

THE DELTA KAPPA GAMMA BULLETIN

International Journal for Professional Educators

Fall 2009 • Volume 76-1



Excellent Educational Practices

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The *Bulletin*, the official journal of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, promotes professional and personal growth of members through publication of their writings.

The *Bulletin* invites materials appropriate to the Society's Purposes: position papers, applied and/or data-based research, and other articles on announced themes or other topics of interest to educators; letters to the editor; viewpoints; book reviews; annotated bibliographies; poetry; and graphic arts.

Prose manuscripts for the *Bulletin*, a refereed journal, are reviewed by the Editorial Board and the Society editorial staff. Selection is based on relevance of the

topics addressed, accuracy and validity, contribution to the professional literature, originality, quality of writing, and adherence to Submission Guidelines (see page 43). Editorial Board members evaluate each submission's focus, organization, development, readability and accessibility to the general audience of *Bulletin* readers. Due to the diversity of the *Bulletin* audience, material of a religious, political or patriotic nature is not suitable for publication.

Please send publication materials to **bulletin@deltakappagamma.org** or to *Bulletin* Editorial Staff, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, P.O. Box 1589, Austin, TX 78767-1589.

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Published by The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International

*The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International
promotes professional and personal growth of women
educators and excellence in education.*

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Call for Submissions

Members are encouraged to submit manuscripts for consideration by the *Bulletin* Editorial Board. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* accepts Action Research, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Annotated Bibliographies, Program Descriptions, Position Papers, Book Reviews, Viewpoints, Graphic Arts, Letters to the Editor, and Poetry for **print** issues (spring, fall) and **online** issues (summer, winter). Manuscripts should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise, and appropriate for Bulletin readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable and free from gender, political, patriotic or religious bias. For more detailed information, please refer to the Submission Guidelines on page 43 and the Submission Grid on page 44. Listed below are the suggested themes of upcoming issues.

Spring 2010 (76-3) 21st Century School Environment

(Postmark deadline is December 1, 2009)

Physical & Emotional Environments • Sustainability • “Going Green” • Healthy Buildings • Security • Health Concerns in Schools • New Designs • International Structures/Infrastructures

Summer 2010 (76-4) Women Educators and Changing Times

(Postmark deadline is March 1, 2010)

Redefining Roles • Gender Roles • Career Change • Leadership Roles • Accountability • Responsibility • Ethics • Teacher Preparation • Certification • National Board Certification • Alternative pathways • Teacher-student Relationships • Respect • International Influences

Submit all materials to:

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Did you know?

The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin received recognition as a 2009 APEX Award winner in category no. 103: Covers. The APEX awards – Awards for Publication Excellence – is an initiative of *Writing that Works: The Business Communications Report*. Now in their 21st year, the APEX awards recognize outstanding contributions in the field of communications – Congratulations to the Headquarters staff of 2008 for a job well done!

Editorial

Much to the chagrin of many a teacher education candidate, excellent educational practices often have little to do with recipes for success, and much to do with understanding local context. Indeed, the challenge of understanding and responding effectively to context is common to beginning and experienced educators alike, working in all subject areas and with all types of learners. This challenge of context is a recurring theme of articles selected for inclusion in this issue of *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*.

This issue's theme, "Excellent Educational Practices," elicited numerous submissions for the consideration of the Editorial Board. The manuscripts selected for publication reflect a variety of milieus, subject areas, and pedagogical approaches, all in the interests of pursuing various iterations of excellence in education. In their article on a tutoring initiative, co-authors June Hetzel, Susan Newcomb and Joanna Fuller describe successful pairing of high school learners with university students. Chris Coughlin, Gloy-sis Mayers and Deborah Wooldridge offer an historical overview and describe contemporary initiatives for high quality kindergarten programming in the United Arab Emirates. Angela Kern and Barbara B. Levin describe a successful on-line program initiative, while Stacey Reeves and Pokey Stanford share their approach to the use of rubrics in assessment.

In addition to these articles and program descriptions, this issue also offers three engaging viewpoints. In the first, Marie Renaudo offers a personal account of exemplary literacy teaching experiences – after she thought she had retired! In the next two, Jenny Sue Flannagan and Irene Hope Gazza each share their perspectives

on meeting learner needs, through relevant science education practices in the first instance, and relevant pedagogy in the second. Also in the viewpoint section are reviews of the Educator's Book Award Selections for 2009, and the third in a series of interviews with key women educators, a feature initiated by the 2008-2010 Editorial Board.

Rounding out this issue of the *Bulletin* are three features specific to Society activities, but with broad appeal. First, is recognition of the Society's 2009 International Achievement Award recipient, Dr. Barbara Day. This celebration of Dr. Day's accomplishments serves to illustrate excellence in service. Second, poetry included in this issue speaks to member interest and commitment. And, last, the fourth and final instalment celebrating the 75th anniversary of the *Bulletin* can be found on page 6.

In reading through submissions and reviews, selecting – and not selecting – articles, poems, and reviews for publication, in editing manuscripts and preparing this issue of *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* for press, I felt on more than one occasion my own challenges of context. As editor of a journal, perhaps especially an education journal, the importance of adhering to local needs whilst addressing broad educational issues is omnipresent. I am excited to face these challenges as *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* moves beyond its already amazing accomplishment of 75 consecutive years of publication, and hope our authors and readers are too!

Lace Marie Brogden, Ph.D.
Editor 2009-2010

Fostering Professional Growth of Women Educators for 75 Years – and Counting!

After over 50 years of continuous publication, the Editorial Board garnered a perennial presence in the opening credits of *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* beginning in 1986. Since that time, appointed members of the Editorial Board have devoted countless hours to reading and evaluating manuscripts for possible inclusion in the *Bulletin*. Their efforts in this regard, then as now, center around three main purposes: first, they dictate the intellectual standards associated with articles selected for publication; second, members of the editorial board work hard to consider the interests of the *Bulletin* readership; and finally, this group of dedicated women invoke their individual areas of professional and academic expertise in a collective effort to choose manuscripts they believe will make worthwhile contributions to practicing educators and to the field of education.

Over the years, the Editorial Board – in collaboration with the Editor and with Headquarters staff – has worked to ensure the ideals of the Society are reflected in and through the *Bulletin*. To this end, *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* plays a special role in the realization of Purposes no. 3 – To Advance Women in Education, no. 6 – To Stimulate Personal and Professional Growth, and no. 7 – To Inform Members of Important Issues. Indeed, the *Bulletin* offers members a unique opportunity for professional development. Because at least one contributing author of any manuscript must be a member, the *Bulletin* is the ideal vehicle for members who want to pursue academic achievement through publication.

At present, at the discretion of the International President, each member of the Editorial Board is appointed for a non-renewing, four-year term. The terms are intentionally staggered, contributing to consistency of standards from one biennium to the next. In addition to dedication to the Society, members of the Editorial Board are key women educators who have demon-

The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin Editorial Board (circa 1986)

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strated commitment and expertise to their field of scholarship and beyond. This is an important trait as these members are called upon to evaluate manuscripts emanating from a broad range of scholarly disciplines and research paradigms. The skills and abilities of the members of the Editorial Board serve to illustrate one more way that the *Bulletin's* 75 years of publication have contributed to the professional and personal growth of women educators, and to excellence in education!



Photo credit: William Branson III

The 77th Delta Kappa Gamma International Achievement Award Recipient Dr. Barbara Day

BY CAROLYN RANTS

Each year The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International recognizes one member for her distinguished service to The Society. From recommendations submitted by members, chapters, or state organizations, the International Executive Board selects a member for this honor. The symbol of the honor is a gold medallion which is presented to the recipient. The first medallion of the International Achievement Award was given in 1933 to Dr. Annie Webb Blanton.

The individual awarded the medallion for 2009 is a scholar, a leader, a communicator, a university professor and chairperson, and an advocate for women. She is well known by many in The Society, for she has traveled to more than 40 states as a speaker and workshop presenter.

She has had articles published in the *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, as well as serving as editor of a book published by The Society entitled, *Education for the 21st Century, Key Issues: Leadership, Literacy, Legislation and Learning*. She has distinguished herself at chapter, state,

regional, and international levels. And, she has done all of this while continuing her work as an active educator.

The 2009 recipient has had a varied career in education as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent of schools and university professor, where she served as Chair of Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Teaching and Learning. Currently, she is serving as Professor and Chair of Curriculum and Instruction at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her textbooks, including *Early Childhood Education: Developmental/Experiential Learning*, now in its 4th edition, and *Good Schools for Young Children*, now in its 5th edition, are used at major universities and have been translated into several foreign languages. Her latest book, published by the Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society, is entitled *Teaching and Learning in the New Millennium*. She is an international lecturer and traveler and has studied and lectured on education in many parts of the world – Great Britain, South Africa, Korea, Japan, Singapore, and Switzerland just to name a few! She has received leadership awards from several professional organizations and societies, including the CINE Golden Eagle Award for a staff development program published by the Association of Supervision of Curriculum Development.

This Society leader was initiated in North Carolina into the Alpha Pi Chapter and later as a charter member of the Delta Beta Chapter. She has provided leadership to the Society ever since. At the international level she has chaired the Professional Affairs, Research, and Program of Work Committees and has served as a member of the Expansion Committee. She is a past Southeast Regional Director, a member of the Delta Kappa Gamma Educational Foundation Board of Trustees. She has also served as First Vice-president and was the International President for the 2006-2008 biennium. In each of these positions, she brought new ideas and new projects to the organization and strongly advocated for women, increasing both leadership and professional development opportunities.

Our recipient is a visionary and has promoted The Society in new arenas. She attended two National Legislative Seminars hosted by the U.S. Forum, three CTAUN conferences, and the annual meeting of the 2007 U.S. Fund for UNICEF. Most recently, her vision is reflected in the installation of two new state organizations, Denmark and Estonia, both of which occurred during her tenure as International President.

Her Achievement Award nomination form included the following statement: “She is gracious, positive, encouraging, and empowers women educators. She is a visionary; ‘Leading with Wisdom and Passion’ (her biennium theme), promoting ten new key initiatives, as well as other programmatic areas, and inspiring us to significant change.”

On behalf of the International Executive Board, it is my privilege and pleasure to acknowledge the 2009 International Achievement Award recipient – an extraordinary woman of wisdom and passion – Dr. Barbara Day.

THE AUTHOR

Dr. Carolyn Rants, International President 2008-2010, is a member of Mu Chapter, Sioux City, Iowa. She has been a member in three different states, Nebraska, Michigan, and the last 40+ years in Iowa. In July 2007, she retired from her position as Vice-President for Instruction and Student Services at Western Iowa Tech Community College. Dr Rants received the Eunah Temple Holden International Scholarship in 1981, and attended the Leadership Management Seminar at the University of Texas in Austin in 1987. She has served the Society in a variety of ways, as state president, on international committees, as regional director and first vice-president. Her theme for this biennium is *From Vision to Action: Advancing the Society*.



June Hetzel, Ph.D.



Susan Newcomb, Ph.D.



Joanna Fuller

Tutoring Initiative: A High School/University Partnership

BY JUNE HETZEL, SUSAN NEWCOMB AND JOANNA FULLER

Tutoring partnerships enable K-12 students to make progress under the mentorship of capable volunteers, while volunteers enjoy the reward of observing their tutees' academic progress. Especially during economic crises, it is critical to support volunteerism in our communities, making use of human capital and goodwill. In this three-year partnership between Biola University and La Mirada High School, the number of weekly volunteers ranged from 13-17 with individual tutors providing one to ten hours of volunteer service per week. By the end of the third year, the tutoring program offered 43 hours of tutoring in one-to-one and small group formats on a weekly basis. The number of high school students served grew from 42 students the first year of the partnership to 138 students served in the third year of the partnership.

