



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF EDUCATION

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TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION

SPRING 2004

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Methods of Inquiry Program

CELEBRATING 17 YEARS AT UB

The Methods of Inquiry Program (MOI) at UB offers an interdisciplinary course in critical thinking. The program began in 1986, when Susan Schapiro was awarded a three-year, \$250,000 grant from the Fund for Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) of the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). MOI was part of a concerted administrative effort to enhance the learning experience of UB undergraduates (see story on page six). Respected, well established, and funded by a dedicated line in the UB state budget, the program joined the Graduate School of Education in June of 1995 so that the faculty and students in GSE could benefit from the years of accumulated experience.

The Methods of Inquiry course offers undergraduate students concrete ways to approach their studies by helping them become actively involved in their own learning processes. All activities in the course explore the theoretical foundations of effective learning, but the main emphasis is the development of means to assure comprehensive learning and provide for accurate assessment of what is indeed learned. These means, in turn, lead to an understanding that is necessary for clear critical thinking. Students review and discuss the following topics in the course:

1) How to develop an appropriate mindset for learning. Dynamic interest, positive motivation, mindfulness, and an understanding of the way one learns, all influence

the learning experience. An appreciation of the role memory plays and the way it works to construct meaning makes effective mastery of course material easier. Students are encouraged to become autonomous learners who take responsibility for their academic lives.

2) How to think critically within a discipline. Assuming

that every discipline asks its unique questions and has its own methodology for answering them, students need to search for those questions to help them organize and use the materials they gather. In this regard, the course introduces the evaluation of data, the understanding of concepts, and the consideration of options as prerequisites to reaching judgment. As part of the process, MOI students study the "Elements of Thought," a philosophical framework for reaching judgment. Once judgment is reached, students learn to construct sound arguments, based on strong evidence and persuasive rationales.

3) How to monitor comprehension. Students need to understand what they know and do not know. They need reliable references



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DEAN'S MESSAGE

MARY H. GRESHAM, PH.D.
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January 2004 brought significant change to UB when **John B. Simpson** took office as UB's 14th president. The story that follows describes his background and his vision for the university. In GSE, we are excited about the potential positive impact President Simpson will have on the Western New York educational community.

John Dewey once said that a primary goal of higher education is to help students develop their critical thinking ability. In this issue we highlight GSE's efforts toward that goal with our cover story on the Methods of Inquiry program. SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor **Ron Gentile**, from the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, provides his insightful perspective on the program on page five. Honored with a Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1991 and instrumental in the development of UB's Center for Teaching and Learning Resources, Ron has long been a proponent and practitioner of teaching critical thinking in the classroom. **Susan Schapiro**, the founder and first director of the Methods of Inquiry program is highlighted in the Emeritus Faculty Spotlight. Her story is not only inspiring, but provides an historical perspective on how education can change with the times.

Within GSE, **Marilyn Koren** joins us as GSE's new

director of development. She was the associate director of development at Grove City College, PA and has brought exciting ideas to help alumni stay connected to GSE.

The GSE Small Schools Initiative is a new and exciting partnership with the Buffalo Public Schools. The story on page eleven discusses how the initiative will help redefine the Western New York educational landscape.

Also reshaping the educational landscape, both locally and nationally, is the groundbreaking research by **Doug Clements** and **Julie Sarama** from the Department of Learning and Instruction. Their work on the teaching and learning of mathematics in preschool is highlighted in the Faculty Focus feature. Research on writing is also discussed in this issue from the Department of Learning and Instruction's **Jim Collins**. Beginning on page thirteen, he demonstrates how the six traits of writing are being used to improve student performance in the Buffalo Public Schools.

These stories are just a sample of the interesting reading you'll find in this edition of the newsletter. John Dewey also said that the aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education. We hope that as GSE alums, this newsletter not only keeps you connected with the School through alumni news, but also provides you with information you can use to keep abreast of current research in your field. ●



JOHN B. SIMPSON IS NEW UB PRESIDENT

The first day of 2004 began a new era at UB when John B. Simpson became the university's 14th president. After receiving his doctoral degree in neurobiology and behavior from Northwestern University in 1973, Simpson embarked on, what has become, a distinguished 30-year career in higher education. It began in Seattle at the University of Washington where he assumed a variety of teaching, research, and administrative positions during a 23-year tenure. Chief among these responsibilities was serving as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from 1994-1998.

Prior to joining UB, Simpson was, most recently, provost and executive vice chancellor at the University of California, Santa Cruz where the student population grew 27% during his term. In addition, Simpson implemented several new graduate programs including degrees in digital arts and news media, bioinformatics, and an innovative doctorate in education in collaboration with San Jose State University.

Although Simpson's tenure at UB has just begun, he is impressed with GSE's accomplishments: "In conjunction with

providing UB students with the best in intellectual exploration and preparation in the many scholarly fields and professional disciplines under its purview, through the many important regional initiatives in which it plays a role, the Graduate School of Education is an extraordinarily visible and significant presence in the Western New York educational community. The School's leadership in support, preparation, and advocacy for excellence in education in this regard is an outstanding example of UB's commitment not only to advancing the limits of scholarship, but to serving with distinction UB's many diverse constituencies."

Regarding graduate education throughout UB, Simpson's vision includes an increase in community involvement, including partnering with elementary and secondary schools. Overall, Simpson is committed to ensuring that UB remains the leading public research university in the Northeast, while also continuing to focus on the traditional university priorities of teaching and community service.

GSE welcomes John Simpson and looks forward to working with him in the years ahead.

Photograph by Nancy J. Parisi

Early Childhood Math Research & Development

DEVELOPING COHESIVE STANDARDS AND CURRICULA AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL

There may be no more challenging issue – for both research and practice – than that of effectively scaling up what is known about the teaching and learning of mathematics with the diverse population who teach early childhood mathematics, especially in the preschool.

