



The Gift to Teach

part in that. And it feels great to get down on the floor with them, read, play games or just talk. I've found that kids respond well when you meet them at their level."

Hanson's first teaching experience started when she was 14 and taught Sunday School at her home church in Wakonda, SD. She began seeking a teaching degree at Yankton's Mount Marty College but didn't complete her studies right away. After marrying and starting her own family, a move to Colorado and the birth of twins kept her home for a period of time. As her children grew older, she went back to the classroom, determined to do whatever it took to get her degree.

"I wanted to teach so badly," she says. "I tried an office job for a short time, but I knew that wasn't where I belonged."

One hallmark of Hanson's teaching approach is her insistence on making students feel comfortable by being in their midst. She wouldn't think of talking down to any of her students.

"You can't sit on a chair in front of the classroom and separate yourself from the kids," she says. "They need to know you care. When I taught K-12 choir at Wakonda I wasn't positive at first that the approach I take with preschoolers would work as well with

Laurie Hanson's students are prone to crying if they have to miss class. That's an indication of the close bond this preschool teacher develops with kids.

Over the years, counting siblings and their children, Hanson has taught as many as 15 children from one family. While parents and grandparents are often quick to expound on her effective teaching, Hanson says the skills "have always been there."

"Kids learn so much in preschool," Hanson says. "It serves for the rest of their lives as a foundation for education. I love to play a



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