

EDUCATION NEWS

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Notes from the Chair

By Jean Ketter

As Chair of the education department at Grinnell, I want to invite each of you to get involved in the education program in any way you can-- through serving on SEPC, participating in sponsored events, meeting with professors, or contributing to the newsletter. We faculty are always happy to get feedback from students about what we are doing well and what we could be doing better.

I want to summarize for you some major changes that have occurred in the department in the last two years. Most of you know that Martha Voyles, who has been the science and math methods teacher for both elementary and secondary students for many years, is not teaching this year. Martha is on sabbatical this semester, and next semester, she achieves senior faculty status. As a senior faculty member, Martha will continue to research and serve the department in many ways, but she will no longer be teaching any courses. With Martha's retirement from teaching, the department needed to find a replacement faculty member, and two years ago, we made a request to replace her and presented it to the Executive Council, the elected faculty representatives who approve faculty position requests. In May of 2006, we learned that the Executive Council was not going to approve our request to replace Martha. Executive Council asked us to consider eliminating elementary licensure at the college because faculty on the Council believed the department was over-stretched and would benefit from refocusing solely on secondary licensure. Although the department disagreed with this recommendation, it was clear to us that we were not going to persuade the Council otherwise. Thus, we submitted a hiring proposal for a secondary science and math faculty person, as the Council had encouraged us to do. We were very lucky to appoint Paul Hutchison to this position. He will be teaching a 200 level course this spring on the Nature of Science and Science Teaching and secondary math methods in the spring. Paul will also be teaching general courses required for licensure. Along with our decision to focus on secondary licensure, we also proposed that we begin to develop an ESL/bilingual focus, one that could

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lead to an ESL endorsement for students. This process has begun, and Nancy Hayes will teach a 200 level course on issues in ESL/bilingual education in the 08/09 academic year.

The Executive Council also encouraged the department to "widen the net" of students it serves. So, the department will also aim to attract more non-license seeking students to its courses, particularly at the 200 level. We also hope to persuade students who are considering TFA, Peace Corps, or other post-graduate experiences that will likely involve teaching, to take at least EDU 101, Educational Psychology, and the methods course for their discipline. We believe that knowledge and skills gained from these education courses will give students who ultimately teach a very basic preparation that may help them prevent some of the typical failures inexperienced teachers face.

We are happy to announce that Nicole Larsen has joined Angela Winburn in the Academic Support Office. Nicole will be learning the ropes for a while, but eventually she will be the "go to" person for education program students. Please drop by and introduce yourself to Nicole.

Also, the department web page has been redesigned and, we hope, will be much more useful. Please check it out. There are some pages that are still being revised, but the overall structure is in place. If you have suggestions for what we might include on the web page, please let us know.

New Faculty Member

The department hired a new faculty member into the position previously held by Martha Voyles, who goes on senior faculty status this year. Our new faculty member is Paul Hutchison, who joins us from his doctoral program in science education at the University of Maryland. Paul got his bachelors degree from Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, IA, so for him coming to Grinnell is coming back to Iowa (though he grew up in Wisconsin). As an undergraduate he majored in physics, and he also has a Masters degree in physics from the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. At one point Paul expected to become a research physicist, but while pursuing that goal discovered a passion for teaching, and later a passion for teaching teachers. He was a non-tenure track faculty member in the physics department at Mississippi State University for three years before beginning his doctoral work. He has taught extensively at the college level with an increasing focus on courses for teachers, both science content and instructional methods courses. In our department Paul is responsible for mentoring and teaching students seeking science and/or math certifications. This semester he is teaching a section of EDU 101 and the science teaching methods course. In the spring semester he will teach the math methods course and a course he is developing titled "Nature of Science and Science Teaching" that will examine what descriptions



Paul Hutchison

of the nature of science and scientific knowledge can tell us about how science can and perhaps should be taught in schools. Paul's research is related to this question. As a researcher he works to articulate what comprises good science 'studenting' and good science teaching, and how those two activities are related to one another. Descriptions of the nature of science are central to his arguments about what school science can and should look like.

Required Exam for Teacher Education Program

By Kara Lycke

In order to be admitted to the teacher education program, students are required by the State of Iowa to pass a competency test in reading (comprehension and general knowledge of literature), writing (grammar, editing and essay writing), and math (geometry and algebra). Grinnell's Education Department is offering the CollegeBASE exam for entrance into our secondary licensure program.

The exam will be given on Sunday, January 20, 2008,

CBASE Exam
Sunday, January 20, 2008
Steiner 106
1:00 p.m.

at 1:00 PM in Steiner 106. There is a \$20 fee (payable by cash or check). No advance registration is necessary. The test will take about 4 hours to complete. Calculators, scrap paper and pencils will be provided.