International comparisons reveal deficits in U.S. children’s mathematics knowledge from the age of 4. Children who live in poverty and who are members of linguistic and ethnic minority groups demonstrate particularly low levels of achievement. These children’s teachers have often not been provided a background in early childhood mathematics.

Kindergarten Mathematics Education with funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the ExxonMobil Foundation. The goal was to facilitate early communication between, and coordination of efforts by, the educational leaders and agencies who are developing mathematics standards and curricula for young

education; psychology; teachers; and policy makers. This work resulted in two publications: an edited book (with Ann-Marie DiBiase, Ph.D., 2002, Elementary Education) *Engaging Young Children in Mathematics: Standards for Early Childhood Mathematics Education*, and to a joint position statement by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), that we helped author, *Early Childhood Mathematics: Promoting Good Beginnings*. We hope the result will be more cohesive standards for early childhood mathematics at the state and local level.

This work also provided a research (and social-political) basis for an early childhood mathematics curriculum. For five years we have been developing several such curricula, with a grant from the NSF, *Building Blocks – Foundations for Mathematical Thinking, Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 2: Research-based Materials Development*. The *Building Blocks* program incorporates both old and new technologies, from blocks and puzzles to multimedia computer programs. The approach is *finding the mathematics in, and developing mathematics from, children’s every day activity*. Local teachers who have been involved in this project have had a major impact on the final curricula, from helping create or refine activities to pilot testing them in various stages of completion. The program has been, or is being, field tested by teachers from many local schools, including Alden, Buffalo, Cheektowaga, Depew, Elma, Ken-Ton, Newfane, Niagara Falls, and Williamsville. Summary evaluations

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We have been addressing this challenge over the past decade in five related projects. Researchers, policy makers, and textbook publishers need some consensus on what constitutes appropriate mathematics for young children. In spring of 2000, we conducted a national *Conference on Standards for Preschool and*

children and researchers in related fields. We brought together a range of experts in the diverse fields relevant to the creation of educational standards. Participants included representatives from almost every state; the federal government; mathematicians; mathematics educators; researchers from mathematics and early childhood

Methods of Inquiry Program

continued from page 1

to confirm their knowledge base and help them avoid the dangerous “illusion of knowing,” an easy confusion between that which is *known* and that which is only familiar. MOI provides students with ways to receive feedback at all stages of inquiry through analysis (learning to use note-taking and reading procedures to check understanding on a daily basis), synthesis (learning to prepare summary questions, concept maps, and mock exams), and evaluation (learning to utilize frameworks for high-level consideration of a topic).

Students in MOI attend two lectures (90 students per class) and one individual meeting with a peer monitor each week. During lectures, students are exposed to theories, strategies, and

techniques that they then apply to their other coursework through assignments with specified criteria. At the weekly monitor meetings, students and monitors work collaboratively to assess how

well a student’s efforts meet the criteria. The goal of this approach is that after a semester of carefully monitored self-assessment, students will be able to

judge for themselves how well they meet the criteria of an assignment. In the end, students in MOI strive to take control of their academic and personal lives, writing for themselves a winning script that reflects understanding, careful thought, and sound judgment.

Quality

Practically speaking, the quality of our course offering can be seen in its effect on students. The table below shows the percentage of recent students (from spring 2002 and fall 2002) who improved their GPA by a whole letter range during the MOI semester. The students are divided into groups by their previous semester GPA since students with low GPAs coming in obviously have more room for improvement.

As evidenced by the table, MOI has a strong influence on GPA. Students coming to our class with the lowest GPAs (and often on academic probation) have a great deal of success in improving their overall academic performance. In fact, several students jump a number of grade ranges in one semester. This data (our most recent) is representative of all other semesters.

Given the influence on GPA, it is not surprising that MOI also influences retention. A retention study of the 1996 freshmen cohort found that

although students who took MOI that year had lower verbal and quantitative SAT scores than the freshmen average, they had a 6% higher retention rate to graduation within five years.

Services and Initiatives

The MOI course is open to all undergraduate students. We do, however, work with some specific populations within the larger setting. Every year MOI takes part in UB’s post-baccalaureate program in which college graduates who are conditionally accepted to a variety of New York medical schools complete one year of intensive study at UB. We have also become part of the Educational Opportunity Program summer FIPSE grant initiative in which incoming freshmen take summer courses, including a course in critical thinking.

In addition to the MOI course offerings, the program is involved in a number of other endeavors. From guest-lecturing to training for instructors to advising workshops, each year we receive numerous requests to make presentations to the UB community. There is also a demand for the MOI insights outside of the UB community, including conference presentations, workshops at local colleges, and training sessions. The combination of these demands, in concert with the course offerings, led us to recently publish a textbook *Methods of Inquiry: Applied Critical Thinking*.

In short, we work very hard to ensure that MOI remains a valuable and up-to-date asset to the UB community and the Graduate School of Education. While we always strive to improve, we are proud of the success we have achieved during the last 17 years and continue to enjoy. ●

Students coming to our class with the lowest GPAs have a great deal of success in improving their overall academic performance.

ANALYSIS OF CHANGE IN GPA

Previous Semester GPA	Number of Students	% of students who improved GPA by whole letter range
D–F range	49	86%
C range	63	68%
B range	46	39%



J. RONALD GENTILE, PH.D.

SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor
Department of Counseling,
School and Educational Psychology

In a 1986 interview, Robert Sternberg, Yale professor and noted researcher on the development of intellectual skills, provided the following perspective on teaching:

Bodies of knowledge are important of course, but they often become outdated. Thinking skills never become outdated. To the contrary, they enable us to acquire knowledge and to reason with it, regardless of the time or place or the kinds of knowledge to which they're applied. So, in my opinion, teaching thinking skills is not only a tall order but the first order of business...

