

## Alumnus – Thomas Finley



The Department of Early Childhood, Elementary, and Middle Level Education is pleased to highlight, Mr. Thomas Finley. Mr. Finley graduated from EIU in 1973 with a degree in Elementary Education. He earned his Master's degree from EIU in 1975. Reminiscing about his fond memories as a student at EIU, Tom recalls the camaraderie he felt between elementary faculty and students. Mr. Finley said the faculty-student connection he experienced at EIU was something he remembered throughout his career.

Tom began teaching third grade at the Cumberland School District in 1973. In 2001, he was honored with the *"Golden Apple"* Award. Golden Apple selects teachers who exemplify the highest standards and practices of the teaching profession. In addition, in 1996 Tom was selected as a *"Key Award"* through the Regional Office of Education #11. Mr. Finley continued as a master teacher at Cumberland Elementary until his retirement in 2011.

Over the years Tom has opened his classroom to many EIU pre-service teachers. When asked about his experience working with EIU practicum students he says, "I was there for them, not just 8-4, but however much time it takes. It requires time for EIU students to experiment and find their teaching style."

He believes that leading by example, a passion for teaching, and a priority of family involvement are the essential qualities a good teacher must possess. He feels he has helped his students to strive for excellence and work hard to meet expectations to achieve success in their future career as well as in life.