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Faculty Profile: Judy Deckers

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Professor Judy Deckers of the Elementary Education Department is a prime example of how the academic reputation of Bridgewater State College reaches well beyond the borders of Massachusetts. Professor Deckers recently returned from a year in Texas as a project editor for Resources for Christian Living Publishing (RCL), which is developing a series of workbooks and videos for Catholic education. Professor Deckers' reputation as an expert in the field of literacy and reading methodology brought her to the attention of the Texas publishing firm. RCL was beginning a major curriculum program, "Echoes of Faith," that prepares catechists to understand and teach their faith. Professor Deckers' considerable experience as Chair of the Elementary Education Department, her work with public school systems on developing reading programs and her commitment to Catholic education made her a natural to work on the "Echoes of Faith" project.

While in Texas Professor Deckers worked with staff members at RCL and distinguished Catholic educators from throughout the country to write what will eventually become thirteen booklets and videos that will be marketed nationwide. Professor Deckers quickly found out that the "Echoes of Faith" project was a massive undertaking which required that she utilize her background in reading pedagogy, editing manuscripts and advising catechists on the most effective manner of understanding Catholic doctrine. At present eight of the booklets and videos are complete, with the remainder close to publication.

Also while at RCL Professor Deckers worked as editor and advisor on a second project - a catechism workbook for young people called "Our Catholic Identity." The workbook combines basic principles of Catholicism with exercises such as crossword puzzles, word games and attractive visuals, all designed to make the learning experience of school children meaningful. The workbooks are organized by grade level and will also be marketed nationwide.

After her stint in Texas Professor Deckers returned to Massachusetts with renewed commitment to continue her work in reading. She has completed two articles on teaching concepts and she has worked with Professor Emeritus John Deasy to write a series of field guides that are used by her undergraduate students to enhance their understanding of reading methodology. She also continues her work as a frequent in-service instructor on reading to public school systems in Massachusetts.

Professor Deckers states proudly that her work on the "Echoes of Faith" project and the "Our Catholic Identity" workbooks made her a better writer and editor and gave her an appreciation of the publishing industry. She now feels more confident that she can make other contributions to reading pedagogy, book publishing and Catholic education. But finding time for all these new professional endeavors will be difficult because Professor Deckers has become a regular speaker to education groups around the country.

Despite her busy schedule, Professor Deckers remains dedicated to the undergraduate and graduate reading programs here at Bridgewater. She is a patient and caring classroom instructor who pays considerable attention to her supervisory responsibilities of prospective teachers. Professor Deckers is animated when she discusses the importance of teaching reading whether it is in the classroom or at home. As a result, she works closely with reading students to ensure that they understand the importance of their role with young people. Stimulating good reading habits in Professor Deckers' opinion is the basic foundation of education. With Professor Judy Deckers as a mentor to Bridgewater students there is a high degree of certainty that the next generation of reading teachers will be well prepared and well motivated.

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