If Sternberg is correct – and I believe he is – then each of us as teachers is responsible for modeling, encouraging, and perhaps even requiring that students learn to think in our discipline. Some of these thinking skills are likely generalizable (e.g., metacognitive processes such as comprehension modeling or knowing what you still need to learn) and some may be more discipline specific (e.g., statistical reasoning). In either case, if we assume that students already know how to think in those ways, we are likely to be disappointed and the students are likely to be frustrated.

The beauty of the Methods of Inquiry (MOI) program is that it never assumes thinking skills, but rather provides instruction and a program of experiences (through students' own coursework) to begin to master such skills. Furthermore, it allows all of us – novices and experts, students and teachers – to expand our repertoires of thinking skills to become better learners and, yes, better teachers.

Congratulations and many thanks to current MOI director, Kelly Ahuna, and program founder and former director, Susan Schapiro (see story on page six), and to their many MOI colleagues and graduate assistants for their excellent and dedicated service to UB and the Graduate School of Education. If this program did not exist, we would have to invent it.

Faculty Focus

continued from page 3

show the curriculum allows children to learn and do more mathematics than previously assumed. Figure 1 shows the results of one study in which *Building Blocks* had a strong, measurable effect on mathematics achievement of low-income children, who made gains, comparable to those resulting from individual tutoring.

Educators know that curricula alone are not sufficient. Professional development is critical, but little is known about professional development in mathematics for teachers of the youngest children. We therefore proposed a grant to the NSF, *Planning for Professional Development in Pre-School Mathematics: Meeting the Challenge of Standards 2000*. We worked for several years to develop a plan for the professional development of the teachers and caregivers of preschool children in mathematics. The plan was informed

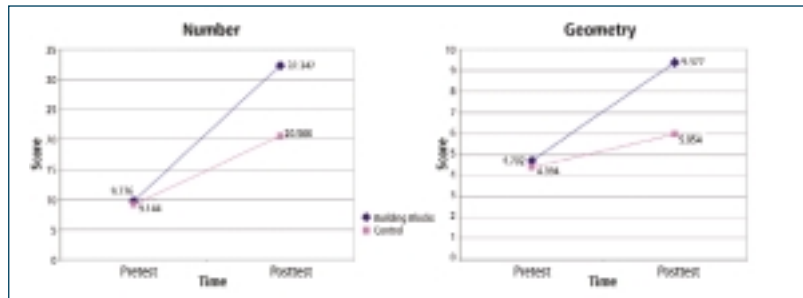


Figure 1

by meetings with leaders in early childhood education throughout Western New York including representatives from organizations such as Success by Six, an extensive review of the literature, and a survey of thousands of early childhood administrators, teachers, and caregivers in New York and Michigan. It considers that early childhood teachers and caregivers have diverse backgrounds and work situations. Although complex, all the plan's components follow the same guideline:

Provide professional development that is multifaceted, extensive, ongoing and systematic, intentional, reflective, focused on common actions and problems of practice and especially children's thinking, grounded in particular curriculum materials, and substantively situated in the classroom.

With the new resources of the curriculum and a plan for professional development, we sought funding for two large-scale evaluation projects.

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Emeritus Faculty Spotlight

A CRITICAL THINKING JOURNEY WITH SUSAN SCHAPIRO

Three years ago, Susan Schapiro retired from UB following a 14 year stint as director of the Methods of Inquiry program.

As noted in the cover story of this newsletter, the Methods of Inquiry program began in 1986 with a \$250,000 federally funded grant. Susan Schapiro was directly involved in the effort to secure that grant. Her background provides insight into how she became uniquely qualified to lead a program designed to teach critical thinking.

Schapiro's teaching career spans 50 years beginning with a position at the Cambridge School in Weston, MA, from 1953 to 1954. Just prior to teaching, Schapiro attended Harvard Law School with the intent to study the philosophy of law. She planned to complement her undergraduate studies, which concentrated on philosophy and psychology. At that time, however, no program existed at the Law School that would allow her to follow her general interest in jurisprudence. Consequently, she chose to leave law and begin her career in teaching, a career she had always thought she would enter eventually. Schapiro attributes her teaching style and interest in critical thinking to her classroom experiences at Harvard, where her professors used the Socratic method of questioning to push students to sharpen their wits.

After her husband completed his military obligation in 1956, Schapiro, a native of Buffalo, returned home. During the two years of her husband's military service, she worked for the University of South Carolina's Bureau

of Business and Economic Research, writing papers, leading seminars for local businessmen, and working on economic predictors for the future of South Carolina. Once home, Schapiro joined the faculty of the Buffalo Seminary where she taught geometry and a class called "Problems of Democracy." The latter used classical sources to pinpoint modern dilemmas. Shortly thereafter, she was invited to become a member of the Nichols School faculty. It was during this time, the early 1960s, that educators were faced with a challenge. Traditional authorities were being rejected and many educators feared the development of a moral vacuum. Educators welcomed a course in critical thinking, one that might prepare students to consider ethical problems by using critical thinking skills to understand the moral choices confronting them. Schapiro brought "Problems of Democracy" up to date and taught "Social and Political Value Theory" until she left Nichols in 1982.

In 1982, at age 52, Schapiro began her pursuit of a Ph.D. and entered GSE's Social Foundations doctoral program. While working as a graduate assistant in the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, she was asked to investigate programs that other institutions were using to enhance undergraduate education. Her research uncovered several successful models of critical thinking programs that became the

foundation for UB's Methods of Inquiry program. Schapiro was encouraged to write a grant to secure funding for the concept, and the Methods of Inquiry program was born.