Getting Started

In the spring of 2006, as faculty at La Mirada High School and Biola University in La Mirada, California concerned about test scores of incoming students, we decided to pursue a tutoring partnership. During the initial meeting between the high school and the university, we established a procedural protocol. Initial tutor inquiries would be screened at the university. If the university student had genuine interest, the potential tutor filled out a two-page application form. Tutors were then interviewed about important informa-

tion related to the subjects and levels with which each applicant felt most comfortable. Based upon each tutor's responses, we provided guidance about tutoring and the importance of consistency, mentorship, and demonstrating genuine interest in the high school students' lives. We then provided directions on fingerprinting clearance to ensure there were no criminal records in the tutors' background experiences. While tutor applications were collected at the university, the high school collected student applications. Once

the university students had the tutors' fingerprint clearances, tutor/tutee matches could be made.

Recruiting Strategies

High school tutees were recruited through Orientation Night, Back-to-School Night, Mid-Year Intervention Meetings, Open House, and periodic announcements via the school bulletin and the high school counselors. Tutors at Biola University were recruited by word of mouth and by posting flyers around common areas of the campus, including in dorms, announcements in students' electronic folders, and ads in education newsletters. We also handed out flyers at the entrance of the university cafeteria. "Undergraduate enrollments at U.S. colleges and universities are around 15 million and growing, and many institutions are expanding volunteer and service-learning programs. Colleges and universities can be especially fertile volunteer recruiting grounds" (Stiefvater, 2007, p. 7), and this mirrored our experience. The most fruitful recruiting strategy was presenting the need at the Freshman Community Service Informational Meeting at Biola University. Stiefvater (2007) offers the following tips for recruiting college students to

serve as tutors:

- 1) Consult with departments and financial aid offices to see if volunteering will qualify students for academic, work-study, and work-experience credits.
- 2) Get to know staff of campus volunteer and student activities offices and keep them informed of the good work their students are doing for your program.
- 3) Target departments with a child or youth focus, such as education, psychology, and social work.
- 4) Work with professors and department chairs to create service-learning opportunities through your program. Some colleges have service-learning coordinators you can work with.
- 5) With permission from student affairs, residential life, and other offices, reach out to student organizations, including fraternities and sororities. Many encourage or require their members to participate in community service and civic-engagement projects" (p. 7).

We not only recruited college students for our tutoring partnership, we also recruited a practicing classroom teacher who volunteered after school. "Understanding the backgrounds, needs, and motivations of volunteers who work with youth helps you create messages that resonate with like-minded individuals and interest them in your work" (Stiefvater, 2007, p. 4). Some of the helpful messages in our recruiting efforts included: a "chance to pass on what you know," the "ability to help change a young person's life," and "a chance to expand one's horizon" (Stiefvater, 2007, p. 4).

Tutoring Logistics

We organized the tutoring program at the high school using large charts with six columns for tracking the following data: Student Name, Contact Information, Subject, Availability, Hours per Week, and Assigned Tutor. We then matched each student to a Biola tutor according to his or her needs and availability. While the tutoring schedules were at all hours during the first two years (before school, during lunch, and after school), by the third year, we streamlined the schedule by having most of the tutoring take place from 3-5 p.m. after school.

Dr. June Hetzel is the Dean of Education at Biola University and a long-time member of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International's Beta Chapter in California. She can be contacted at june.hetzel@biola.edu.

Dr. Susan Newcomb is the Literacy Coach for La Mirada High School and an adjunct professor at California State University, Fullerton. Dr. Newcomb can be contacted at snewcomb@nlmusd.k12.ca.us.

Joanna Fuller is an undergraduate Liberal Studies major, Dr. Hetzel's Teaching Assistant at Biola University, and a volunteer tutor at La Mirada High School. Joanna can be contacted at Joanna.M.Fuller@biola.edu.

Tutor Testimonial of Success

The tutoring program has been a tremendous success. One tutor reflected on her first year tutoring (2006/2007): *I could tell that my students' confidence was boosted greatly by the one-on-one tutoring time. After I observed their learning style, I was able to teach accordingly and math began to make more sense.*

Reflecting on her second year tutoring (2007/2008), she wrote: *I began to really connect with and invest in the students I was tutoring. My favorite group of students to tutor was a small group of four geometry students. The dynamics between the students and me made tutoring a safe and fun place to learn, and the students would comment that they looked forward to tutoring. In fact, these four students who were strangers to each other before tutoring, became good friends and sought each other out on their high school campus during the day.*

In her third year (2008/2009) tutoring, she described her experiences as follows: *One of my Algebra students was difficult to teach; she had an apathetic attitude and I had to call her mother to help me keep her accountable to tutoring. After weeks of tutoring, she finally began to let down her guard and she gleaned as much as she could from our tutoring sessions. At the end of the school-year, she had brought her math grade up from a D- to a solid B!*

When we asked the tutor, "What was the most personally rewarding aspect of your involvement in the tutoring partnership?" she responded: *I love building relationships with my students and seeing them grow as individuals.*

The tutor described her overall experience as follows: *Being an education major, I have benefited tremendously from this tutoring program. As I have begun teaching a few lessons in actual classrooms, I find myself more confident and passionate about teaching because of my many good experiences at La Mirada High School!*

The tutor's successful experience in changing students' lives is the type of experience we want for all of our pre-service teachers. Many universities call this type of experience 'service learning.' "Service-learning combines service objectives with learning objectives to affect both the learner and the agency or community served. It combines volunteer work with opportunities

for reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and content knowledge" (Wang, 2009, p. 2). While this particular program was completely volunteer, and student commitments were in addition to field assignments required by Biola University's School of Education's courses, many universities, such as the University of South Carolina, build their tutoring partnerships with local schools within their course requirements by, for example, having their 400-level pre-service teachers tutor four days per week in an AVID (The Advancement Via Individual Determination Tutor) program with local schools (University of South Carolina, 2009).

Service-learning benefits both students and the agencies or communities they serve. Youth gain an opportunity to test, strengthen, and apply their academic studies and skills. They can explore career options, develop collaboration and problem-solving skills, and learn the importance of civic participation. According to a study by the National Youth Leadership Council, youth who participated in service that included a structured reflection of the type found in service-learning achieved positive civic outcomes in adulthood. (Finlay, Flanagan, & Black, 2007, cited in Wang, 2009, p. 3)

As can be seen by the tutor's testimonial in this article, her experience tutoring has not only benefited the high school students, but it has changed her life as well, strengthening her understanding of the rewards of teaching.

Tutee Testimonials of Success

Tutees, in general, provided overwhelmingly positive feedback. Comments include affirmations of being comfortable with the tutoring relationship. For example:

My tutor, Joanna, has helped me so much in going through proofs slowly, helping me memorize theorems better, and having patience with me.

I feel comfortable here with Joanna.

Tutee comments also indicated deepened insight into their subject matter:

It [tutoring] has helped me learn more about Geometry and it has helped me understand it more.

[Tutoring has helped me] by helping me

understand the concepts better.

Tutees further commented on grade improvement:

I was receiving a C- in the class but by the end I managed to get a B-. I took a test and I usually get a C or lower, but this time I got a B! [After 3 weeks of tutoring]

My grade has improved, and it has helped me grasp a better understanding on the subject.

Parent Perspectives

Parents have expressed deep appreciation for the high school/university tutoring partnership. One parent stated:

I feel that if tutoring was not available, [my child's] grade may have dropped to a C.

A second parent described her perceptions as follows:

The program is working well; time is sufficient and (my child) likes the comfortable, friendly environment. The tutors have good teaching skills.

The tutoring partnership was so successful at the high school that parents from a feeder middle school began to apply for their students to be tutored at the high school as well. We did accommodate three middle school students in math in the program, as well as initiate another tutoring partnership at the local elementary school.

Literacy Coach Perspectives

When the Literacy Coach was asked to reflect on the question, "What was the most personally rewarding aspect of your involvement in the literacy initiative?" she responded, "My work in the school district's literacy initiative is to expand student literacy proficiencies so that all students are exhibiting grade level capabilities. It seemed logical to reach out to our nearby university to try and gather more support for this large goal. Something that should be highlighted is how capable students became in the realm of math; literacy across the content areas was improved because of our tutoring partnership. It has been personally rewarding to see and hear that so many students are benefiting from this partnership. The benefits have been both academic and social, including a deeper love or at least interest in school and developing a sense of capability, especially with someone who is closer in age and in a different capacity than the

student's teacher. Students formed connections that helped them in a multitude of ways, similar to a Big Brother/Big Sister relationship."

The Literacy Coach also reflected on the three-year partnership: "With our budget crises, it will become ever more crucial to look into volunteer projects/opportunities to support the K-12 educational system. Having the opportunity to have college students on campus has been a wonderful experience since it has improved our school climate and has helped students feel that there is yet another resource they can access if and when they need to or want to."

University Perspective of Success

The Dean of the School of Education has come to believe the last three years of tutoring partnership with the La Mirada High School/Biola University Literacy Initiative has been tremendous. While she has enjoyed interviewing and screening tutors on the front end of the program, she has also been quite surprised that the majority of the tutors recruited were non-education majors. The great delight has been that some of these non-education majors have decided to become teachers based upon their experiences in this volunteer tutoring program. The most exciting moment for her was when one of the university tutors rushed into her office and plopped down into one of her office chairs, beaming. "I finally know what I'm going to do with my life!" the university tutor cried out. "I'm going to be a teacher." She then went on to describe how she had tutored two ninth graders in math who were failing. However, after three months of tutoring, both students had raised their failing grades to at least a B. The tutor was ecstatic, proclaiming "I've never done anything more rewarding in my life."

Challenges

While the rewards of the tutoring partnership have been many, the challenges have also been plentiful, particularly in the areas of scheduling, consistency, parent communication, and funding. Regarding scheduling, for example, some of the tutees were involved in after-school sports practices, so tutoring sessions were arranged at the La Mirada Public Library in the evening once a week.

In two consecutive years we had difficulties

with tutees consistently showing up to meet with their tutors. To ameliorate this problem, we had most of the Biola tutors come to the high school campus right after school on their assigned day, so that the high school students did not have to coordinate rides to meet off campus. In addition, we planned for about five students struggling in the same subject to meet with each Biola tutor, so that if some tutees did not come that day, the tutor still had at least one or more students with whom to work.

Additionally, there was the ongoing challenge of parent communication. Examples of frequently asked questions posed to counselors/office staff included:

Who is my child's assigned tutor?

Where does my child go to meet with the tutor?

How many day(s) does my child attend? How many hours per day?

How do I contact my child's tutor if he/she can't attend on the assigned days?

Can my child receive tutoring in multiple subjects?

When will I hear about his/her status in relation to the waiting list?

Because of the individual nature of the tutoring program, and because it was designed to be tailored to individual needs, time-consuming conversations were necessary to maintain clear communication channels with parents.

Additionally, another challenge was the lack of funding. The program had no start-up funding. Fingerprinting fees were paid for by the tutors, personal donations, and by contributions from Biola University. The tutoring program also competed for volunteers with paid tutoring programs at the university, such as America Reads, another fine literacy program.

Looking to the Future

The tutoring program supported at least seven of the 40 developmental assets identified by the

Search Institute (2006) required for youth, ages 12-18, to grow up healthy, including assistance from adults, interaction with positive adult role models, high expectations, as well as strengthening positive values, such as taking on responsibility and seeing the future as positive and something they (the students) can control. Our three-year tutoring partnership, The Literacy Initiative, while fraught with challenges, was overwhelmingly positive in its results. Children's lives have been forever changed. If we could say one thing to our readers, it would be this - don't let obstacles (such as funding or logistics) deter you from looking to the future and doing what's right for kids. Volunteerism is key. Even in financial crisis, human capital and goodwill is plentiful. Encourage your community to invest in the future now; the leaders of tomorrow are our students of today.