Because CollegeBASE scores are reported 4-6 weeks after the exam date, applications to Grinnell's licensure program can be submitted without scores, but admission to the program will be contingent partially on passing the test.

Students who wish to learn more about the test can request a student guide at the Assessment Resource Center's website, <http://arc.missouri.edu/collegebase/>. Sample test items and the scoring rubric for the writing section

Please see *CBASE* on page 5

Rosenfield Symposium on Public School Education Reform

By Jean Ketter

The education department will bring several education leaders and classroom teachers to campus next February 19th -21st to participate in a symposium called Public School Education Reform in an Era of Accountability Politics. Our kickoff speaker will be **Kevin Carey**, the research and policy manager for Education Sector, a national independent policy think tank devoted to developing innovative solutions to the nation's most pressing education problems. **Doug Christensen**, the Commissioner of Education for Nebraska will speak on Wednesday evening. Mr. Christensen led the resistance to pressure from the U.S. Department of Education to standardize assessments for schools and was successful in maintaining Nebraska's local control of school assessment. Our convocation speaker, **Deborah Meier**, is an advocate for small schools and local control, a position that sets her against the current push to standardize and nationalize school assessment through No Child Left Behind. On Thursday evening, a panel of

Grinnell alums who are public school teachers working in challenging schools across the U.S. will discuss the reforms they see as working where they are.

We know that all of you will be able to attend the Convocation on Thursday, Nov. 21st, but we hope that you will also be able to attend other events included in the symposium. We also hope that some of the presenters will be visiting your classes during that week.

Deborah W. Meier
Scholar's Convocation
Thurs., February 21, '08
11:00 AM, JRC 101

SEPC Update

By Becca Weiner

SEPC stands for Student Educational Policy Committee, and as a committee our job is to serve as a liaison between professors and students and to organize study breaks and other activities for students in the education department. The members of this year's Education SEPC are Becca Weiner '08, Nikisha Glenn '08, Mando Guzman '08, Matt Hochstein '09, and Emily Kugisaki '09. On September 23rd, Professor Jean Ketter hosted the annual Education Department Picnic at her house, where we honored this semester's student teachers Katrina McGranahan Brown, Rebecca Jacobson and Mike Van Hulle. On October 4th we had a study break with the student teachers, and members of the education program were given the opportunity to ask them questions about their student teaching experiences while feasting on food from Chuong Garden! Before the end of the semester we will have a pizza and a movie study break, and we hope to start designing our department t-shirts. If you are creative and have any

ideas for t-shirt design please email [weinerre]. And, if you have any suggestions for more study breaks in the future or simply have something you'd like to express regarding the education department, feel free to email [weinerre].



Emily Kugisaki '09, Becca Weiner '08, Matt Hochstein '08, Nikisha Glenn '08

Ninth Semester Students Report from the Field

Rebecca Jacobson '08

I am student teaching in a 1st grade classroom at Woodbury Elementary, a dual language immersion school in Marshalltown. The students in the school receive approximately 50% of their instruction in English, and 50% in Spanish. The school is made up of both Spanish-dominant and English-dominant speakers. Students receive reading instruction in their dominant language, but all other instruction is given in either English or Spanish, on alternating weeks. The classroom in which I teach is the English room. This means that all instruction in my room is conducted in English. Teaching in a dual language setting, where approximately half of the students are considered Spanish-dominant, and more than that are labeled as "limited English proficient" has really forced me to think about the ways I teach all students. Because so many of the students would have no idea what I was saying if I used only spoken words to lead class, I always use gestures, pictures, photographs, modeling, etc. This is valuable not just because many of the kids would be lost without the visuals. Requiring myself to use both words and pictures (at the very least - though preferably also miming/modeling/role-playing, and perhaps music and occasionally sign language) to explain a concept helps me to reach more students with unique learning needs all at one time. It also makes it more interesting for me. After all, I'm not just standing up there talking - I get to dance around, show pictures, use many different materials/manipulatives, and sing songs with the kids!

Katrina McGranahan '08

I am student teaching at Davis Elementary in Grinnell, IA in a Fourth Grade classroom. My twenty-one students range from students with a full time aid to students working two years above their grade level and everything in between. Attention is a problem many students have as they are drawn away from class by many unknown issues in their lives. Many of my students lack support at home in terms of help with their homework, signing permission slips, and generally asking how they are doing. Without this active involvement students are often in at recess finishing work or making corrections which creates frustration and hinders their learning. As a teacher I have to work hard to ensure that all my students are receiving some benefit from our lessons. Breaking skills into concepts for those students who do not understand multiplication or place value is difficult when there are some students who can multiply decimals and fractions. Games and hands on activities allow students to work at an individual

level while sharing their ideas and helping each other grow in their knowledge. Lessons need to mean something to the students; they need to see a direct relevance to their lives in order to understand why they should learn the skills. By involving them in their learning process they gain control and pride in what they can accomplish. Recognition of those gains is also very important as students need feedback in order to encourage future involvement. There is nothing better than watching a student have an "aha!" moment and suddenly being able to answer all your questions even if you don't call on them.