Schapiro recalls that 700 students participated in the first year of the program and those numbers have been consistent throughout the years. Current director, Kelly Ahuna, reports that approximately 600 students attended classes last year. Schapiro also notes that the Methods of Inquiry program continues to be successful because it is eclectic: it was developed and continues

to evolve by incorporating the best information from other successful critical thinking programs across the nation.

Since her retirement in 2000, Schapiro has remained active as a scholar, teacher, and in providing service to the community. She co-authored the book *College Transition: A Critical Thinking Approach* in 2001. This book provides high school students with strategies to master the critical thinking and learning skills to succeed in college. Schapiro has also been teaching "Problems of Identity in Literature" and "Existentialism in Literature" for the UB Honors Program Seminars; and she is a trustee of Temple Beth Zion and an honorary trustee of the Buffalo Seminary. ●



SUSAN SCHAPIRO, PH.D.
(1992, Social Foundations)

ALUMNI NOTES

'60s

Joan Ohl (Ed.M., 1969, College Counseling and Student Personnel Work) was appointed the commissioner of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Washington, D.C. Ohl oversees the agency's \$19 billion annual budget while leading a staff of 175 that addresses the concerns of millions of families in need.

'70s

Rosemary Callard-Szulgit (Ed.D., 1979, Educational Administration) authored two books in 2003: *Parenting and Teaching the Gifted* and *Perfectionism and Gifted Children* (both published by Rowman & Littlefield). Her third book, *Teaching the Gifted in an Inclusion Classroom: Activities that Work*, will be published in spring 2004. For more information about these books, visit her website: partners-for-excellence.com.

Anthony Nigro (Ed.M., 1976, College Counseling) is the supervisor for vocational rehabilitation services at the Buffalo Psychiatric Center.

'80s

Leon Smith (Ph.D., 1982, Higher Education) serves as the director of academic standards at Buffalo State College, where he is responsible for monitoring the academic progress of all students. He is also the coordinator of the Ethnic Minority Honors/Scholarship Program.

'90s

Rosa D'Abate (M.A., 1994, School Psychology) is the coordinator of student services in the Williamsville School District.

Kate Ferguson (Ph.D., 1995, Educational Administration) has been appointed director of enrollment marketing and communication services, in addition to her position as associate vice provost. As director, she is responsible for marketing services, student and staff communication, web services, and graduate student recruitment services.

Steve Harvey (Ph.D., 1997, Social Foundations) is the director of national program coordination for EPIC (Every Person Influences Children) in Buffalo.

Michele Marable (Ph.D., 1996, Special Education) was named chair of the Department of Undergraduate Education at Canisius College.

Teresa Lawrence (Ed.M., 1993, Mathematics Education) was selected as the 2004 Outstanding Educator of the Year by the School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS).

'00s

Denny Atkinson (Ed.M., 2003, Elementary Education) is the English and career communications teacher at the Erie 1 BOCES/ Harkness Career and Technical Center in Buffalo.

Alan Gellin (Ph.D., 2003, Higher Education) published the article "The effect of undergraduate student involvement on critical thinking: A meta-analysis of the literature 1991-2000" in the November/December 2003 issue of the *Journal of College Student Development*.

Tim Hartigan (Ph.D., 2001, Higher Education) has been appointed program coordinator at Millard Fillmore College on UB's South Campus.

Jennifer Hess (Ph.D., 2003, Social Foundations) had her revised dissertation accepted as a book with SUNY Press. The forthcoming book, *Muddy Ruggers: Contesting Femininity Through Women's Rugby*, will be released in 2005.

Susan Paige (Ph.D., 2003, Elementary Education) is a lecturer in the Department of Exceptional Education at Buffalo State College.

Bruce Shields (Ph.D., 2000, Educational Administration) is an assistant professor in the Department of Education at Daemen College in Buffalo.

Barry Smith (Ph.D., 2002, Higher Education) is the vice president for student life at Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, New York.

If you would like to be included in a future newsletter, please e-mail your information to Assistant Dean Jenifer Lawrence at jlawrenc@buffalo.edu.

Planned Giving

Are you looking for a proven way to generate reliable income?

Many alumni and friends of the Graduate School of Education are pleasantly surprised to discover that through a charitable gift annuity they can make a contribution to the school and at the same time generate annual guaranteed income for themselves, their spouses, and/or others for life.

With a charitable gift annuity a donor transfers money or stock to the University at Buffalo Foundation, Inc. In return, the foundation contractually promises to pay a fixed amount every year for as long as you live. Many alumni have found this to be an excellent way to:

- ◆ Support students, a specific academic program, or a particular professor's teaching or research activity at UB. You may designate the gift portion of your contribution to whatever you wish.
- ◆ Ensure reliable and predictable income as all assets held by the University at Buffalo Foundation guarantee the annuity income to be paid to you.
- ◆ Increase current income by converting low income yielding assets (i.e., appreciated stock paying little or no dividend) to one that pays a fixed return regardless of market performance.
- ◆ Earn immediate tax benefits including a charitable deduction that can be used to offset current income tax obligations along with possible capital gains tax savings.



WENDY IRVING, J.D. '91, ED.M.
(1991, College Counseling and Student Personnel Work)

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A charitable gift annuity is a long-established, popular, and flexible way to make a charitable gift and also fulfill other personal financial and philanthropic objectives. Consider the following example:

Susan, 70, has a \$25,000 CD coming due soon and is disappointed to learn that she would be able to renew for only a 3% annual return.

