

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
Virginia Alice Woodward
(1927-2021)

Virginia Alice Woodward, 93, died on June 20, 2021 at the Vitalia Nursing Home in Westlake Ohio. Virginia was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on September 5, 1927.

Many features of the Indiana University School of Education Early Childhood Program bear the stamp of Virginia Woodward's intellectual input. Virginia was a determined advocate for universal preschool education staffed by professionally trained early childhood educators.

Virginia's professional education began at Temple University where she earned a B.S. degree in 1951. After teaching kindergarten for six years in New Jersey and in Iowa, Virginia went on to get an M.S. degree from the University of Michigan. From 1958 to 1967, Virginia held an assistant professor position in early childhood education at Temple University where she took a leadership role in preparing Head Start teachers as part of President Johnson's War on Poverty. Also during this time, Virginia earned an Ed.D. from Teachers College at Columbia University. From 1967 to 1969, Virginia taught at the University of North Carolina where she co-directed an Educational Professional Development Grant for training early childhood specialists. Virginia came to Indiana University Bloomington as an associate professor in 1969, bringing with her a wealth of experience in early childhood education and in designing teacher education programs for early childhood educators.

Virginia's initial role at Indiana University was as a research associate in the Institute of Child Study. During the next eight years, Virginia served as director of the School of Education's Laboratory School Preschool and Kindergarten Program as well as a faculty member for IU's Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program on Young Children.

As a scholar, Virginia was an advocate of open education, a movement she studied and wrote about as part of her work at the Institute for Child Study. Open Education originated in the progressive pedagogy movement and was associated with universal access to education, open or adaptive teaching methods, and promotion of learner autonomy both within and outside the classroom. During the summers of 1970 to 1973, Virginia offered workshops on open education as well as led study tours to British primary schools that had adopted and were implementing this educational philosophy.

Virginia spent a sabbatical at the University of California at Berkeley where she worked as a research associate for Robert Ruddell, who was involved in a study of early readers. When she returned to IU, she made contact with Carolyn Burke and Jerome Harste, two professors in the area of language education who were interested in studying written language acquisition. Together, they wrote a Proffitt Grant to formally study 3, 4, 5, and 6-year-olds' early encounters with print, which later turned into a million-dollar federal grant and the publication of a book of findings entitled *Language Stories and Literacy Lessons*. This work was wildly received in the field of literacy education and heralded as a paradigm shift in the profession's thinking about how written language was learned. In 1987, Virginia and her colleagues won the David Russell Distinguished Research Award from the National Council of Teachers of English.

In 1988, Virginia was recognized by the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children for the impact of her work on early childhood teachers and parents. Also in 1988, her professional colleagues at the Ohio State University recognized her scholarship by inviting her to work on an Academic Challenge Grant as eminent scholar. In 1989, Virginia became a full professor of education at Indiana University.

Despite recognition of her scholarship, Virginia saw herself first and foremost as a teacher. Working with undergraduates and graduate students brought her a particular joy. She was a demanding instructor who expected much, but who also gave fully of herself to help students at all levels to achieve their potential.

Virginia particularly took joy in developing early childhood teacher education programs and seeing them through to fruition by teaching courses and advising students. Virginia was ever the advocate for students to get the program they needed given their career goals, sometimes even when students themselves were not quite sure what their best interests entailed.

Beyond the university, Virginia always made time for family and travel, often treating various nephews to trips abroad. For her seventy-fifth birthday, Virginia arranged her own party at Squam Lake in New Hampshire, where the movie “On Golden Pond” was filmed. Virginia, ever the teacher, required her sibling and her nephews to tell an “Aunt Ginny Story.” Everyone contributed; as always, no one could avoid participating in Ginny’s curriculum.

Be it resolved that this memorial resolution be preserved in the archives of the Bloomington Faculty Council and that copies be sent to her sister Priscilla Woll and her four nephews, Charles, John, Richard, and William Woodward.

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(with assistance from notes earlier compiled by Professors Anna Ochoa, Susan Schuster, and Gerald Smith, all of the School of Education)