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Dr. Chris Coughlin



Dr. Gloysis Mayers



Dr. Deborah G. Wooldridge

History of Public Kindergarten in the United Arab Emirates: Past, Present, Future

BY CHRIS COUGHLIN, GLOYSIS MAYERS AND DEBORAH G. WOOLDRIDGE

In 1968, the first public Kindergarten was established in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). By 1973, there were seven kindergartens throughout the UAE. The number of students in kindergarten has increased dramatically since 1973, from 11 schools in 1973, to 82 in 1993. Today there are 1 092 kindergarten classrooms serving the needs of 22 506 children. This paper provides an historical overview of kindergarten education in the UAE as it has transitioned from an informal to a formal system. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the development of kindergarten within the UAE as well as provide a description of the kindergarten system today and future directions as proposed by the UAE Ministry of Education.

Introduction

Over the centuries, there have been different series of goals, aims and purposes for educating children, with each society shaping the goals of educating its' citizens (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has followed this same path in shaping public kindergarten education (Academy for Educational

Development, 2002). Public kindergartens in the UAE follow the originating philosophy embedded within the name kindergarten, referring to children needing nurturance and the right environment in order to grow and flourish. Viewing young children as active, curious and learning about their environment through active inquiry provides a foundation for curriculum develop-

ment (Badri, 1995; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Factors that have greatly influenced UAE education policy are embedded in Article 17 of the UAE's constitution (2003-2005), which states education is fundamental to the progress of the country. The overarching objective of the education system follows the directives of federal government leaders who put great emphasis on the development of human potential.

Informal Beginnings

The federation of seven sheikhdoms withdrew from the United Kingdom, forming the United Arab Emirates, in 1971. At that time, the Ministry of Education was founded and schools were formed in order to teach students basic skills and develop literacy skills. Historically, the UAE was a country of Bedouins and small villages and was dependent on fishing and trade. Today the UAE remains a relatively small country with a population of a little more than 5.66 million (UAE Ministry of Information and Culture, 2009). The most recent figures indicate that non-Nationals (or expatriates) comprise the largest segment of the population, 81.7 percent (UAE Ministry of Information and Culture, 2009). By definition, Nationals are UAE citizens and Non-nationals is the term used to refer to expatriates who reside in the UAE and work through temporary resident visa status.

The story of education in the UAE started when early communities were created within the current UAE region. It was between 1900 and 1912 that informal educational activities were presented by Islamic scholars, or people in local communities who had the most knowledge. This informal teaching was open to all ages, especially children. They learned the Qur'an, writing the alphabet, math and whatever knowledge the Mutawwa (teacher) decided to teach (Al Ta'boor, 2009). This was the first form of education that was available in these early years. These early teachings took place in the scholar's home or the mosque. It is interesting to note that the Mutawwa would refrain from taking the young children to the mosque so that they would not make a mess in the mosque and disturb the studies of older children. Therefore, education for young children took place in the scholar's home. In addition, all children from both genders were

in the same classroom. Today, segregating male and female students begins in 4th grade.

The parents and the teachers negotiated fees based on the financial status of the parents. However, on average fees were roughly 50 Fils (100 fils = 1 Dirham, which is similar to 100 cents = \$1). Today the cost of kindergarten is 500 dirham per family per year, which is equivalent to \$136 USD or 97€ (Al Khalid & Al Suwaidi, 1993).

Formal Beginnings

Opened around 1912, the literature identifies "Al Ahmadiya" school as being one of the first schools, if not the first, opened in Dubai (Badri, 1995). This represented a shift from an informal to a formal school setting. Initially, however, this program only served a multi-age grouping of children who were over five years of age. After a few years, young children under the age of five started attending: first only as listeners until they were old enough to start first grade. In addition to the Al Ahmadiya School, there were also small community schools that scholars taught in and that children of both sexes, five to 12 years of age could attend (Al Harbi, 1988; Nile, 1993).

When assessing the importance of these early beginnings, Al Khalid and Al Suwaidi (1993) point out both positive aspects and challenges to the early model of informal kindergarten schooling. They identify the following positive aspects:

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- teachers' roles extended to helping the parents discipline and raise their children;
- informal teaching system was aware of the different levels of children and helped them learn at their own pace and lessons were individualized and customized to suit each child; and,
- society's appreciation and respect towards the teachers, including parents, tribe leaders, Islamic scholars and the people.

Challenges include:

- unavailability of structured curriculum based on educational theories;
- use of inappropriate discipline techniques; and,
- dependency on memorizing as teaching strategy.

During the transitional period from an informal to a formal education system in the UAE, there was a period of time when the scholars of the informal educational programs could not afford the expenses of maintaining the system. This financial crisis, influenced by WWII, led to lower incomes for many of the wealthy members of communities who had previously paid for large portions of the teachers' fees. Given the financial situation post WWII, there came a time when no formal education was offered and local leaders stepped in and paid the teachers' fees, which allowed the school doors to be re-opened (Al Khalid & Al Suwaidi, 1993).

In 1968, establishing the first public kindergarten, located in Abu Dhabi, was a major step in supporting development of kindergarten education. In 1973, there were seven kindergartens throughout the UAE and kindergarten education was under the administrative purview of the Ministry of Education. Other Arab countries supported the kindergarten program and introduced their curricula into UAE schools. The oil revenue increases in 1973 enabled the UAE to build its own schools, but it continued to use curricula from Kuwait. In the 1990s, the UAE started to develop its own kindergarten curricula (Mustafa, Nabeh & Rawi, 1996).

Today there are roughly 1,092 kindergarten classrooms serving the needs of 22,506 National children. The statistics available through the Ministry of Education show that the number of students in kindergarten has increased dramatically since 1972, from 11 schools in year

1972/1973, to 82 in 1992/1993. Available statistics for 1992/1993 indicated that the numbers of female students reached 8965 while male students were around 8756 (UAE Ministry of Labor and Culture, 2009). Statistics indicate that from 1991 to 2007, 85% of kindergarten eligible UAE National males and 84% eligible National females attended kindergarten (UIS Brief, 2007).

Current Programming

The government provides services for UAE Nationals only, while private programs serve both National and non-National residents. Kindergarten education is optional, serving children between the ages of 3 ½ to 4 ½ years. The student/teacher ratio in government schools is approximately 20:1 for kindergarten in comparison to 16:1 for primary (ages 6-12), 13:1 for preparatory (ages 12-15), and secondary stages (ages 15-18) (UAE Ministry of Education, 2000).

Kindergarten programs follow a half-day schedule with the school year running from the second week of September and continuing up to the third week in May. Looking at the administrative structure, the kindergarten division comprises the following: a principal, two vice-principals, a treasurer, a social worker, a classroom teacher, an activity teacher, a nurse and a visiting doctor. For the kindergarten level only, all teachers and administrators are required to be National females, however they teach children of both sexes.

Teaching and Curriculum Requirements

One consequence of the rapid expansion of kindergarten education in the UAE in early years was the large number of kindergarten teachers who did not have a university degree. In 1985, the Ministry of Education began a program to train High School graduates to be kindergarten teachers. At that time, to be a kindergarten teacher, two years of post-secondary training was required. Today, the minimum requirements include a Bachelor's degree as well as 11 weeks of training provided by the Ministry of Education prior to appointment as a kindergarten teacher. As stated in the Ministry of Education's training manuals, the philosophy governing kindergarten addresses nine goals, which are: (a) teaching children about the school environment; (b) help-

The Ministry of Education is currently addressing some ongoing projects that focus on the continuous development of kindergarten programming and establishing a curriculum that promotes active learning, teaching techniques that best suit a child's nature and meets the child's need for exploration and a positive outlet of their energetic nature.

ing children develop Islamic values; (c) helping children learn self-regulation, good habits, and social norms of behavior that are relevant to the school environment; (d) meeting children's needs through addressing areas as discovery, creativity and curiosity and by giving them opportunities to interact with their surroundings/environment; (e) developing children's skills; (f) teaching children self-awareness, social interaction, and discipline skills; (g) developing linguistic abilities, gaining knowledge and supporting self-expression; (h) developing feelings of security, confidence and happiness; and (i) establishing clear curriculum goals that support children's development (Mohamed, Mohamed, Abdulla, Saweed, & Aywb, 2002-2003).

As previously stated, all curriculum utilized in the schools was originally taken from Kuwait.

However, in 1982, the UAE Ministry of Education developed its own public school curriculum and began developing a national kindergarten curriculum in 1996. The national curriculum was completed and its implementation began in 1999.

The UAE Ministry of Education currently uses training centers whereby instructing teachers in the new curriculum. These centers serve as "lab schools" where teachers work directly with children learning how to implement the new curriculum. Of the 137 kindergarten programs in the present-day UAE, less than half the teachers have received teacher training. The Ministry of Education is striving to overcome staff and resource restrictions in order to complete this training process.

The current kindergarten curriculum consists of 16 content areas (Mohamed, et al., 2002-2003), with each content area being viewed as flexible and aimed at providing children with learning experiences that are developmentally and culturally appropriate. In an effort to work towards improvement, the Ministry of Education is currently addressing some ongoing projects that focus on the continuous development of kindergarten programming and establishing a curriculum that promotes active learning, teaching techniques that best suit a child's nature and meets the child's need for exploration and a positive outlet of their energetic nature. In addition, the UAE Ministry of Education promotes the inclusion of opportunities enabling children to be acquainted with their surroundings and enhance cultural sensitivity.

Establishing a Kindergarten Development Center in 1992 with the cooperation of the UAE Ministry of Education and other agencies facilitated the progress of kindergarten education in the country. For example, UNICEF served as a major contributor to the development of kindergarten programming through different ways. Initiatives proposed by UNICEF included:

- providing support towards the development of kindergarten programs that provided a holistic educational experience for children;
- establishing a national curriculum that responds to children's needs;
- implementing curriculum policies that promote developmentally appropriate experiences and

opportunities for children stretching into later educational levels;

- providing suitable learning materials that support the curriculum objectives; and,
- training kindergarten teachers to implement a curriculum that supports an active-learning approach to teaching.

The UAE Ministry of Education suggested testing strategies in four kindergarten programs prior to implementation was essential to developing a national kindergarten curriculum. Using UNICEF funding, resource centers providing the kindergarten programs with needed material, resources and information were set up. These initiatives are currently in place and have contributed towards moving the developmental process forward and influencing the quality of the kindergarten education system in the UAE.

Outlook for Kindergarten Education in the UAE

Kindergarten programs in the UAE strive to apply the goals set by the Ministry of Education. Such goals include:

- Enabling young children to adjust to the school environment and preparing them for a smooth transition into kindergarten;
- Preparing the child to acquire Islamic behavior;
- Preparing the child for discipline and appropriate behavior;
- Meeting children's need to explore and giving them the chance to learn about their surroundings;
- Developing the child's senses, skills and teach positive behavior;
- Allowing the child self-discovery and to develop social cooperation and self-control;
- Developing the child's language skills and knowledge;
- Helping the child acquire security, trust and a sense of belonging; and,
- Developing organized, clear and affective concepts to aid the child's intellectual and thinking abilities as well as, encourage discovering his/her environment (UAE Ministry of Education, 2000).

These goals support the nature of the child; it is essential that educators consider each child's development from a holistic perspective, recognizing that cultural, social-emotional, physi-

cal, intellectual and creative facets of development are closely interrelated. Past progress and planned reforms to the UAE kindergarten system suggests that educators are progressively moving in the right direction by aligning programs with the best international practice and experience, current research, and developmentally appropriate principles of early childhood development and learning.