Susan decides to let her desire to make a gift to the Graduate School of Education and her desire to generate a higher rate of return work together by contributing the \$25,000 for a charitable gift annuity that will pay her 6.5% – or \$1,625 each year for life. The actual return on the gift annuity is more than twice the return she could have received from the CD, but the “real” return is even greater. REASON: \$1,007.50 of Susan's annual payment will be tax-free for the balance of her life expectancy.

To calculate the annual annuity payment multiply the rate for your age by the funding amount you are considering. We would be pleased to give you rates for other ages and also calculate your charitable deduction.

ANNUAL ANNUITY RATE

ONE LIFE

Age	Annuity Rate
55	5.5%
60	5.7%
65	6.0%
70	6.5%
75	7.1%
80	8.0%
85	9.5%

TWO LIVES

Ages	Annuity Rate
55-55	5.0%
60-60	5.4%
65-65	5.6%
70-70	5.9%
75-75	6.3%
80-80	6.9%
85-85	7.9%

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss your planning concerns and possible charitable solutions with you. If you wish to learn more about establishing a charitable gift annuity with the University at Buffalo Foundation or a personalized gifting illustration summarizing possible benefits for you, please contact Wendy Irving, senior director of planned giving, at (716) 645-3312, ext. 238 or irving@buffalo.edu. You may also contact Marilyn Koren, director of development for GSE, at (716) 645-2478, ext. 1029 or mjkoren@buffalo.edu. ●

“HIRE EDUCATION: PREPARING FOR YOUR FUTURE CAREER IN EDUCATION” CONFERENCE

The Graduate School of Education hosted a “HIRE Education: Preparing for Your Future Career in Education” conference in November 2003. The conference goal was to bring GSE alumni back to UB to discuss job search strategies and skills with current graduate students. The conference featured interactive panel discussions in two career tracks (“K-12 Teachers, Counselors, and School Psychologists” and “College/University Faculty & Administrators”) where students asked alumni panelists questions regarding specific career issues. Students attended three 45-minute panel sessions within each career track. Topics discussed during these sessions included how to use your graduate experience to help find a job, resume writing tips, successful interviewing techniques, and the secrets to getting published.



Julius Adams, Ph.D. '88, Associate Dean for Teacher Education, GSE; Bennie Kyle, M.A. '96, School Psychologist, Buffalo Board of Education; Cindy DeMarchis, Ed.M. '91, School Counselor, North Tonawanda High School; and Catherine Battaglia, Ph.D. '97, Principal, City Honors (l to r) are the GSE alumni panelists for a K-12 Teachers, Counselors, and School Psychologists career track session discussing the topic: Making the Most of Your Student Teaching, Subbing, and Practicum/Internship. Current GSE master's student Maria Baldassare (center) was the moderator for this panel session.



Barry Smith, Ph.D. '02, Vice President for Student Life, Roberts Wesleyan College; Beth Delgenio, Ph.D. '01, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, UB; Letitia Thomas, Ed.M. '93, Director, Cora P. Maloney College, UB; and Bill Harden, Ph.D. '81, Admissions Assistant, Graduate Admissions, GSE (l to r) are the GSE alumni panelists for a College/University Faculty & Administrators career track session discussing the topic: Curriculum Vitaes, Portfolios, and Research Statements. Current GSE doctoral student David Forgues (far right) was the moderator for this panel session.

**KOREN APPOINTED
DIRECTOR OF
DEVELOPMENT**

Marilyn Koren has joined the Graduate School of Education as director of development. Working in development for the past 13 years, she most recently worked as the associate director of development and major gifts officer at Grove City College in PA. A former elementary teacher and a Western New Yorker for 33 years, Koren likes the fact that the mission of GSE so strongly reflects her own values. “Private support,” notes Koren, “makes a critical difference in what GSE is able to do together as a community – in the research we are able to advance, the new programs we are able to create, and the talented students we are able to support.”

Ms. Koren is aware that many alumni have not been in touch with UB since their graduation. A significant part of her job will be to help alumni find meaningful ways to



MARILYN KOREN

become involved in GSE through personal visits – learning more about exciting new programs, reliving fond memories, and investing in the future of the University. Koren firmly believes that the support and commitment of each GSE family member will result in positive changes in education: “Your generous contributions at any level will help provide financial aid for future students, support our expanding use of technology, and further enhance our research resources in GSE.” ●

GSE Summer Professional Development

BY MARA HUBER

The Graduate School of Education is pleased to announce its summer line-up of professional development conferences and workshops. Distinguished faculty will join with local experts to provide relevant and engaging professional development on the topics of science assessment, teacher mentoring, special education, and adolescent grief, suicide, and depression. Please join us for these exciting events.

SCIENCE ASSESSMENTS

June 28-July 1, 2004 | 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Cost: \$285

Program information: Dr. Xiufeng Liu at xliu5@buffalo.edu
Facilitators: Jeff Arnold, Ed.M. (1993, Science Education), Daemen College; Xiufeng Liu, Ph.D., UB; and Joe Zawicki, Ph.D. (2002, Science Education), Buffalo State College; Co-developed with Buffalo State College and Daemen College.

Workshops will help middle and high school science teachers develop skills and knowledge to analyze and interpret students' performances on New York State science program and Regents' (grade 8, biology, earth science, chemistry, and physics) exams. Please bring copies of students' answer sheets from the most recent Regents exam (at least one class set) for analysis. Please obtain district permission if required.

