Dean Educates

NOT ONLY COLLEGE STUDENTS ON
IMPORTANT LIFE LESSONS, BUT ALSO
NEARBY PRE-SCHOOL STUDENTS

Dean College instructor Paula Waite ’78 has
successfully taught others how to resolve
conflict: First, remain calm; second, make
sure everyone is heard; third, choose a solu-
tion together; and finally, be prepared for
follow-up and support.

Does Waite instruct diplomats or busi-
ness leaders? No, she works with pre-school-
ers at the Dean College Children’s Center.

The 25-year teaching veteran is asso-
ciant director of the school and is a graduate
of Dean and Framingham State College. Her
three children, now grown, also attended
the Children’s Center.

“What I see is that what works to solve
problems and resolve conflicts with pres-
schoolers, works for all age groups,
including adults,” she explains. “We get
testimonials from parents that this approach
works for them in family situations, and
that children who know the technique are
well prepared for elementary school.”

Kate Barba, a registered nurse at Mas-
sachusetts General Hospital and a Frank-
lin resident, sent her two children to the
Center.

“We found this curriculum very helpful
to both of my children,” she says. “It really
focused on their social skills as they entered
school.”

All of the educators at the Children’s
Center are educators in the High Scope
curriculum. “All of the children and teach-
ers use the same approach over and over
again, and it works,” she explains. “What I
especially like is that the Center is a labora-
tory school connected with the College. The
Dean students bring so much energy and
enthusiasm to the classrooms, and Dean’s
international students who work at the
Center bring some additional diversity to
this program.”

Barba also notes that all of the pre-
school teachers are always up-to-date on
the latest literature and research, and the
school’s director shares that with parents.

“People see it working,” says Nickolas.
“We teach the children, Dean College
student teachers, and parents!”

In the photo above Faith Nickolas works
with children in the Center.

On the left is Paula Waite ’78 teaching
two young children how to resolve conflict.

“What frequently happens with chil-
dren in different settings, is that the adult
supervising them thinks it will be easier to
just solve the problem, rather than letting
this be a learning opportunity for children
to learn how to negotiate the problem,” says
Waite. “We encourage the children to bring
up issues, to state what is happening, and
to work together to hear everyone’s sugges-
tions for a solution.”

The school staff works to develop en-
pathy through this technique. “We want
the children to look at how others feel and iden-
tify their own feelings. Children are very
capable and eager to use the technique,”
says Waite. “Once they are familiar with
the process, and they’ve seen how well it works,
they use it themselves. We guide and facili-
tate the problem-solving at the Children’s
Center, including asking the children to
come up with the solutions.”

One goal at the Center is that when the
children leave and go to elementary school,
they are able to solve problems without
an adult.

“Of course not everything is an open
discussion,” says Waite. “Respect and safety
are key, and unkind words or destruction of
materials is not allowed nor tolerated.
You get to know the children’s physical and
intellectual capabilities, and you create the
expectation for them to come up with a solu-
tion. Even very young children can be taught
this method.”