

BC3 to highlight programs, careers for future educators

July 2, 2019



Madison Roth, who earned an associate degree in education in 2019 from Butler County Community College, is shown Monday, July 1, 2019, in the \$2.3 million Amy Wise Children’s Creative Learning Center, which enrolls preschoolers ages 3 to 5 on BC3’s main campus. Roth, who will transfer to The Pennsylvania State University this fall to pursue a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education, will be among the panelists during BC3’s first Spotlight on Careers in Education on July 17.

(Butler, PA) Madison Roth knew she wanted to become an educator at age 10, when she “literally played school all the time,” toting a portable chalkboard and a rubber-tipped wooden

pointer to lessons attended by friends and relatives in classrooms imagined in her bedroom in Cabot or in her cousins' basement in Butler.

"Anywhere," she said, laughing, "that people would play with me."

Dan Parson, of Portersville, knew he wanted to become an educator at age 17, on a 95-degree July day "sweating and being cut" by jiggers at a job site near New Castle with his father's tree removal business following his junior year of high school in Ellwood City.

"It was the dead of summer and I thought, 'There is no way I'm doing this as a career,'" Parson said, laughing. "The property owner came down and later said, 'I'm a teacher.' And I thought, 'That is what I'm going to be.'"

Roth and Parson, graduates of Butler County Community College's education programs, will be among panelists July 17 when BC3 hosts its first Spotlight on Careers in Education from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Student Success Center on BC3's main campus in Butler Township.

The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with refreshments and check-in and is free and open to the public.

Spotlight on Careers in Education will introduce prospective students and general studies majors on BC3's main campus or at its five additional locations to BC3's five transfer or career programs in education and to future employment options, said Amy Pignatore, BC3's dean of admissions and the college's registrar.

Those options can include becoming an elementary school educator, as is Parson, 44, a 1995 BC3 graduate; a middle-level educator, as is Corey Miller, 27, a 2012 BC3 graduate; or daycare center director, as is Mona Bhatia, 54, a 2007 BC3 graduate.

Expected job growth ranges from 7% to 10%

The median salary for high school teachers in 2018 was \$60,320, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, and for kindergarten and elementary school teachers, \$57,980. Both fields expect at least 7 percent job growth through 2026, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Dan Parson, who earned an associate degree in education in 1995 from Butler County Community College, is shown Friday, June 28, 2019, outside North Side Primary in the Ellwood City Area School District, where he has taught first-graders for 15 years. Parson will be among the panelists during BC3's first Spotlight on Careers in Education on July 17.

“All trends are pointing to that, in the next five years, there will be an extreme teacher shortage,” said Annie Lindsay, a BC3 education faculty member who as the college’s PRAXIS/PECT coordinator helps students prepare to take the basic skills examinations in reading, writing and mathematics necessary to transfer to a four-year institution’s college of education.



“The majority of it will be seen on the eastern side of the state,” Lindsay said, “but we will see that here as well, basically due to the retirement of baby boomers.”

Mona Bhatia, who earned an associate degree in education in 2007 from Butler County Community College, performs yoga with children at Kiddie Academy of Wexford on Thursday, June 27, 2019. Bhatia is the owner and onsite director of Kiddie Academy of Wexford, and of Kiddie Academy of Cranberry Township.

Thirty-three Pennsylvania school districts – including Armstrong, Pittsburgh and Punxsutawney – reported teacher shortages in 2017-18, as did 14 intermediate units statewide, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

“The fields they are looking for primarily are in special education, English as a second language, math and science certification and elementary or early childhood education,” said Stephanie Long, coordinator of BC3’s early childhood education program. “All are certifications that are in high demand.”

Partnerships offer BC3 students experience

BC3 offers on its main campus transfer programs in early childhood education (Pre K-4), in physical education-teacher education option, in secondary education-English concentration and in secondary education-social sciences concentration; and a newly revamped career program in child development and family studies.

The curriculum for the redesigned child development and family studies program now incorporates “more studies about children’s growth from birth through age 5, and adds the family component,” said Dr. Nichol Zaginaylo, BC3’s associate dean of humanities and social sciences.