5TH ANNUAL SUMMER TEACHER MENTORING INSTITUTE

July 12-16, 2004

Cost: \$300

Program information: Dr. Suzanne Miller at smiller@buffalo.edu
Presenters: Diane Zigo, Ph.D. (1998, English Education), UB and Regina Dunlavy Derrico, M.A., Williamsville East

The Summer Teacher Mentoring Institute is designed to provide participants with professional development addressing key issues in the induction of pre-service and early career teachers. Sessions will include presentations, simulations, and workshops focusing on the essential components of quality induction programs; ways to help beginning teachers move toward ambitious levels of teaching and educational leadership; and ways to foster reflective practice among educators at all experience levels. The Institute is appropriate for new and experienced mentor teachers, cooperating teachers, school liaison coordinators, administrators, university teacher supervisors, and teacher educators.

BEST PRACTICES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

July 12, 2004 | 8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$149

Program information: Dr. Sharon Raimondi at raimonsl@yahoo.com

Presenter: Wanda Blanchett, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

This workshop will focus on best practices for children with disabilities and those who are at risk of failure. Dr. Blanchett will discuss successful practices for working with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

HELPING STUDENTS IN PAIN: BRIDGES TO THE CLASSROOM

July 13, 2004 | 8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$149

Program information: Dr. Mara Huber at mbhuber@buffalo.edu

This all-day conference will provide school and agency practitioners with developmentally appropriate interventions that will help them feel confident in their interactions with children and adolescents during difficult and painful times. This conference will include both morning and afternoon workshops.

A.M. Workshops:

Adolescent Suicide Prevention: Making a Connection

Thomas Frantz, Ph.D. and Jenifer Lawrence, Ph.D. (2001, Counselor Education), C.R.C.

Prevention of Anxiety and Depression: Talking So Kids Can Hear Us

Catherine Cook-Cottone, Ph.D. (1997, Counseling Psychology) and Linda Kane, Ed.M. (2001, School Counseling)

P.M. Workshops:

Grief, Loss, and Pain: Art as a Bridge to Children's Words

Catherine Cook-Cottone, Ph.D.; Eileen Hothow, M.S., C.R.C.; and Molly Flynn, M.S.

Life Threatening Illness in Childhood: Symptoms, Support, and Quality of Life

Jim Donnelly, Ph.D. (1988, Counseling Psychology); Julie Palmer, M.S. (2003, Rehabilitation Counseling), C.R.C.; and Sue Huff, R.N., M.S.N.

To register for these exciting events, please call GSE's Office of Continuing Professional Education at (716) 645-6642 or visit www.ubthissummer.net for a complete list of summer offerings.

Mara Huber, Ph.D., is director of special programs in the Graduate School of Education.

GSE Small Schools Initiative

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN WESTERN NEW YORK

The Graduate School of Education, in conjunction with the Education Innovation Consortium (EIC), has taken a lead role in introducing the small schools initiative to the Western New York educational community. Compelling research over the last thirty years suggests that small schools improve grades and test scores while also contributing to lower dropout rates. These findings are particularly significant for female students and students of color. In addition, small schools appear to be safer and more secure as violence and alcohol and drug use among students tend to decrease in small school environments.

While advocates of small schools date back to the 1960s, initiatives first began to take hold in the early 1990s. Today, small school initiatives can be found in every major city in the nation. Statistically, small schools have a maximum number of 40 students per grade level, K-8, or 100 students per grade level, 9-12. Philosophically, small schools have two distinguishing characteristics. First, the students are visible: the small school environment allows teachers and administrators the opportunity to know each student within the school. Secondly, small school models seek to build stronger working relationships among the staff. Specifically, teachers within each school are encouraged to work together as a professional community to ensure student success.

Among the issues being discussed are how small schools will meet the specific needs of the Western New York community.

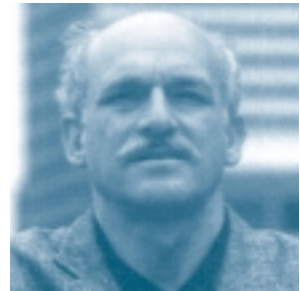
In 2001, GSE sponsored a forum to discuss developing a small schools initiative in Buffalo. As a result, GSE recruited two experienced educators to assist with the initiative: Dr. Michael Klonsky, executive director of the Small Schools Workshop, and Dr. Pedro

Noguera, professor in the Steinhardt School of Education, New York University. Each scholar has extensive experience researching and helping to create small schools in communities similar to Western New York.

Currently, the small schools initiative is in the planning phase. Klonsky and Noguera are working in a

cooperative arrangement with GSE and the Buffalo Public Schools in the redesign of up to seven Buffalo Schools, as well as other possible schools in the Amherst Central School District. Klonsky and Noguera have joined GSE Dean Mary Gresham and EIC founder Don Jacobs, in planning meetings with Buffalo Schools Superintendent Marion Canedo, along with the building principals from the participating schools. Ann Marie Tryjankowski, managing director of the EIC (and doctoral candidate in GSE) is coordinating the effort for the team. Among the issues being discussed are possible funding sources and exploring how small schools models will meet the specific education needs of the Western New York community. In addition, the planning team will be using small schools models as a foundation for the development of Buffalo's landmark Renaissance Project Schools Initiative that will open district-authorized charter schools across the city.

September 2005 has been proposed as the opening date for the new small schools strategy in Buffalo. While this goal is within the typical three to five years needed to develop small school initiatives, it is too early to determine the specific models individual schools will follow. As the planning process continues, the local community will also be asked for their input to help design these schools. In this way, parents, teachers, students, and administrators will play a role in creating schools that benefit the Western New York area. ●



MICHAEL KLONSKY



PEDRO NOGUERA



DON JACOBS, PH.D.
(1993, Educational Administration)

WNY School District Spotlight

NORTH TONAWANDA CITY SCHOOLS

The North Tonawanda City School District is comprised of nine schools: six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. According to information on their website at www.ntcityschools.wnyric.org, these nine schools serve over 4800 students. In addition, the site reports there are 375 teachers and 57 other professionals employed across the district.

