

Distinguished Alumni Award: Marcella (Marcy) Vancil, class of 1969



The University High School Alumni Association honors Marcy Vancil, class of 1969, as the 2013 Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient for her contributions to her profession and civic service.

With over forty years of experience, Vancil is recognized as a nationally renowned educator and mentor to both students and educators. She graduated from University High School in 1969 and began her journey to expand her skills in the art and science of teaching. Following graduation from Southern Illinois University, Vancil dedicated 34 years of her life to educating students at three very diverse schools in Urbana School District 116. Her work in education has included collaborations with the University of Illinois, Illinois State University, Eastern Illinois University, The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), Walt Disney American Teacher Program, Conner Prairie, and Colonial Williamsburg. These endeavors have taken Vancil throughout the United States and to Britain and Japan.

Vancil's effective teaching practices in literacy, social studies, science, and in-depth, integrated investigations along with early childhood, have been the subject of eight dissertations, continuing the U-High goal of research and applied practices to improve teaching and learning. Her innovative teaching has been featured in numerous education books, magazines, and videos.

In 1998, Vancil became one of only 27 teachers in Illinois to be certified by the NBPTS. In 2002, she was one of eight leaders to first design and implement the Illinois Comprehensive Support System to recruit and support NBPTS candidates. For 10 years, she served as the area four regional coordinator for the Illinois Comprehensive Support System. Vancil continues to mentor K-12 teachers seeking National Board Certification and other professional development experiences.

In 2009, Vancil took on the role of student teaching supervisor at Eastern Illinois University where she helps young educators explore new ways to move diverse learners into complex intellectual territory.

Vancil continues to stay in touch with a forty-year span of her former kindergarten through fourth grade students. They still remember remarkable details of their experiences in her room and frequently report that she inspired them in their choice of career path in education, anthropology, science, arts, and religion, just to name a few. She travels often and visits her "kids" and this year was no exception with mini-reunions with students on the East and West Coasts. She continues to mentor and collaborate with many of her students.

Over the course of her career, Vancil has received the following awards and recognitions:

- Illinois History Teacher of the Year
- USA Today All Star Team
- Walt Disney's American Teacher Award, Early Childhood
- Illinois Those Who Excel, Award of Excellence
- Urbana Teacher of the Year
- NAACP Champaign County Branch Presidential Award
- Outstanding Educator's Award, Regional Office of Education

While at U-High, Vancil participated in chorus and was a member of the student council, the Clarion staff, and the pep club. She has degrees from Southern Illinois University and the University of Illinois.

She is married to Scott Stewart, the Shao Lee Soo Chair Professor in Mechanical Science and Engineering at the University of Illinois. Their son, Cameron, is a graduate student in mechanical and aerospace engineering at the University of Florida.