Conclusion

The UAE has actively pursued initiatives to improve the quality of education in public schools. The Ministry of Education (MOE), Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) and the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) have worked with international educators whose education systems have undertaken major education reform initiatives. The 21st Century or Madras Al Ghad Schools, a project inaugurated in 2008, is part of a five-year strategic plan program, towards school reform. It was implemented through a partnership with the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOEHSR), education services provider Association for Supervision Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the College of Education at Zayed University, one of three government-sponsored universities in the UAE. The objective of the program is to train 10,000 public school teachers beginning from kindergarten level to Grade 12. The program focuses on upgrading the competence of teachers including major outcomes such as developing a professional certification program, reorganizing the administrative structure of the Ministry of Education and introducing new curriculum standards and assessment methods.

In the Al Ghad School curriculum, there is a focus on less rote memorization, with greater emphasis given to active learning and problem solving. These schools also aim to graduate pupils proficient in Arabic and English and knowledgeable about their heritage. Developing graduates who are productive citizens in a global society is another goal of the Al Ghad School curriculum. Delivery of quality kindergarten curriculum is essential to the success of the goals outlined in this curriculum. Launching the first phase of this program in 2008 in 50 schools, the Ministry of Education anticipates completion by 2010 in all

other schools.

Building on the principle that each child is unique, the UAE Ministry of Education is in the process of designing Special Education standards toward the inclusion of children with special needs into the regular class settings. These Special Education standards support the belief that each child must achieve to his/her fullest potential. Towards the achievement of this goal, Federal law No. 29, of the year 2006, on the Rights of People with Special Needs is being addressed. This law provides a set of standards addressing the foundation for special education programming in education. The law ensures that schools

are providing equal education opportunities to all special needs students in the United Arab Emirates, including kindergarten ages.

This review has reflected on progressive changes at different phases of UAE'S education system. Experts agree that meaningful change must be systematic, with change occurring at all levels of the educational system and extending beyond the walls of the early childhood classroom (Academy for Educational Development, 2002). Investing in comprehensive, early childhood development programs is a key factor towards providing sustainable, quality education.

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Angela Kern



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How National Board Certified Teachers are Learning, Doing, and Sharing Action Research Online!

BY: ANGELA KERN AND BARBARA B. LEVIN

This article describes lessons learned from an online, professional development opportunity for teachers to learn and improve their practice by conducting action research projects in their classrooms or schools (Noffke & Somekh, 2009). We also share what we learned about meeting the needs of adult learners (Merriam, 1993) and how to create viable online learning communities for teachers (Palloff & Pratt, 2005).

Introduction

This article describes the Teacher Action Research Academy project, or TARA Online, which used an online course management system hosted by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to support teacher action research projects (Hubbard & Power, 1999). In the United States, becoming a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) means earning the right to be called an “accomplished” teacher based on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification process (<http://www.nbpts.org/>). This highly-regarded status, earned through a year-long portfolio development and assessment process, is valid for 10 years and must then be renewed. All the participants in this project were NBCTs considering the renewal of their NBPTS certification. However, for those NBCTs teaching in small, ru-

ral school districts, or in schools where there are not many other like-minded teachers, or teaching too far from a college or university where they might take classes, we wondered: How can teachers connect with other teachers, learn to do action research, and actually carry out and share action research projects online at no cost – except for time and effort? What would make this completely voluntary, professional development project valuable to the participants?

First, we developed TARA Online to provide NBCTs with self-paced instruction about how to conduct action research in classrooms or schools (Noffke & Somekh, 2009), and then recruited accomplished teachers from several rural counties in North Carolina who wanted to participate. The goal was for TARA Online to offer a scaffolded and mentored community of fellow NBCTs with

whom they could share ideas for action research projects, post questions and plans for their action research projects, and share final results. During the first year of TARA online, two university faculty members mentored a dozen NBCTs through the action research process, but in the second year we sought out an experienced NBCT who participated in TARA Online during the first year to serve as an online mentor to new participants. During both years we gathered data with the participants' permission that included all their online postings, including discussions with fellow participants and several opportunities for guided reflection, and results from their final project presentations. What follows is a description of how we used TARA Online to meet the needs of accomplished teachers for meaningful professional development and discussion of ways teachers can learn to improve their practice by conducting action research projects.

One Teacher's Experience with TARA Online – Angela's Story

As a teacher of academically and intellectually gifted students in my school district, I was enticed to try TARA Online because I wanted to participate in meaningful professional development. I wanted to interact with other NBCTs who were excited about trying innovative projects in their classrooms. I also wanted to develop an action research project around the notion of developing critical thinking with my students. By participating in TARA Online and discussing my ideas with colleagues, I narrowed my focus to studying the effects of implementing the game of chess with students in my gifted classroom. After gaining district and parent permission, and through the advice of my online peers, I administered a primary critical thinking test, implemented a playing log with reflections, taught the children how to keep track of the number of moves needed to win the games, and pre and post tested related terminology. My students learned the strategies of the game of chess, practiced chess strategies, mapped out their strategies, and then taught chess strategies to others. From my perspective, my action research project was a huge success because my students' scores on a measure of critical thinking improved from the beginning to the end of my project. My students also slowed down and thought through their actions, an as-

pect of learning to think critically that I hoped would carry over in real-life applications. At the end of the first year, my TARA Online colleagues and I shared our projects. I learned from their action research projects how technology can enhance mathematics instruction, how the use of audio books can influence reading, the benefits of kids teaching other kids about science concepts, and strategies to increase the self-worth of poverty stricken students. All of the action research projects were meaningful and worthwhile to the teachers conducting research in their classrooms – and to their students.

The next step for me was to offer TARA Online to another cohort of NBCTs who were also planning to renew their National Board certifications and looking for personally meaningful professional development opportunities. This time, I was to be the facilitator for the TARA Online discussions. Now, from a teacher's point of view, I thought this was going to be a breeze! However, what I learned from facilitating and mentoring other teachers online was that mentoring across distances can have its challenges. First, not everyone had experience working in an online environment. As one participant stated, *"The concern that I have about working in this online project is manipulating the [courseware]*

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technology, as it has taken me a few weeks just to get started.” Becoming familiar with the use of a different technology was a goal many participants sought and all accomplished. Second, facilitating ideas coming from teachers from across the state seemed to flow best when multiple participants were regularly adding input to the discussion board. Several heads together produced the greatest results. One NBCT, Bethany, stated, *“communicating with teachers across the state in an educational forum has been outstanding. Outside perspectives, varied backgrounds, and thoughtful insights from different areas of education have provided a rich learning environment.”*

At the conclusion of the second year of TARA Online, action research projects included journaling in an early childhood methods class, analyzing the effects of using Brain Gym activities with ESL students, emphasizing eco-friendly practices at home and school with middle school students, and using electronic journals in a science classroom. Kathryn stated, *“teaching is really an individual and personal experience, and teachers must be willing to go outside a comfortable box to grow.”* These teachers stepped outside of their comfort zone and blossomed!

Kris also posted about her experiences with learning about, doing, and sharing action research using TARA Online: *“I learned that it is a very “workable” research method. It takes what I think a lot of teachers do naturally and makes it more structured. It helps you really fully analyze whether or not a new approach is effective. I think it [action research as a professional development experience] is great because it is immediately applicable in your class and meets your own needs.”*

Why Learn, Do, and Share Teacher Action Research Online?

One of the original goals for TARA Online was to provide professional development opportunities that would encourage NBCTs to remain in their teaching positions and not leave the classroom. Over the years, many NBCTs have been selected for other positions in their school districts and leave their classrooms. We did not want to see this trend continue and tried to find ways to provide professional development to accomplished teachers beyond the more traditional “sit

and get” experience. Engaging in teacher action research where teachers could pose their own questions and develop their own action research projects was one possible solution. Here is what we learned after two years with TARA Online.

What we learned about the needs of adult learners

We learned that teachers, as adult learners, needed support and guidance when trying something new. Despite being accomplished teachers, all our participants were not comfortable with the electronic courseware and they needed clear directions for how to access and post information to the online discussion forums (Palluff & Pratt, 2005). They also needed deadlines for each step in the action research process and guidelines about exactly what and how to post online. Examples were the best solution to the “what to post” concerns, and access to a phone number of a real person to talk with at the beginning of each year was necessary until a level of comfort was achieved. As Kris said, *“I thought the resources and learning activities, especially the samples, were very helpful!”* Even though we demonstrated TARA Online to several large groups of NBCTs at information sessions about the National Board renewal process, the time lag between those meetings and beginning TARA Online necessitated personal support in the form of an online mentor. Angela also sent several individual and group email messages throughout the year she served as a mentor for TARA Online as a way to offer the personal connection desired by adult learners (Merriam, 1993). As Bethany stated, *“TARA is a wonderful experience and working online has been exciting (and boosted my confidence). I had a little trouble navigating the site at first, but Angela (the facilitator) has been super to help me understand. Communicating with teachers across the state in an educational forum has been outstanding.”*

What we learned about creating online learning communities

We learned that the more people involved in TARA Online, the better we were able to create a viable learning community. A minimum of five teachers in a group was needed in order to generate enough dialogue back and forth on the discussion board to motivate these busy teachers to respond to each

other. Nothing was more frustrating and disappointing to participants than going online only to find that no one had responded to their recent posting. Having a mentor like Angela was critical, but a real learning community did not develop until other teachers in the group began discussing their project ideas, posting their research questions, asking if they had planned for enough data to be collected, and seeking feedback on their plans for their action research projects. As Bethany stated, “*The strength of TARA in regard to online support is that it is an ongoing communication tool. Rather than waiting for a weekly meeting to gather feedback and insight from colleagues, by posting our thoughts, others could respond immediately. I especially like the varying topics and discipline areas represented in our TARA group. Having my project viewed by a variety of perspectives offered unexpected insights.*”

What we learned about high-quality professional development

We learned that you can provide high-quality professional development online, but we also learned that you have to do much more than just offer information (Treacy, Kleiman, & Peterson, 2002). You have to offer and even require interaction and active engagement from the participants. We learned that in order for TARA Online to be worthwhile as a professional learning opportunity we had to connect and engage the participants with each other, assist with answering any questions or concerns they had (such as about why and how they needed to get parent permission for their projects), and we had to keep them coming back to TARA Online so they would not feel alone or isolated as they conducted their action research projects in their classrooms and schools across the state.

What we learned about getting the most from online professional development

We learned that online professional development is doable and costs very little, that it is a great way to connect like-minded teachers around the state in a learning community, and that learning and doing teacher action research is a valuable form of professional development. Once the online curriculum is developed, it can be used over and over again with each new group, and the cost of adding another organization to an online

course management system is so negligible that a college or university can easily donate that service. Mini-grants to support teachers conducting action research are useful but not always essential, so the main cost is for someone to serve as the mentor and facilitator for others who want this learning experience, preferably a teacher who has already has some experience conducting action research. As another participant stated, “*I totally embrace the action research of TARA. I feel that it has impacted my teaching more than other in service in a long time!*”

Conclusion

Finally, we learned that participation in TARA Online was a good fit to the core principles of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2008). These include teachers’ commitment to students and their learning, knowing their subject and how to teach it to their students, taking responsibility for managing and monitoring their students’ learning, thinking systematically about their practice and learning from experience, and participating in learning communities. So, while the participants in TARA Online were already experienced, accomplished teachers, we believe that projects like TARA Online can benefit teachers anywhere there is access to the technology, fellow teachers to work with, and supportive leadership. In this technological age, learning forums such as TARA Online seem to offer accomplished teachers the atmosphere to link with like minds and enhance their professional lives and their classrooms!

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Rubrics for the Classroom: Assessments for Students and Teachers

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How do teachers assess all learners in the classroom as they produce written pieces while offering encouragement and motivation in the learning process? Rubrics can help measure student performance beyond the data that can be collected using a standardized testing system (Arter & McTighe, 2001). Rubrics measure teaching by helping the teacher to focus instruction on specific elements or characteristics. When focusing on assessment tools, understanding and developing the right type of rubric may help classroom teachers show growth and development in their students' writing. Assessment becomes a loop of learning for the students and the teacher. In addition, rubrics are defined and websites are listed which show excellent examples of these types of authentic assessments.