Superintendent John George (Ed.D., 1979, Curriculum Planning) believes that the North Tonawanda School District is a place in which all children can learn; all students, teachers, and administrators are treated with respect, support, and appreciation; and that high expectations are the norm. For example, the district has set a goal that 100% of all graduates will be enrolled in postsecondary education or employed in their selected field (vocation) of study by 2008.

To determine the extent that GSE alumni are employed within the district, we cross-referenced degree information from our alumni database with an employee name and title list we received in August 2003 from the district's

administrative offices. GSE is well represented as 41 alumni and 4 current graduate students are employed within the district; accounting for 12% of the district employees. Segmented by profession, 11% of the teachers (this figure includes the four graduate students), 22% of the school counselors, 25% of the school psychologists, and 28% of the administrative positions are held by GSE alumni. The administrative positions and alumni are Superintendent George, Assistant Principals Lisa Colburn (Ed.M., 2000, Educational Administration) and Patricia Kormash (Ed.M., 1975, French 7-12), Elementary Principal James Fisher (Ed.M., 1993, General Education), and Director of Special Education Mary Lawler (M.A., 1993, School Psychology).

Commenting on GSE's presence within the district, Dr. George said "as a district, we are pleased with the number and quality of GSE alumni in our professional ranks." On a personal level he added, "I am proud to be a GSE alumnus. The program provided me with solid academic preparation for the challenge of school leadership."

ABOUT THE SPOTLIGHT

This is the initial installment of a new feature called School District Spotlight. This feature will appear in each newsletter and highlight a specific Western New York school district. Each spotlight will include a district profile and describe the extent that Graduate School of Education alumni are employed within that district.

Six Traits Writing in the Buffalo Schools

BY JIM COLLINS

The name “Six Traits Writing” refers to an approach to writing assessment and instruction built on the notion that writing performance can be measured and enhanced through attention to six main criteria: Ideas, Organization, Voice, Sentence Fluency, Word Choice, and Conventions. The approach is becoming extremely popular both locally and nationally, probably due to its ties to both assessment and instruction. In this age of standards-driven educational reform, an approach to writing which unifies assessment and instruction is bound to be popular, especially since so many of the standards-based assessments in New York and elsewhere use writing as the primary means of assessment across the major content areas. One positive aspect of teaching to the new assessments has been renewed interest in programs to improve the teaching and learning of writing, and *Six Traits Writing* has been the program of choice for many districts.

For three years I have directed a professional development program in *Six Traits Writing* in the Buffalo schools. The program focuses on helping teachers to develop writing strategies for the six traits of writing. Writing strategies are the mental procedures writers use to solve problems they encounter while writing. Planning before you write is an example of a writing strategy, and so are deciding to start a new paragraph, adding words to a sentence to clarify meaning, and pausing in mid-sentence to correct a spelling. These writing actions are not accidental, but rather the result of familiarity with the workings of written language. For experienced writers, writing strategies tend to operate below the limen of consciousness because the thinking procedures involved in writing are relatively automatic, that is, until we encounter difficulty – when the topic of writing is sufficiently challenging, we all become conscious of the strategies we’re using. The benefit here is that experienced writers can spend more cognitive energy on generating and shaping the content of writing, because the tools and structures of written language come readily to mind to serve their thinking as they write.

Novice writers, on the other hand, have it doubly difficult. They have to not only think about the content of writing, but about the tools of written language as well. This is why struggling writers have so many questions about form and function—What can I say about this

topic? How many words? How do I begin? Do I need a title? How do I spell _____?

In our program in Buffalo we use the six traits of writing with teachers and students to clarify, organize, and focus writing assessment and instruction. Simply stated, the Six Traits approach makes a highly complex cognitive activity more manageable by breaking it into six related components. These six traits of good writing – *Ideas, Organization, Voice, Sentence Fluency, Word Choice, and Conventions* – are consistent with the five qualities of good writing identified by New York State assessments – *Meaning, Development, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions*. Thus, Six Traits helps make the expectations of teachers, administrators, and the state assessments visible to students.

Another valuable part of the Six Traits approach is the close connection among assessment, instruction, and learning built into the model. One connection is found in the set of rubrics accompanying the traits. The materials we use in Buffalo, taken from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, include three sets of rubrics for each trait, which we call “kid-friendly,” “student-friendly,” and “teacher-friendly,” respectively, as an indication of grade and audience appropriateness. As with the six traits themselves, these rubrics help make the expectations of teachers and administrators and the New York State assessments clear to students.

Taken together, the traits and rubrics are the heart of the Six Traits model. They clarify and illustrate what good writing is for both teachers and students, and when taught one trait and rubric at a time, they organize instruction and learning to make the complexities of writing more accessible to students.

Our *Six Traits Writing* program in Buffalo is sponsored by the Western New York School Support Center at Erie 1 BOCES and the GSE Dean’s Office. To date, we have trained more than 800 Buffalo school teachers in the Six Traits approach. In addition, the program supports three doctoral



JIM COLLINS

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GSE Remembers Ruth McGrath

BY ELAINE BARTKOWIAK

Ruth Ehrig McGrath (Ed.D., 1953, Educational Administration), professor emeritus at UB, died January 26, 2004. Born in Buffalo, December 29, 1908, Dr. McGrath graduated from State Teachers College at Buffalo in 1930 and received her master's degree in education from UB in 1950.

She was associated with the Early Childhood Research Center (ECRC), which was formerly referred to as the Laboratory for the Study of Young Children, since 1938. After serving as the program's head teacher from 1938-1950, Dr. McGrath became the director of the ECRC until 1979 when she retired.

