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Cathy Toll : Distinguished Achievement in Education

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2019 Distinguished Achievement in Education

Cathy Toll '79

Cathy Toll has made groundbreaking differences in educational communities around the globe. She has made and continues to make significant contributions to the field of education and literacy. Thousands of educators have grown, excelled and benefitted from her influence, as have the exponentially greater numbers of students those educators have taught.

Cathy's reputation for developing the field of educational coaching, particularly literacy coaching, is international. She has written six books on educational coaching and a book for principals on leadership of learning, setting the standard for school practices across the country and internationally. Her first book on the topic was seminal in creating the field and has been called "the Bible of educational coaching."

When the federal government implemented a large-scale literacy program in the early 2000s, it included mandates for having literacy coaches in every school that received funds. The SOS went out, and soon school districts, state departments of education, regional and national agencies, and countless professional organizations across the country were all turning to Cathy for help.

Cathy currently leads the Center for Literacy Educators and Leaders and directs graduate programs in literacy at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. In this role, she leads faculty to set high standards, consider important teacher-education issues and move others to rethink curriculum. As a faculty member, she helps practicing teachers enhance their literacy instruction and become school and school district literacy leaders.

Cathy has taught at the elementary-, middle- and high-school levels and served as a school principal, curriculum director, reading specialist, director of literacy at a federally funded education research-and-development lab, grant director, and consultant with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, where she supported educator preparation programs at colleges and universities throughout the state.

For nine years, Cathy was a full-time independent consultant, traveling throughout the U.S., Australia and Canada to provide support to educational coaches and school administrators. In that capacity, she has helped administrators design programs of job-embedded professional development for teachers and has guided educational coaches in developing the knowledge, skills and perspectives to implement such programs.

Respected as a scholar and practitioner by educators near and far, Cathy is prolific in her national and international conference sessions. She has created the Ancora Imparo Model (AIM) of teacher professional learning and the problem-solving cycle for teacher-coach partnerships. With the support of her books and articles, her website, and her in-person assistance, educators continue to learn, grow and improve their skills.

At the same time, her colleagues cite the warmth and humor she brings to her work, and the wisdom and empathy she has in seemingly endless supply.

Cathy sees her work as a way to enhance the quality of the teaching profession. In an era when many policymakers would have teachers toe the line of others' mandates, her work honors teachers' voices and their expertise.

Grateful for the difference she has made for educators and students, the college is proud to bestow upon Cathy Toll this Distinguished Achievement Award in Education.

St. Norbert College

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