

LEONE PATRICIA DICKINSON

Citation for the conferral of a Doctor of Education (*honoris causa*)

Vice-Chancellor, it is a privilege to present to you and to this gathering, for the award of Doctor of Education (*honoris causa*), Dr Leone Patricia Dickinson.

The University Council has resolved to confer this award on Dr Dickinson in recognition of her outstanding contribution spanning more than half a century as an educator and advocate across all sectors of education, from early childhood to tertiary education, working broadly across the areas of education, research and policy.

Dr Dickinson is one of those talented individuals who has been able to seamlessly navigate her way across and between classroom practice, pre-service education, research and advocacy throughout her career, all the while maintaining a sharp focus on issues of social justice, in particular, improving learning and development for young children.

Born and raised in the United States, she completed a Bachelor of Science in Education at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and started her teaching career there. By the early 1970s Dr Dickinson was living and teaching in this area of Ontario. She subsequently earned a Diploma in Child Studies at the Institute of Child Studies, University of Toronto, and a Masters of Education and a doctoral degree in Education, both specialising in Early Childhood, at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto. During this time she also became a Canadian citizen.

As a classroom educator, Dr Dickinson was a committed pre-school, Kindergarten and primary teacher who brought parents, early years and primary teachers together in both informal and formal networks with a focus on implementing best practices in the early years. She brought this expertise into the secondary grades where she taught Child Studies and supervised high school students during their co-op placements in the nursery school located within their secondary school.

Across the next two decades of her career Dr Dickinson worked as an instructor in the early childhood programs at both Mohawk and Sheridan Colleges, as a classroom teacher in Special Education, and on a three year secondment from Halton to the York University Faculty of Education, where she served as Course Director for the Elementary Education consecutive program.

At the school district level, Dr Dickinson provided leadership for the vision and implementation of *Halton's Literacy Model K-3*, a comprehensive model for supporting the literacy development of all young learners. Throughout this time she was instrumental in launching with both school boards and various community agencies, the '*For the Love of Literacy Conference*', an annual conference for educators in the school and early childhood sectors as well as parents in the Halton area. This Conference has been a highly anticipated, regularly sold out event for the past 20 years.

During a secondment to the Ministry of Education, Dr Dickinson was influential in shaping the current landscape of early childhood and Kindergarten policy and practice in the province. Dr Dickinson prepared the international curriculum framework review that guided the Ministry's Expert Panel's in the development of the Early Learning for Every Child Today Document, a foundation for Full-Day Kindergarten in Ontario.

Dr Dickinson has been an active member of various professional organisations including the Council of Associated Primary Educators, and the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, always advocating for an integrated approach across grade levels, and roles within the system in order to best support young children. She was recognised with the provincial awards from both of these organisations.

During this time she also was co-founder of what would become the 'Our Kids Network' in Halton Region, a multi-agency cross-sector partnership of organisations and agencies serving children and youth whose mission is 'All children thrive.' Dr Dickinson still serves on the Our Kids Network whose work is focused on child development from birth to 18 years, with partners from education, government, health, mental health, special needs, police services, children's services and the multicultural community. After four decades of work in early childhood and school settings, the Ministry of Education, two colleges and one university, Dr Dickinson retired from the Halton District School Board. But she kept on going! She taught for several years as a part-time faculty member at Brock University, and was a private consultant for Ontario's Ministries of Education and Children and Youth Services, Pearson Education Canada, the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, and the Region of Halton Children's Services.

It was as a consultant that Dr Dickinson was first engaged by Charles Sturt University in 2003 for program development for what would eventually be the Ministerially-approved Bachelor of Primary Education Studies degree, the cornerstone of the University's Ontario campus. Dr Dickinson worked for two years on program development, and was an original member of the staff in Ontario when the program launched in August 2005.

While teaching in the Bachelor of Primary Education Studies course, she again engaged in program development for the Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies degree, and when it gained Ministerial consent, she was the foundation Course Coordinator.

Dr Dickinson's lifetime dedication to children and youth, evidenced through the myriad of roles she's filled, community organisations she's worked with and led, and advocacy she's engaged in, leave no doubt that this is a woman committed to ensuring a better future for all children. Charles Sturt University has most recently benefitted from this passion and commitment, and the work we have done here for a decade stands as a testament to Dr Dickinson's vision and energy.

Vice-Chancellor, I now present Dr Leone Patricia Dickinson, an educator who embodies Charles Sturt University's core value of 'gumption,' working tirelessly to secure a better education, and thus a better future, for children across Ontario.

Dated this Twelfth Day of June Two Thousand and Fifteen