Introduction

How do teachers measure what students write? How do teachers assess all learners in the classroom as they produce written pieces while offering encouragement and motivation in the learning process? Can a teacher focus on learners' strengths, while at the same time addressing their weaknesses? Is there more to the measurement of students' written products and knowledge outcomes than standardized, high-stakes assessments? The answer: Yes, teachers can do all of these things by using rubrics!

Using rubrics to assess writing is not a new

concept, but we argue they are being under-used in many language arts classrooms. Our hunch is that rubrics are being under-utilized because they are misunderstood; teachers believe they are time-consuming, lack reliability and validity, and are too confusing for students and parents (Kamil, 2003). But, when focusing on assessment tools for the writing process, understanding and developing the right type of rubric may very well help teachers show growth and development in their students' writing process, skills and products.

It is valuable to classroom instruction to

gather data and to assess beyond standardized tests. High-stakes tests are rigid and show only a snapshot assessment, that is, a narrowed view in a focused, momentary frame of time. Taking into consideration the language and writing differences that all groups of students display in the learning process (for example, differing intelligences, learning styles/learning modalities, and strengths), teachers must also consider assessing and gathering data for learners by differing means (Alvermann, 2003).

Numerous assessment options are available including anecdotal records, process lists, portfolios, checklists and t-charts; there is a plethora of options for measuring writing processes and products. Rubrics can help measure student performance beyond the data that can be collected using a standardized testing system (*Arter & McTighe, 2001*).

What is a rubric and how is it created?

A rubric is any set of criteria that describe the varying degrees of excellence or levels of development in an activity, process, or product (Andrade, 2005; Goodrich, 1997). A good rubric for assessing writing can serve (at least) two purposes—evaluating students’ knowledge and measuring teaching. To evaluate students’ knowledge, the teacher can develop a writing rubric. How does a teacher create a rubric? Before beginning development of a rubric, the teacher should clearly visualize what is expected from the written project, product or process. The expectations, or the vision of what the written work should look like, may be described in terms of “look fors” (for example, the teacher will look for creative word choices based on the week’s mini-lessons in writers’ workshop or the expectations may be described in measureable standards (for example, “look for five paragraphs”). These descriptors become the criteria or characteristics that will be used on a Likert scale for measuring student growth in their writing. The Likert scale may be very basic and in three levels (e.g., under the heading “Creative Word Choices” the following scale is used “Not Found (0 points),” “Found Less Than Two Times (1 point),” and “Found More Than Two Times (2 points)”).

After a list of criteria is developed, teachers should consider asking the students what

they feel is most important to the success of the project (Nitko, 2001). Would they like to have more time to work on a project, which would necessitate including more components in the completed work, or would they rather have less time and just a few, but more focused, criteria on the rubric? By questioning students and listening to their responses, teachers can cooperatively develop a rubric for writing that is valid and jointly shared with student/teacher ownership (Wilhelm, 2008).

Using defined criteria, the teacher’s next step lies in determining how a student can distinguish levels of performance or how the student’s writing will be positioned within a range of scores. What looks like “Outstanding,” “Adequate,” and “Needs Work” according to the teacher and the students? Utilizing past examples of students’ writing or teacher-made models can help clarify what is required (Ward & Murray-Ward, 1999). Often, operationalizing what is expected from an assignment helps both teachers and students determine the goals and better understand what is expected from both the process and the product. By determining what criteria or characteristics are present in the highest level of performance and clearly describing these characteristics, the indicator of performance is understood by teachers, students and parents (Andrade, 2000). Likewise, by describing the lowest level of scorable

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student work or bare minimum of performance, students and teachers are often able to distinguish real differences in performance based on specific writing needs, goals, and differentiated instruction.

The question then becomes how to develop rubric assessments, or in other words, how does a teacher make a rubric? The teacher may utilize the Internet which contains several excellent samples of rubrics and there are free rubric makers as well. Three excellent sites are <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php> (Rubistar 4 Teachers); http://www.teach-ology.com/web_tools/rubrics/ (Teach-nology); <http://712educators.about.com/od/rubrics/> (Writing and Grading Rubrics). All of these sites are free of charge and guide the user/teacher through the process of developing a rubric for writing-based assignments.

A well-constructed rubric can be used as a measurement of teacher self-assessment because the teacher must be instructing the criteria or characteristics found in the rubric (Steff-Mabry, 2004). The teacher is the one utilizing the rubric as a grading instrument so she or he is very familiar with its steps and criteria. In knowing that the evaluation is developed at the beginning of a writing activity has been established, the teacher also knows what should be taught, when it should be taught, and approximately how much time to devote to it. The spelling and punctuation criteria can be tailored to focus on a particular spelling or punctuation strategy, such as spelling sight words correctly in context. As the rubric shows progress, data can be linked to daily instruction. More specifically, the data generated by the use of rubrics can help the teacher make daily instructional decisions.

Recommendations

To best understand how to both write and to use rubrics, teachers should view examples of rubrics used to assess writing. Some good examples are found at the website <http://www.rubrician.com/writing.htm>. This site is dedicated to educators, teachers, parents, students and evaluators who are looking to design or locate good rubrics. Another great site to see rubrics is Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators at <http://school.discovery-education.com/schrockguide/assess.html>. It is further recommended that teachers practice as-

As the rubric shows progress, data can be linked to daily instruction. More specifically, the data generated by the use of rubrics can help the teacher make daily instructional decisions.

sessing a set of writing samples from students. As the teacher spends time practicing with the rubric, the assessment becomes easier and more automatic. After these initial efforts, the teacher should be ready to develop a simple rubric and to ask the students to give input into its development. At this point in the process, students should be ready to write their assignment, all the while focusing on the rubric. Last, the teacher should score these projects, products, or processes using the rubric. As the teacher becomes more practiced in developing rubrics, everyone's comfort level grows including that of the teacher, the students, and the parents (Simpson, Stahl, & Anderson, 2004).

Rubrics can become a familiar and accurate tool for the development of instruction and for scaffolding learning. Assessment in a continuous feedback loop is fostered as a process for teaching and learning, for both students and teachers. The learning process becomes more concrete with the narration and feedback inherent in the rubric. Focused, corrective feedback from the

teacher becomes more individualized and specific. As he/she grows in knowledge and experience with the use of rubrics, the students and parents should also see results in the form of improved student writing.

Conclusion

Rubrics can help measure student performances beyond the data that can be collected by standardized, high-stakes tests. Good rubrics are simple to

design when the criteria or characteristics are in place, and rubrics measure teaching by helping the teacher to focus instruction on specific elements or characteristics. Furthermore, educators can tailor outcomes to specific objectives. By using rubrics in the classroom, confusion between student and teacher should decrease while learning should increase, contributing to a win-win situation for everyone.

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VIEWPOINTS



Finding Answers in a Specialty School: Teaching Composition in the College of Nursing

BY MARIE RINAUDO

The purpose of this article is to relate some of my experiences as a seasoned educator teaching first year composition at a local College of Nursing. This positive experience has convinced me of the value of specialty schools. I saw first-hand the benefits of a goals-oriented curriculum, small classes, the use of technology to support traditional methods, and the commitment of students, and methods I have long believed in actually worked in this situation. This is one of the most positive experiences in teaching rhetoric I have ever had.

After fifty years in education, I retired in the Spring of 2009. Then, when the opportunity to teach as an adjunct instructor in the English department of Louisiana's Northwestern State College of Nursing arose, I quickly accepted. This experience has left me encouraged and even

motivated to continue teaching a while longer. Teaching in what I considered an ideal situation, I discovered that methods I had always wanted to use, but had never had the opportunity to try, actually worked. I enjoyed the small classes, one-on-one instruction, access to a computer writing lab, and most of all, students committed to professional growth. Because the class was small, I was able to have immediate communication with students as well as email them further comments and explanations. I have a renewed sense of hope that even students who have a weak background in writing skills can succeed in college composition. Out of the twenty-three students enrolled in the class, nineteen passed. I credit the success of the students who passed to their industry and responsibility: excellent attendance, submission

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of all assignments, and persistence in improving their work. Those who failed the class did so primarily because of absenteeism and incomplete assignments.

Most of the students who enrolled in the course were focused on their professional goal—to become practical or registered nurses. In the beginning of the semester, I used health care publications for examples of clear, logical, and informative writing. These professional articles had obvious appeal to the students and guided them in grasping the nuances of rhetoric, which I have found is a difficult skill for the average first-year college student to grasp. By the end of the semester, the students had reached a level of confidence that allowed them to enjoy reading and responding not only to articles on health and medicine but also to literary works, especially short stories.

The class reflected a rather broad range of ages, experiences and academic achievements, and included recent high school graduates, a few students in their early to late twenties, and several thirty and forty year-olds. Some had jobs and some were single parents; most were enrolled in more than the minimum hours required (NSU 2008-2009 Catalog). This variety of student circumstances and abilities would normally be difficult to handle. However, unlike high school classes I had taught, where the range of abilities was difficult to handle because of the large class size and the fifty-five minute period, this class allowed for meeting with individual students and responding to their specific concerns as well as communicating by email.

One of the most rewarding experiences was having a ninety-minute class that allowed for time in the writing lab. The lab made it possible for me to give students time to work on their compositions independently. I was also available to provide assistance if and when students had questions. Most of the students were persistent in revising their compositions, and seldom did they have to wait any length of time to confer with me. They worked at their own pace, retrieving articles from the licensed database, establishing a thesis statement, setting up an organizational outline, and integrating research into their compositions. In the lab setting, I could also continue to address whole-class concerns when necessary.

While the issues of rhetoric such as logic, organization, coherence, and point of view are the central foci of a class in rhetoric, the issue of basic writing skills also prevails. As I had learned from my years of teaching high school English, most students' greatest deficiency resides in standard grammar and language usage. For this reason, I designated a time each day for work on specific skills. The computer and data projector were invaluable tools in making visual clarifications as the class analyzed professional and student models of writing. To help students construct good, clear sentences, I focused on participial modifiers, independent and dependent clauses, run-on sentences, and parallel structure. Parts of speech, tense, and case were addressed as they pertained to sentence structure and grammatical accuracy. The class also studied more complicated issues of rhetoric – logic, organization, and coherence – as they discussed the writings of professionals. Eventually, this systematic practice led the majority of students to coherent, clear writing; a few of them even achieved fluency and depth of reasoning.

In one particular mode of writing, student papers showed a marked decrease in errors as well as a fluency in expression. When students wrote in their own voice, recounting events and reflecting on personal experiences, they had little difficulty with sentence structure or organization. Though I was familiar with long-standing research and study by Peter Elbow (1983), Nancy Atwell (1987) and Donald Graves (1981) on personal writing, I considered it remarkable that students whose expository papers were often riddled with mechanical and usage errors expressed themselves well in narrative and personal writing. With continued practice, some of the students eventually reached the confidence zone critical for beginning college writers. Essentially, students were learning to be brave in the face of the blank page.

As I reflect on my semester, I am grateful for the opportunity to have seen the possibilities that arise when traditional methods of teaching rhetoric are married to technological advancements. What better way to meet the students of the 21st century? In the absence of hard data, I am basing my conclusions on what I have learned and what I have taught. As proposed by Clandinin and

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Responding to Student Needs in Science

BY JENNY SUE FLANNAGAN

Developing capabilities, whether in fitness or in science, occurs over time and requires encouragement, guidance, and support. This viewpoint uses a fitness analogy to describe transforming students into scientists by responding to learner needs. Attending to the needs of students in science is key if all students are to succeed.