Graduates with associate degrees in child development and family studies can become daycare providers, group supervisors or teachers in daycare or preschool settings, Zaginaylo said, or with a bachelor’s degree, child life specialists at various family agencies.

“It is ideal for someone who wants to get an associate degree, and go out and work with children,” Zaginaylo said. “This is also great for those who are working in a daycare or preschool as an aide, and want to further their education and get a higher-level position.”

The median salary for preschool teachers in 2018 was \$29,780, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which forecast a 10 percent increase in job growth through 2026.

Students or prospective students who attend Spotlight on Careers in Education can learn about BC3’s partnerships that offer real-world experience in school districts such as Butler, Mars, New Castle and West Middlesex, and at the Zion Education Center in Farrell, Long said.

“Our program at BC3,” Long said, “is thriving and growing in leaps and bounds with the opportunities and partnerships that we are creating.”

Programs, courses at all BC3 sites

Associate degree transfer programs in early childhood education (Pre K-4) are also offered at BC3 @ Brockway in Brockway, Jefferson County; BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township, Butler County; BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle, Lawrence County; and at BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage, Mercer County.

Associate degree transfer programs in secondary education are available at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing and at BC3 @ LindenPointe. BC3 @ Armstrong in Ford City, Armstrong County, offers coursework.

Graduates with degrees in education can also become trainers for businesses, journalists or museum tour guides, among other professions, Long said.

“There is a wide range of careers you can have in education,” added Bhatia, a Cranberry Township resident who is onsite director and owns Kiddie Academy sites in Wexford and in Cranberry Township, which together serve 350 children ages 6 weeks to 12 years.



Corey Miller, who earned an associate degree in education in 2012 from Butler County Community College, stands Thursday, June 27, 2019, in a hallway at St. Kilian Parish School in Cranberry Township, where he has taught mathematics to sixth-through eighth-graders and social studies to sixth-graders since 2015.

“You can go for special education,” Bhatia said. “Elementary education. Early childhood education. Attending BC3 has a wide range of what you want to do in the education field. The classes are smaller, and the professors are there for you.”

As is the \$2.3 million Amy Wise Children’s Creative Learning Center, which enrolls preschoolers ages 3 to 5 on BC3’s main campus, and provides BC3 education students with additional real-world insight, Bhatia said.

Teacher: “Be the happy face”

After graduating from BC3, Miller, of Cranberry Township, earned a bachelor’s degree in education from Clarion University of Pennsylvania and since 2015 has taught mathematics to sixth- through eighth-graders and social studies to sixth-graders at St. Kilian Parish School in Cranberry Township.

“Being a teacher, you get to impact children’s lives every day,” said Miller, who obtained an associate degree in secondary education from BC3. “You get teach them something that they may not otherwise know, or get the chance to know. Seeing that process happen is really a special thing. You impact some kids without even realizing it. ... You might be the happy face they get to see every day. Maybe the only one they get to see.”

More than 90 students are enrolled this fall in BC3’s education programs, according to Sharla Anke, BC3’s assistant dean of institutional research.

Nearly 30 graduated with an associate degree in education in the past year, among them, Roth, 20, a Knoch High graduate who this fall will transfer to The Pennsylvania State University and pursue a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education.

“I have always had a passion for working with children,” said Roth, who imagines her first real classroom as having “a ton of colors. A bunch of bright colors. A lot of corals and blues and greens. I see a welcoming atmosphere and really loving children.”

That is the atmosphere that Parson has created for the average of 22 first-graders he’s had in each of the 15 years he has been a first-grade teacher at North Side Primary in the Ellwood City Area School District.

Rather than removing trees with the family business, he is now planting seeds for the future.

“You are their hero,” said Parson, a 1993 Lincoln High graduate who transferred after his graduation from BC3 to Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education.

“The best part about that is, you are their champion. You better be ready for that and take that seriously. I do, and I love that part. I love building the relationships with them, earning their

trust, motivating them, being their cheerleader and providing them with the tools to be lifelong learners and critical thinkers and problem-solvers.”

Those who attend Spotlight on Careers in Education can ask questions of BC3’s education faculty members and will be entered to win an iPad. Games will also be played.

Visit bc3.edu/education to RSVP by July 10.