of success in a regular school setting, so it is needless to say that her teaching assignment is extremely unique and requires a very distinctive individual to meet the challenge. Deanna puts forth tremendous effort to ensure that when her students leave her room, they are prepared for not only the next academic level, but the community at large.”

– Charles Maust, EID, director of education,
The Ridge School of Montgomery County

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

Member, Gifted Association of Missouri • Member, Missouri Geographic Alliance • Coach, Raytown (MO) South Middle School Scholar Bowl Academic Team for two years • Advisor, Raytown (MO) South Middle School Newspaper • Facilitator, Poetry Contest for student national publication, The Ridge School, Rockville, MD