Getting Personal

This was the year I decided it was time to get healthy and shed some extra unwanted pounds while also reducing stress. So, I signed up for an hour long aerobics class and found myself extremely nervous on the first day of class. It had been over 10 years since I had tried such a long workout and I worried I might not be physically ready. As the class progressed, I was pleased to find out that support for my lack of physical readiness was built into the workout. In fact, at the beginning of each aerobic segment, the instructor presented modifications for those of us who were not ready for the high impact moves. In reality, the only difference between the modified movements and the high impact moves was the lack of a hop, but to me, the modified moves were still a challenge. Now let me be clear – the modifications did not make the exercises easier; they just allowed me to finish the class with a feeling of success. Since that first class, I have built up my body strength and am now able to do the more high impact moves. However, without modifi-

cations early on, I certainly would have quit the workout program because I would have either injured myself or I would have become too frustrated at not being able to keep up. Conversely, if the workout had only been made up of easy moves, I may have felt like I was not getting my money's worth. In essence, each workout provided exactly what I needed – challenge and support.

Differentiation as a Philosophy of Teaching

Developing capabilities, whether from unfit to

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physically fit or from student to scientist, occurs over time and requires encouragement, guidance, and support. Science is usually a subject for which students come to elementary school with much fascination. Given all the different television channels focusing on science (The Discovery Channel and Animal Planet just to name a few), it is not surprising that students know a lot of facts about science topics. But simply knowing “facts” pertaining to topics found in science is not all there is to science. Scientific literacy, as defined by the United States’ National Science Education Standards (1996) is “the knowledge and understanding of science concepts and processes required for personal decision making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and economic productivity” (pg. 22). The goal, therefore, of any science program should be to develop attitudes and values about science that will serve as a foundation in shaping a child’s scientific literacy as an adult. However, given all the diversity in our schools today, we must remember a one-size-fit all approach to teaching science is not always effective. Some students will learn science concepts faster than others, and student interest for various topics will differ. Furthermore, some students will learn science best through a hands-on approach while others will need both a visual and kinesthetic approach. If teachers are to teach students how to think and act like scientists, then they must respond to the learning needs of their students.

Responding to Student Needs Begins with High Quality Curriculum and Instruction

Responding to student learning needs – or differentiation – is a philosophical approach to teaching; it is not a specific road map for learning. Differentiation takes into account the fact that what students bring to school as learners impacts how they learn. It also is dependent upon the development of high quality curriculum that is important, engaging, demanding, focused, and scaffolded. Curriculum is effective when it focuses on essential understandings and skills of the discipline that a professional would value. For science, this means curriculum must focus not only on scientific content, but should also engage students in doing science experiments to verify what scientists already know as well as allow students to design their own experiments. The science curricu-

lum must be designed to be problem-based and provide students with choices. It should stretch the student by providing an appropriate level of challenge and yet at the same time be supportive through the use of various materials, strategies, and grouping practices to support the growth of a wide range of learners in the classrooms.

Differentiating Content, Process, Product, and Learning Environment in the Science Classroom

Content refers to what students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the sequence of teaching and learning. In science, knowing facts and performing various skills such as observations or making hypotheses are important, but if we want our students to be scientifically literate, they must also understand, for example, that there is no single method to doing science; rather, scientific investigation is a process used for understanding the natural world.

Process refers to how a student makes sense of information, ideas, and skills in a science unit or lesson. In designing a science unit or a series of lessons, teachers should think about the use of various graphic organizers to help students make sense of scientific and technical vocabulary. They should also employ a variety of teaching strategies to help students understand processes found in science. Even when designing experiments, for example, teachers can use strategies to model metacognitive processes for students.

Products are the means by which students demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Students can create a variety of products and often times these do not have to be graded. When they are assessed, however, product can become tools to help teachers assess student progress towards content goals. For example, teachers can have students create weather reports or engage in mock debates about contested scientific topics.

Respond According to Readiness, Interest, and Learning Profile

Responsive teaching occurs when teachers take one or more of the three curriculum elements mentioned above and modify their teaching based on students’ readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Readiness is defined as the knowledge, understanding, and skills that students bring to the classroom based on prior learning, life experienc-

es, and attitudes about school (Tomlinson, 2003). In essence, it is a student's entry point relative to a particular understanding or skill. The purpose of responding to differences in readiness is growth related to a particular content understanding or skill. When work is too easy or not challenging, children can become bored. When work is too challenging, children can become frustrated and may lose their motivation to learn. If we are to ensure all students are learning science, then learning tasks must be adjusted to meet students where they are with regards to learning.

For example, learning how to design a testable question is important in the experimental design process. Some students will learn very quickly how to develop a testable question, identify the variables for the experiment, and even be able to design the procedures to carry out the experiment. Other children will struggle with this task. If the teacher continues to teach the whole group in an effort to assist the struggling learners, those students who already understand are not growing in their ability to design more complicated experiments. The solution is to differentiate the lesson according to the differences in skill and use a mix between whole group and small groups. While the lesson may begin whole group with a quick discussion on what constitutes a testable question in science, students are quickly moved into two groups based on their readiness as it relates to the ability to develop a testable question. For those students that are struggling with the process, the teacher provides them with a guided opportunity to generate questions. Using the student's questions, the teacher moves to having students classify questions into two groups—those that can be answered by looking up the answer in a book or on the computer and those that can be tested because something is being changed. Throughout the process the teacher is continually providing feedback and additional information that will help them make sense of the process. At the same time, the other group of students have been given very clear directions and a task they need to complete. In the task, students are told they are editors of a children's science journal and their job is to provide feedback regarding how to improve the various questions submitted by other students of the same age.

Once students have had a chance in both groups to work through the designing of the

question, the teacher quickly pulls the groups back together and together the groups share out what they had to do. This activity then leads the students into another activity in which they have a chance to develop an experiment using a question developed from the first group's work.

Through the use of both whole group and the smaller flex groups those students who 'get it' are not waiting through another whole group lesson on experimental design and those students who need the teacher in a small group setting, get the teacher's immediate help instead of forging through another lesson. Essentially all students are improving in their understanding of the skills needed to design experiments

Along with readiness, teachers can use interest to modify learning. Students come to school with different interest, curiosity, or passion in particular areas, and school offers the opportunity to pursue new interests. The goal of differentiating by interest is motivation. Use topics students are interested in is a great way to hook students into the learning process. They are more likely to persist through difficult content if they are interested. When designing curriculum units, interest might be considered in order to make connections to a child's world.

Learning profile examines how students learn best and the goal of this differentiation is efficiency. When teachers use information that identifies the way in which a student best learns, they are able to organize the curriculum and instruction so students learn things in a more efficient manner. In science this may mean allowing students to work with their peers to discuss ideas while others will prefer to work alone and then bring their ideas to the entire group. It also may mean the teacher may need to use a concept map to show those students who need to see the big picture of what they are getting ready to learn instead of marching through the smaller details first. Teachers can address learning profiles of students by addressing learning styles, gender, culture, and intelligence preferences.

Guiding Principles in Action

So what would this look like in action? Let's take, for example, a first grade teacher who has developed a unit that responds to student interest and readiness. Her/his unit is designed to focus on teaching students to understand that although

animals may differ physically, they have similarities among them. From previous classes, s/he knows the topic of animals is something first graders love and decides to use interest in order to teach students how to conduct research. To begin, the teacher develops an interest inventory which will be used to place students into seven different "animal" groups. Students will use books and other library resources to identify details about their animal. Because the groups will be based on student interest, the teacher knows s/he must also pay attention to the reading level (readiness) of the students in the groups. Working with the librarian, they find books and resources for each group at a variety of reading levels. The teacher also develops three different graphic organizers students will use to identify the details. Some of the graphic organizers provide more details while others are more open ended for those students that are ready to select their own information. The end product calls for students to write a one page summary of their animal's body characteristics, what it eats, and where it lives.

Conclusion

While it was my choice to begin an exercise program in an effort to improve my health, I did not have to continue. But I did because I had support and a challenge. Without support, I would have given up and lost my chance to improve my quality of life. Early on students come to school excited and ready to learn, but somewhere along the way, we lose some of them because their needs as learners are not met. If we want to encourage students to choose science as a career, then the science classroom must provide learning opportunities authentic to the disciplines in science that not only provide a challenge, but provide the necessary support to help all students recognize they can do science and be a scientist. We cannot afford to lose potential scientists simply because we fail to identify their interests, their readiness to learn, and the ways in which they learn best.

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(Continued from page 29)

Connelly (1994), the experiences and recollections of teachers can lead to professional growth. My observations stem from the trials, error, and successes that I encountered as a teacher and later as an administrator. Over the years, I had always envisioned a classroom where students could have some level of independence to apply what they were learning, where I would be available to assist in areas of individual concern, and where they could be apprentice writers in a studio-like environment that invites discovery and creativity. An institution like the College of Nursing, has the ingredients for success, offering a model for an educational approach that is not only viable but in many ways exemplary. It is focused on specific goals, a small learning community, a well-equipped facility, and most of all, motivated students and dedicated faculty. When the students graduate, they will be accustomed to communicating their beliefs clearly and authentically. They will be medical professionals prepared to serve not only as practitioners in the field but also as articulate advocates for improved health care principles and policies.

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Reinventing the Wheel: Seeking Excellence in Education

BY IRENE HOPE GAZZA

In this viewpoint, the author shares her professional experiences leading her from public school teaching to founding a private Montessori school in the hope of fulfilling her ideal goal of meeting students' individual needs so that they may achieve success in the classroom.

An Organized Desk, Idealistic Goals and a Bad Dream

During the night before my first day of teaching I experienced a fitful sleep. Like most new teachers, I was nervous about meeting and managing my first class. I had been assigned twenty seven second graders, but I would not have a teacher's aide. Instead, I would have the knowledge of methods and materials from recent college classes along with behavior modification techniques under my belt, a stack of teacher guides, and a brand new collection of necessary objects for my very own teacher's desk, including a matching desk set, a brass apple, plenty of pencils and red pens, and a plan book. It was the desk that caused me to lose sleep that night. Unfortunately, I dreamed that when I walked into my new classroom, my desk was so high that I could not reach it!

That first day took place in September of 1974. Teaching jobs were hard to come by then and I had truly reached my lifetime goal of becom-

ing a teacher, only months after graduating from college. I was, and still am, idealistic about my profession in that I believed my primary purpose was to assist students by meeting their individual needs in order to learn successfully. I worked very hard for the next five years to create a learning environment where students would be motivated to achieve. The "open classroom" was a popular educational practice in the 70's. So too were learning centers and student/teacher contracts by which individual assignments and due dates

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were agreed upon. I embraced these techniques in my classroom and more, including individualized spelling lists, with many hours spent creating educational materials for the learning centers and designing twenty seven individual contracts each week for my students.

I enjoyed the challenge and experienced a satisfactory level of success for my students. They loved the environment and became more responsible and enthusiastic about learning. However, I noticed that there were similar problems each year among my students. Many of them had trouble concentrating. Some could not complete a task. Others were unable to maintain a sense of order in their efforts. Most disappointing was the lack of self-motivation. Some were not comfortable with their freedom in the classroom and needed more guidance. Although I worked to make learning fun, I knew I had not found a way to truly meet all of my students' individual needs.

While working on my master of education project, which focused on individualized instruction, I read a book written by Dr. Maria Montessori, published in 1912 entitled *The Montessori Method*. I became totally absorbed in her educational philosophy which seemed to resolve many of the problems I was experiencing in my classroom. Dr. Montessori determined how to meet students' individual needs in her first school, Casa dei Bambini, in Rome, Italy almost a century ago, and I felt as though I were attempting to reinvent the wheel in my own classroom. I immediately set out to observe a classroom in a Montessori school to see for myself if this concept really worked. I found one and was able to confirm what I had read. How amazing it was to see multi-aged students and a team of teachers work together to foster independence, self-motivation, concentration, cooperation, and individual success, all within a peaceful and productive environment. It was this visit to a little Montessori classroom in the basement of a church that led me to take an educational leave from my cherished, second grade teaching position for the following year to study the Montessori Method. I thought at the time I might be able to bring the principles I would learn back to our district's second graders. However, I realized during the course of the Montessori teacher training and certification

program that the skills I hoped to develop in my students needed to be introduced much earlier, between the ages of three to six when children begin to form their skills and attitude towards learning. It was with a heavy heart but renewed enthusiasm for my original goal as an educator that I resigned my teaching position and began the process of opening a Montessori preprimary school.