Dr. McGrath was a noted author and a frequent speaker at regional, national, and international early childhood education conferences. She also chaired several conferences within the United States and Canada, including Buffalo; Niagara Falls; Dallas, Texas; and Hamilton, Ontario. She was passionate about her field, teaching young children and challenging both undergraduate and graduate students to become outstanding teachers and researchers. Dr. McGrath traveled extensively throughout the world, visiting preschool programs in 43 countries.

She was past president of the New York State Council for Children and the Early Childhood Education Council of Western New York. Dr. McGrath represented the United States in the O.M.E.P. World Organization for Early Childhood Education, and was recognized in the World's Who's Who of Women, Who's Who in the United States, as well as numerous other sources.

During her distinguished career, Dr. McGrath enriched the lives of thousands of young children and UB students. She will be missed by all those who had the privilege to work with and get to know her during her tenure at UB.

Elaine Bartkowiak (Ph.D., 1996, Elementary Education) is assistant director of the Early Childhood Research Center.



Current ECRC Director James Hoot, Ruth McGrath, and then UB President Steven Sample (l to r) at the October 1989 ceremony commemorating the renaming of ECRC as the Fisher-Price Endowed Early Childhood Research Center.

Faculty Focus

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The first is a U.S. Dept. of Education (DOE)-funded project, one of seven grants focusing on preschool curriculum evaluation research. Working with colleagues from the University of California, Berkeley, we are evaluating the effectiveness of our combined mathematics curricula. Many local classrooms will be cooperating with this scientific, experimental study, including Head Start classrooms and Universal Pre-K programs in the Buffalo Public Schools. The goal of this research is to implement rigorous evaluations of preschool curricula that will provide information to support informed choices of classroom curricula for early childhood programs.

While the successes of research-based, innovative educational practices are promising, we also know that such practices have difficulty succeeding on a large scale without direct support from those who created the innovations. We therefore proposed a second large-scale evaluation project to the U.S. Interagency Educational Research Initiative (*IERI* – a joint effort of the NSF, DOE, and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) to study how curricula can be “scaled up” to work in many diverse classrooms. Our present, “Phase 1” project, is conducting a rigorous experimental test of scaling-up our model of mathematics curricula and professional development that includes what we have learned in all our previous projects. We are carefully examining what variables are related to the success of the model’s implementation in a wide variety of classrooms throughout Western New York.

The model involves the collaboration of key groups to support (a) the Pre-K math curriculum (*Building Blocks*) in which all components are structured upon a common core of learning trajectories (curriculum activities that are connected to “developmental progressions” of children’s thinking); (b) a course for teachers including hands-on experience and interactions with peers around common issues and problems of practice and work with children; (c) technical and pedagogical coaching during the school year (coaches visit teachers at least once a month); and (d) materials and active roles for parents and administrators. We also use technology extensively to support children, teachers, and the research. The model includes software for children that embodies research-based learning trajectories and tutoring strategies, video of children’s math thinking (interviews and classroom work) and teaching strategies in the context of the curriculum, distance learning centers, and a UB-constructed Web Portal that provides scalable access to the project’s learning trajectories and best practices (e.g., videos and commentaries).

We are currently seeking funding to continue in “Phase 2,” to use this model to scale up locally in other areas of the country. We hope to avoid what is too often seen in educational innovations: the lessening of effects over time and distance by promoting teaching and learning (including a new course for teachers), broadening the participation of underrepresented minorities in Pre-K mathematical activity and professional development in that area, and building and strengthening school-university partnerships. ●

Six Traits Writing in the Buffalo Schools

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students who each work intensively in three schools: Corinne Kindzierski, Kim Leavitt, and Pauline Skowron. This year, Corinne is working in Martin Luther King School, Kim is in Frank Sedita School, and Pauline is in Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy.

The research component of this program has already produced one completed dissertation and another is underway. Two grant proposals and dozens of tested writing strategies have also come out of the work, and I’m currently writing a book on the lessons and strategies we’ve developed. Associate Professor Catherine Cook-Cottone (Ph.D., 1997, Counseling Psychology) (from the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology) and I are developing the theoretical model

combining writing traits and writing strategies, and also analyzing the writing, which students from one Buffalo elementary school produced for state assessments as fourth and eighth graders. In this research we are examining the writing for developmental patterns in features of written language at levels of text, syntax, cohesive ties, and words.

For more details about the *Six Traits Writing* program, an expanded version of this story is available at www.gse.buffalo.edu/newsletter/. ●

Jim Collins, Ph.D., is professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction.

Lecture Series

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

All sessions are held from 8:30-10 a.m. at the University Inn and Conference Center, 2402 North Forest Road, Amherst. Cost per session is \$25, which includes a continental breakfast. For further information, call (716) 645-6642. The lecture series is presented by GSE's Office of Continuing Professional Education.

2004 LECTURE SCHEDULE

APRIL 22

GUOFANG LI, PH.D.

"Exposing the 'Model Minority' Myths:
Stories of a Chinese-Canadian Family"

MAY 20

LAURI JOHNSON, PH.D.

"Parental Involvement in Schools"

JUNE 3

ROSE YLIMAKI, PH.D.

"The Impact of Current Reading Policies
On Holistic Beliefs and Practices"

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Editorial Consultant: Jenifer Lawrence (Ph.D., 2001, Counselor Education)

Proofreader: David Forgues (Ed.M., 2000, General Education)

RECEPTION AT AERA

Please join us for a reception during the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in San Diego.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 2004

6:45 P.M. - 8:45 P.M.

SAN DIEGO MARRIOTT HOTEL & MARINA

Alumni, students, and friends of GSE are invited.

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