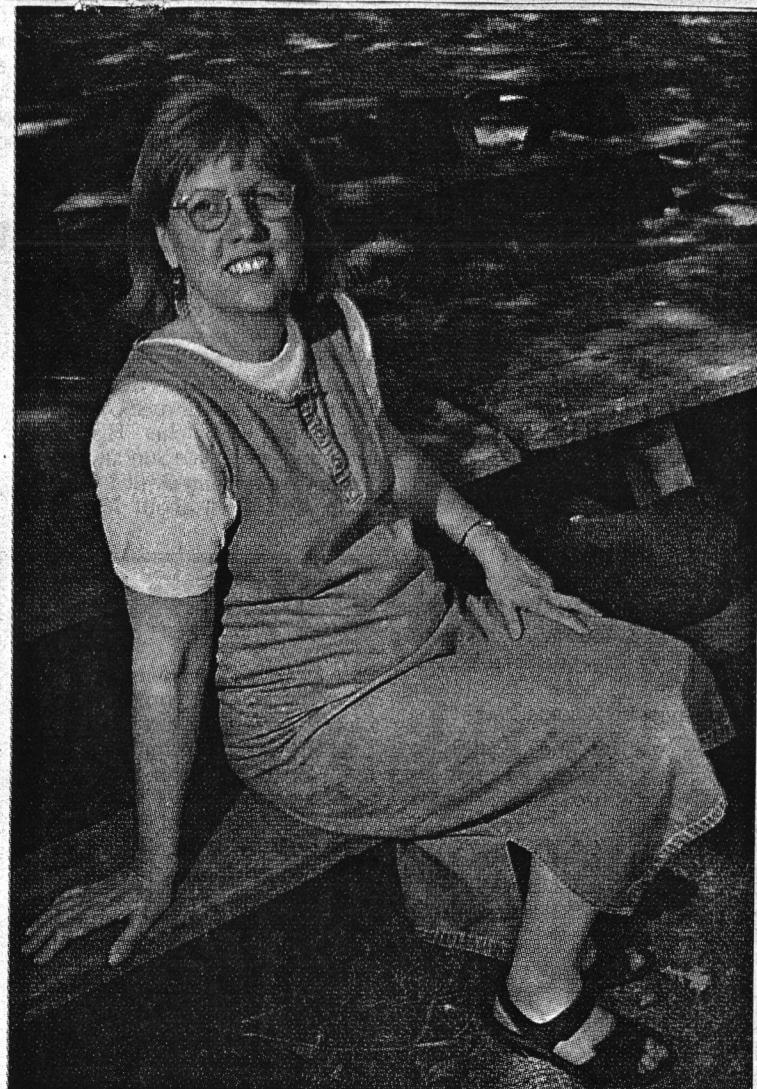


## COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

# 'Champion' of multicultural education has peers' respect

BY JODI RAVE LEE  
Lincoln Journal Star



Beth Franklin, head of curriculum and instruction at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Teachers College, is known as a "champion" of diversity among her peers.

LANE HICKENBOTTOM/Lincoln Journal Star

Beth Franklin teaches teachers.

In doing so, she aims to help aspiring teachers embrace other people's cultures. It's a trait that has earned her respect from peers.

"She was the type of person who welcomed and made you feel important," said Clarice Baker Big Back, a former colleague who worked with Franklin at the University of North Dakota's Teaching and Learning Center. "She was the only faculty person who walked her talk and integrated culture into her classes."

Today Franklin is chairwoman of curriculum and instruction at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Teachers College, where she is also a professor. While her job duties as chair are many, she is described as a "champion" of bringing multicultural curriculum into the classroom.

It all boils down to knowing the children you teach and knowing their communities, Franklin said.

"Relationships are at the core of everything we do, know and everything we learn," she said. "I need to know the particular people, at this time and place, who I'm working with. That's at the core of all faculty and all learning."

But it's not always easy.

"The single most important

## Beth Franklin

**Age:** 50

**Occupation:** University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor; chairwoman of curriculum and instruction at UNL's Teachers College.

**Quote:** "The single most important problem and major issue is, how do you help white teachers understand and respect diverse cultures so they can teach children of color?"

problem and major issue is, how do you help white teachers understand and respect diverse cultures so they can teach children of color?" Franklin said.

The Indianapolis native attributes her compassion for understanding and teaching diversity to eight years interacting with native people while at UND, which included two years as chair of elementary education. While in North Dakota, she spent a year teaching graduate courses at the Spirit Lake Indian Reservation.

"I think that's part of what drives Beth," said Nancy Engen-Wedin, a UNL art education instructor. "She sees how it can be. She's having to

carve it out here, because there aren't that many people with the same experience and vision."

Franklin brings those experiences to Lincoln where she has spent five years as head of curriculum and instruction. She recently resigned from that position, effective Aug. 14, to spend more time in Macy where 16 American Indian college students are earning degrees in elementary education.

The teaching program in Macy is the result of Franklin's involvement in securing a \$1.1 million U.S. Department of Education grant. As a result, UNL is now administering the Native American Career Ladder Project, a program designed to bring 30 native teachers into classrooms during the next five years.

UNL instructor Lisa Pollard said Franklin is helping build a bridge between the university and the Omaha reservation.

"Beth has been really pivotal in changing the tone of instruction in the (Teachers College) program," Pollard said. "She has facilitated interaction between UNL faculty and administration and people at the school in Macy. That has led to some pretty incredible results."

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