The Montessori Method as Teaching Philosophy

What was it about the Montessori philosophy that affected a change in my career? Overall it was the underlying principle to respect the child that caught my attention. Dr. Montessori advised teachers and parents to "follow the child," that is to shape the learning experience to the child's capabilities rather than the child to the experience. A Montessori classroom is considered a "prepared environment" where every learning tool and aspect of physical design fits the child's needs. Dr. Montessori's approach to education was based on her own scientific study of the child to determine how s/he learned.

Through observation and documentation of students' behavior, and use of her unique didactic materials, she discovered that young children exhibited a strong desire to learn and could do so successfully given an astute teacher fully knowledgeable of how a child develops, the appropriate materials and sensory experiences, independence, freedom of movement, and an ordered environment.

There is a golden rule, so to speak, in the Montessori Method that a child should never be set up to fail. Dr. Montessori considered the teacher to be a directress responsible for guiding students to the next level of learning only when they are ready. This opportune time to introduce a new concept is called "the match" whereby the child is prepared to learn, the teacher is aware of the child's readiness and trained to present the next lesson, and the material needed is readily accessible. This requires the directress to observe and carefully document each child's progress and to have a thorough understanding of the sequences of learning within the Montessori classroom. The directress is confirmed of the child's

readiness when she later observes his independent repetition of the activity until he achieves mastery. Outside rewards are not necessary as it is the inner reward that is meaningful. It is in this masterful design of the learning process that Dr. Montessori builds confidence in the child, ensuring his curiosity to learn.

I opened my little Montessori school in 1983 with a school secretary, assistant teacher, music, art, gym and Spanish teachers, and eight students. I was both the head teacher and Head of School. We've grown since then to a full enrollment of 60 students and a staff of eleven teachers. Most importantly, building this school and program led me to find the means by which to reach my goal of meeting students' individual needs. Each of our graduates excelled to his or her fullest potential and loved to learn during their preprimary years. They were respectful of others and their environment. I have great hope for all of them to continue to enjoy the learning process and to each contribute to society in their own unique way.

I believe the Montessori approach incorporates many of the educational practices we strive for today in the classroom. Team teaching and multiage grouping promote cooperation for students and adults. The three-year grouping as opposed to single grade classes offers students the opportunity for learning at their own rate. Observing advanced work stimulates the child to move through the sequences and learn from older students while all students feel free to go back and reinforce skills without feeling left behind.

There is no labeling of students. Each works to his or her potential. The Montessori classroom is prepared with abundant self-correcting materials to allow for independent learning while the directress guides students individually to the next challenge. Movement and sensorial experience are incorporated into each activity, supporting recent studies on brain growth. Grace and courtesy are encouraged through modeling and valid praise, and there is a deep respect for each individual in the classroom community. Materials are always put away before others are taken out. To encourage concentration, students are not interrupted while they are working, a skill that must be practiced in order to become automatic. Children may invite each other to share or reserve the right to work independently. Creativity is encouraged while students are always based in reality through hands on experiences in order to better understand their environment. Finally, the Montessori teacher, or directress, does not have a desk! She is mobile throughout the day, assisting students individually or in small groups. She tries not to draw attention away from students' focus to herself unless she is giving a lesson or leading a group. She is aware of her importance as a role model and always utilizes grace, courtesy, fairness and consistency in her reaction so as to build trusting relationships with her students. A Montessori classroom today is, as it was a century ago, a peaceful, spontaneous, respectful, individualized learning environment, and still serves as a successful model for those seeking excellence in education.



2008-2010 Educator's Award Committee (l to r): LaWalta Turner, Peggy Rupe, Dr. Carolyn Rants, Ruth E. Pridgen, Dr. Ingrid Stjernquist, Henrietta T. Schaefer

Educator's Award Selections

BY THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATOR'S AWARD COMMITTEE

The Educator's Award Committee of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International is charged with the responsibility of selecting an appropriate book as winner of the annual Educator's Award. Committee members read and evaluate books submitted by publishers that meet the criteria of having been written by women and whose content may influence the direction of thought and action necessary to meet the needs of today's complex society. This article reports on the 2009 Educator's Award selections.

2009 Educator's Award Recipient

ENGAGING THE DISENGAGED: How Schools Can Help Struggling Students Succeed by Lois Brown Easton (2008), Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Dr. Lois Brown Easton has drawn from her twelve years of work at Eagle Rock School and Professional Developmental Center in Colorado to provide *Engaging the Disengaged: How Schools Can Help Struggling Students Succeed*. Her experience at this laboratory school, which enrolls a limited number of struggling students, offers readers a resource for redesigning schools and changing school culture. Data gathered from author information and interpretation, stories from Eagle Rock students, and observations from educators provide a readable content.

Division of the book into four sections begins with the Importance of Culture which focuses on evaluation of this component through use of be-

liefs, metaphors, artifacts and practices, moves to Improving the Culture for Struggling Students which discusses relationships, principles rather than rules, and an environment promoting a whole learning community. Improving Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for Struggling Students offers details regarding documents of learning and presentations of learning as opposed to traditional time and test methods of credit designation and ending with the Importance of Looking at the Student as a Whole Person.

Sections are divided into chapters. Each chapter offers steps for analysis and application. First is the WHAT where experiences and information are shared. SO WHAT follows and provides the impetus for the reader to reflect alone or with constituents about feasible opportunities for application within a different system. NOW WHAT presents specific suggestions and steps to improve engagement.

Test scores and references add to the value of this book for teachers, administrators and parents.

(Continued on page 41)



Dr. Dorothy Sisk with Dr. Janice Novello

Making Great Kids Greater: Easing the Burden of Being Gifted

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. DOROTHY SISK CONDUCTED BY DR. JANICE NOVELLO

This interview is the third in a new series initiated by the members of the *Bulletin's* 2008-2010 Editorial Board. The goal of the series is to feature interviews conducted with Delta Kappa Gamma members or other educational leaders on a topic related to the theme of the issue.

Gifted Education

The National Association for Gifted Children (2009) defines gifted children as “students who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities,” while the Elementary and Secondary Education Act defines gifted children as “students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Although no federal agency or organization collects statistics on the number of gifted students in the United States, the National Association for Gifted Students (NAGC) estimates that there are more

than 3 million school aged academically gifted children which translates to approximately 6% of the population. No single program has been implemented to serve the special needs of these children, and each state and in some cases each school district designs and implements a program for its own students.

THE AUTHOR

Dr. Janice Novello holds a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Gifted Education Programming. She has served as a teacher of the Gifted in four states and is currently on the Editorial Board for the National Association for Gifted Children’s publication *Teaching for High Potential*. She has presented workshops and lectures around the world on both Creativity and Gifted Education, and will be presenting *Conversation in the Gifted Classroom* at the NAGC Conference in the Fall of 2009. Dr. Novello is a faculty member of the University of Phoenix and is currently serving as a member of *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* Editorial Board (2008-2012).

Services may be provided in a number of ways, including, but not limited to:

- Part time class with like ability students, regular schedule the remainder of the time.
- Accommodations in the regular classroom
- Full time class with students of like ability
- Acceleration of content
- Grade advancement

Dr. Sisk's Background in Gifted Education

Dorothy Sisk is currently the Program Director for the Texas Governor's Program for Gifted Children. She holds the Lamar University's Conn Chair for Gifted Education in the College of Education and Human Development, a position she has held since 1989. In 2009, she was honored as the Distinguished Faculty Lecturer. She served in Washington, D.C. as Director of the Office of Gifted and Talented Education and was previously a professor of Special Education and Gifted Education at the University of South Florida.

She has authored a number of books about gifted children and has lectured all over the world on their behalf. In August, 2009, she lectured at the *World Council for the Gifted and Talented* in Vancouver, Canada on the unique perceptions of gifted kids and the discrepancies between their mental age and their chronological age, which could lead to feelings of inadequacy.

A Career Devoted to Children Who Are Gifted

Dr. Sisk, what led to your involvement in Gifted Education?

I became interested in gifted education in my very first year of teaching third grade in Garden Grove, California, in which I taught a cluster group of gifted students, above average students and average students. Across the hall, my colleague had a class of above average students, average students, and students below average. She was an accomplished musician and would give impromptu concerts for all of us before or after school, and there was a constant flow of students back-and-forth from our classrooms, as we shared our talents. My students were studying famous authors and were eager to share their findings with our companion class. This experience

taught me that "gifted strategies" are enabling strategies for all kids. The pace and product may be very different, but the active, responsive classroom works for all abilities. I was very fortunate to be selected as part of a team of ten teachers who participated in a special project in the district that replicated the Cleveland Major Work Class. At the same time, I was taking classes with Dr. Juliana Gensley who was one of the original Terman study youngsters who were identified at age nine as gifted and followed throughout their life. Juliana became a life-long mentor and colleague and urged me to seek a doctorate. I enrolled at UCLA and again was able to study with giants in the field of gifted education, including Dr. Ruth Martinson who crafted what became known as the Marland Report for gifted education, and the Dean of the College of Education, Dr. May Seago. Upon graduation, I joined the University of South Florida and was able to work with Dr. Marvin Gold in establishing a MA program in gifted education and founding the Florida Association for Gifted Education. Our program eventually became an outstanding Ph.D. program in Special Education with emphasis on gifted. I took a leave of absence from the University of South Florida to go to Washington, DC to direct the Office of Gifted and Talented for five years, and then returned to USF until 1989. Since 1989, I have been at Lamar University where I hold an endowed chair in gifted education.

What Information Concerning Gifted Children Do You See as Important for Educators to Understand?

Gifted students want to live a life of immutable values, and they need to develop moral courage to step away from actions and behaviors of others that are outside of their ideals. Recently in a three-week residential program for gifted adolescents (the Texas Governor's School), the students shared that they have pulled away from friends who are using alcohol and drugs; consequently, they have lost many of their friends from early childhood. Being able to define themselves with their values is part of developing their individuality, and this can be a painful process. One of the students in the Texas Governor's School created a film clip called Individuality in which he portrayed the loss of one's identity as a result of

going along with the group. He shared his film with the group, and they all agreed that at some point or another they all had been on that same path choosing which is the best path to follow.

At the same time that gifted students need to learn to be individuals and to become more aware of their gifts, it is equally important that they develop a sense of being other-centered in order to meet one of their essential needs—that of making a difference. When gifted kids are asked ‘what is their quest?’ most will answer “to make a difference.” Many gifted programs are adding service projects to their program offerings, and these service projects are great vehicles for developing and maintaining the sensitivity and empathy for others of gifted students. An example is the Challah for Hunger Project developed by students in California to assist the people of Darfur. These students bake the traditional bread of the Seder and sell it to their friends. Their project was so successful that there are other similar projects springing up at other campuses to reach out to others who need help and assistance.

Last, of great importance in the lives of gifted students is the development of their creative consciousness. Using one’s creative consciousness allows the individual to solve problems in a creative way, but most important it helps one to live in a creative way. In today’s world, we are bombarded with scenes of violence, social injustice, sexual abuse, alcoholism, environmental exploitation, and countless other problems in the evening news, in movies, and in video games; therefore, there is a danger that people, including gifted students, may come to accept violence as a way of life. One way to help gifted students overcome this bombardment is to help them develop a sense of peace and tranquility by engaging in nature walks, bird watching, and just being “one with nature.” These types of quiet moments can help gifted kids achieve a balance in their life, and a recognition of the importance of quiet time. Many gifted programs are asking their students to journal and this reflective activity can help encourage “pondering” and thinking about one’s actions and reactions. Gifted kids are our hope for the future. Developing that giftedness is the challenge of education, to enable them to help shape society to its true fulfillment.

In your latest book, Making Great Kids Greater, Easing the Burden of Being Gifted, you address the issue of Asynchrony. Would you please elaborate on that for us?

Asynchrony means being “out of sync.” Gifted kids are more advanced than kids of their chronological age, which represents one type of asynchrony they experience. In addition, there can be discrepancies between their mental age and their emotional and social development. A gifted kid with the mental maturity of a 14-year old and the physical maturity of an 8-year old faces enormous emotional and social challenges. Along with their asynchrony, the gifted have a unique perception of themselves and their world in comparison to their age mates. The gifted are sensitive, perfectionist, and intense, and moral issues affect gifted students more deeply and at an earlier age than their peers. Gifted students may appear to be great kids and well adjusted, receiving good grades in school, but they still may suffer from feelings of inadequacy because their successes fall short of their ideals.

Would you please briefly discuss the Theory of Overexcitabilities and its relationship to Gifted Children?

Gifted kids are intense and the theory of Polish psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski helps to clarify and build an understanding of their intensities. Dabrowski called the intensities “overexcitabilities” and he said that they can be considered positive energy. He said this energy can enable the gifted to live lives with immutable values and to develop moral courage to become their best selves. The overexcitabilities are: 1) psychomotor, 2) sensual, 3) intellectual, 4) imaginal, and 5) emotional. Dabrowski theorized that intellectual, imaginal and emotional intensity are necessary parts of giftedness.

Gifted kids need to develop social skills, but there should be a distinction made between socialization and social development. Many times in the literature these terms are used interchangeably. Socialization is a Level II function in Dabrowski’s theory of emotional development in which the individual goes along with the group; whereas, social development represents what Dabrowski calls a multi-level function in which the individual seeks autonomy, responsibility, and

authenticity, which would be the goal for gifted students.

Some Educators have heard the term "Perfectionism." Would you please share some information concerning this important quality noted in some Gifted Children?

Perfectionism is a characteristic of many gifted kids and again there is a difference between debilitating perfectionism, and the positive side of perfectionism in which the individual seeks excellence. Parents and teachers need to be mindful of the gifted students' high standards that they set for themselves, and work with them to achieve time management skills and ways to plan for follow through on long range plans and projects.

Dr. Sisk, I know that you are a strong supporter of Delta Kappa Gamma. Would you please share how you became involved in a leadership role in this Society?

The University of South Florida was using the concept of a professional development school long before it became popular and I worked with Gorrie Elementary School where I met Mrs. Jessie McKenzie. She was a creative visionary principal and her students were involved in project based learning and creative problem solving using E. Paul Torrance's ideas. Jessie was president of Delta Kappa Gamma at that time and asked me to present a session on the importance of Recognizing and Developing Giftedness in Students. They were such an appreciative audience that I joined the group. I became their program chair, their secretary and eventually president of the Chapter.

References

- National Association for Gifted Children, (2009). *Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved September 3, 2009, from National Association for Gifted Children Web site: <http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=548>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (159, 115 Stat, PUBLIC LAW 107-110). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

(Continued from page 37)

Dr. Easton offers a thesis for individuals seeking educational solutions: "One part of the premise of this book is that engaged students are learning students. Another part of this book's premise is that schools can do something about engagement" (preface, p. xix). This thesis has broad appeal for the needs of today's complex society.

Educator's Award Honorable Mention

DOLPHIN MYSTERIES: Unlocking the Mysteries of Communication by Kathleen M. Dudzinski, PH.D. and Toni Frohoff, PH.D. (2008), New Haven: Yale University Press.

Selected by the 2009 Educator's Award Committee for honorable mention is *Dolphin Mysteries: Unlocking the Secrets of Communication* by Drs. Kathleen Dudzinski and Toni Frohoff. In writing about the wonders of this species the authors have emphasized the necessity of eradicating ocean pollution. "Within each of us there is also an internal dance between two selves: one self is the dedicated, objective researcher who documents every nuance of dolphin posture, behavior, interaction, vocalization, and more with exacting precision; the other is the little kid who is simply enamored by dolphins and wants to cavort with them until the sun sets" (p. 35). Thus is the balance found in this enthralling book.

The research is well-documented. The pages of photos pull the reader to marvel and review the many well-labeled diagrams. Systematic and readable, this offers the dynamics of the communication, behavior, and social patterns of the species in an understandable format for the general public. Additionally, the necessity for environmental concerns is presented in a tangible manner. Dudzinski and Frohoff have peaked interest in aspects of human interaction with the environment and the other species with which we share our world.

Selections by the Educator's Award Committee came from nearly twenty submissions. Three other titles are recognized as books of interest: *The Gender Gap in College: Maximizing the Developmental Potential of Women and Men* by Linda Sax; *Journeys of Heartache and Grace: Conversations and Life Lessons from Young People with Serious Illnesses* by Melody Chatelle; *Where the Pavement Ends* by Marie Wadden.

Poetry

What Delta Kappa Gamma Means to Me

Dedicated educators who devote their lives to
 Enabling others to prepare for a better
 Life by learning to accomplish all
 They are capable of doing and being while
 Allowing them time for play and relaxation

Kind, caring women of many nationalities with an
 Array of talents and skills who are
 Pulling together to create a world that is a more
 Peaceful place where everyone is willing to
 Accept that not all people have the same beliefs

Gentle, yet strong and determined individuals,
 united to
 Achieve the goals the twelve founders set forth
 Many years ago as their dreams developed and
 Made Delta Kappa Gamma Society International
 the
 Active, influential driving force it is today

— **Glenda B. Bright**, Beta Xi Chapter, Iowa

To The Golden Girls of '94

I wish that I could write a great poem
 Of the life changing experiences we shared in the
 Golden class of '94
 Hearts glad from cheery greetings after hours and
 hours of work
 And long, quiet talks in the evenings gave true
 friendship birth

As I journeyed home that now far-off July day
 Thinking of all the great folks I'd met
 I decided that after two weeks with all of you
 The world's a good place yet

Gee! How I'd like to see each of you, it seems so
 many years
 Since, we sat together sharing hopes and fears
 No other educational experience was ever half so
 "joyful" as this
 A fact I attribute to each of you and to fun times
 spent

And so to you, My Friends, whose lives have
 brought so much
 Happiness and comfort to each other life you've
 touched
 My heart is full of gratitude for each of you, each
 day
 For the kindness shown and the joys shared in
 every little way

My tongue grows numb and cannot speak
 Except to murmur "Thank You" for a life time of
 memories

— **Patricia (Patty) Cook**, Nu Chapter, West
 Virginia

Letter to the Editor

Dear Dr. Brogden,

Thank you for publishing the summer Bulletin
 online. I think this is a great way to save paper
 and still get all the news. I do have one sugges-
 tion. For those issues printed only on line, per-
 haps it would be better to publish without col-
 umns. I find that I have to scroll down then back
 up again to read the next column. I know it is
 such a minor detail when I should be most in-
 terested in the context, but the matter caught my
 eye. Thanks.

— **Sandy Rushing**, Beta Phi Chapter,
 California

***Bulletin* Submission Guidelines**

Submissions from members will be accepted for review provided that:

- The submission is not being considered concurrently in whole or substantial part by another publisher.
- The *Bulletin* has exclusive option of possible publication for a period of six months following receipt of the submission.
- The author assumes responsibility for publication clearance in the event the submission was presented at a professional meeting or is the direct product of a project financed by a funding agency.
- Authors are responsible for accurately citing all quoted and bibliographic materials and for obtaining permission from the original source for quotations in excess of 150 words or for tables or figures reproduced from published works.
- Co-authors are permitted. At least one author must be a Delta Kappa Gamma member.

Manuscript Preparation

- Though there is a suggested theme for each issue, manuscripts on all topics are welcome.
- Manuscripts should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise and appropriate for *Bulletin* readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable and free from gender, political, patriotic or religious bias. Topic headings should be inserted where appropriate.
- Please see Submission Grid on the following page for specific requirements of the types of manuscripts appropriate for publication.
- Use *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, current edition, for manuscript preparation. Visit the APA Style website at www.apastyle.org.
- Double space the entire manuscript, including quotations, references and tables. Print should be clear, dark and legible. Pages must be numbered.
- References should refer only to materials cited within the text. Non-retrievable material, such as papers, reports of limited circulation, unpublished works and personal communications, should be restricted to works absolutely essential to the manuscript.
- Abbreviations should be explained at their first appearance in the text. Educational jargon (e.g., preservice, K–10, etc.) should be defined as it occurs in the text.
- Place tables and figures on separate pages at the end of the manuscript. Use Arabic numerals and indicate approximate placement in the text.
- Photos, graphics, charts, etc. that may enhance the presentation of the manuscript may be included. Contact the editorial staff (bulletin@deltakappagamma.org) for information regarding the use of photos.

Submission

- **One submission per author per issue.**
- Submit electronically your manuscript, definitive abstract, and biographical information to bulletin@deltakappagamma.org. Biographical information must include author(s) name(s), occupational position(s), Society and professional affiliations (list offices held), address(es), phone number(s) and e-mail address(es).
- Submit a recent photograph of the author(s) suitable for reproduction to *Bulletin* Editorial Staff, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, P.O. Box 1589, Austin, TX 78767-1589. To submit electronic/digital photos, the files must have a **minimum of 300 dpi** resolution and be saved as a JPG or TIFF file. Please e-mail to bulletin@deltakappagamma.org.

Poems and Graphic Arts

Submit a single copy with your name, address and chapter affiliation on it. A photograph is not required.

Publication of Submissions

- Authors of published articles will receive five complimentary copies of the *Bulletin* in which the article appears; authors of published poems and graphic arts will receive two complimentary copies.
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- All published materials are copyrighted by The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International and may not be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission.
- The editorial staff reserves the right to make changes of a non-substantive nature.

For evaluation rubric, please go to the Publications page at www.deltakappagamma.net.

Bulletin Submission Grid

Submission Type and Description	Word Length	Abstract or Introduction	Documentation
Action Research: Organized, systematic and reflective observation of classroom practice that also addresses areas of concern.	1,500-3,000	Abstract	Required
Qualitative Research: Focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meanings from their experiences; essentially narrative-oriented and employs non-statistical approaches.	1,500-3,000	Abstract	Required
Quantitative Research: Involves the measurement of quantity or amount in order to test a hypothesis or a theory; gathers and analyzes measurable data in order to support or refute a hypothesis or theory. Numbers and statistics are central to quantitative research.	1,500-3,000	Abstract	Required
Annotated Bibliography: An alphabetical listing of sources that provides an account of research that has been done on a given topic; includes a concise summary of each source as well as some assessment of its value.	1,500-3,000	Introduction	Required
Program Description: Provides an overview and details of a single program in an educational setting. goals, resources and outcomes are included. No marketing or promotion of a program is allowed.	1,000-1,500	Abstract	Encouraged
Position Paper: Defines an issue; asserts clear and unequivocal position on that issue and argues directly in its favor.	1,000-1,500	Abstract	Encouraged
Book Review: Combines summary and personal critique of a book on an educational topic or with educational relevance.	400-700	Introduction	Required
Viewpoint: Expresses the writer's thoughts and opinions based on personal experience, perceptions, philosophy, or reading.	1,000-1,500	Abstract and Introduction	Not required
Graphic Arts: Original drawings, sketches, etchings, woodcuts, photographs, cartoons	NA	NA	Not required
Letter to the Editor: Responds to materials previously published in the Bulletin; must include author's name and chapter/state of membership.	200-300	NA	Not required
Poetry: Original expression in any brief poetic format.	NA	NA	Not required