Michael Van Hulle '08

I am currently teaching at East Marshall High School, a small rural school about 25 minutes north of Grinnell. Of the 311 students, I work with about 150 a day between two sections of government, one section of world cultures, three sections of world history, and a section of geography. My main goal as a teacher is to teach students how to participate within the discipline they are studying. For example, in world history, I challenge my students to examine multiple perspectives of a single historical event and then encourage them to make their own interpretations of history. As a class, we studied the battle of Thermopylae as interpreted by the ancient Greek historian Herodotus and the modern day comic book writer, Frank Miller and his movie 300. By juxtaposing two accounts of the same event and comparing them, the students were able to experience the process that historians go through to make their own interpretations of history. Overall, my motto in the classroom is that students are not there to learn history, but rather to create history!

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are available in Steiner 209. If you plan to take the exam, I strongly suggest you look over the samples to familiarize yourself with the format of the test and to review the material that will be covered on the exam. In the sample material, there is a scoring rubric for the essay. Please review it so you can anticipate how your essay will be scored. If you have a documented special need for test taking (visual, hearing, physical, learning, or other disability), let Kara Lycke [lyckekl] know ASAP so that your needs can be accommodated for the exam. If you have questions or concerns about any of this information, please don't hesitate to contact me, Kara (X4552), or Angela Winburn (X3157) in Steiner 209.

Reflections on Teacher Preparation and Teach for America

By Kara Lycke

I have been thinking a great deal this semester about the importance of high quality teachers and the role of Teach for America (TFA). More specifically, as I have been advising students about their coursework toward teacher licensure and about their careers as educators, I have been exploring the conflict I feel between the mission of TFA, its presence on Grinnell's campus, and my goals as a teacher educator. I felt this conflict acutely after listening to Wendy Kopp, the founder of TFA, deliver the Convocation address in October, and I have revisited these feelings throughout the semester.

As the Education Department asserts in our mission statement, our job as teacher educators is to help prepare "...teacher-researchers who can fulfill decision-making and leadership roles in schools and communities. Because we carefully guide students through a program of increasingly demanding research and teaching experiences, our graduates are prepared to act on their informed choices to transform classroom practices to make schooling more equitable, engaging, and accessible to all students...." (Education Department, 2007)

Our graduates are highly qualified for this work. After twenty hours of coursework in education, including extensive supervised field experiences in classrooms, followed by a fourteen-week closely mentored student-teaching experience and a seminar—all this and a major, too (rigorous but do-able in a liberal arts setting)—they become very successful teacher-leaders around the country in a variety of school settings (just read their Plans). They are also considered highly qualified by federal NCLB regulations; that is, they are fully licensed and they teach in the areas of their subject matter expertise.

Well-prepared, highly qualified teachers (such as ours), according to Darling-Hammond (2007), are key to shrinking the achievement gap and providing hope for reforming an education system that has a long way to go in our work for equitable access to the resources needed for learning. The teachers who have come through our program, both those employed in high-need school districts and those in more affluent communities, are working to provide the best quality education to every one of their students. They are helping their students think about issues of equity and marginalization in schools and in their worlds beyond school.

Wendy Kopp believes that the achievement gap will be diminished if TFA builds a "highly selective corps of top recent college graduates," not licensed teachers but "individuals of all academic majors, career interests, and backgrounds—who commit two years to teach in low-income communities" (Teach for America, 2007) after just five weeks of training.

I know from talking with many Grinnell students and alumni involved with TFA in various roles (recruiters, corps members, trainers), recruits are frequently placed to teach in a subject outside of their major. These practices run counter to a number of research studies (see Darling-Hammond, 2007, for references) that report "students' access to well-qualified teachers can be a critical determinant (emphasis is mine) of whether they succeed on the state tests often required for promotion from grade to grade, for placement into more academically challenging classes, and for graduation from high school" (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 323).

Among the troubling aspects of Kopp's Convocation address in October was that it was delivered as a recruiting device rather than a scholarly address to an assembly of interested students and professionals. Throughout her talk, Kopp referenced the importance of quality teaching in school reform efforts. She told compelling stories about admirably dedicated young individuals who raised their students' test scores. She described their deep knowledge of the creation and uses of many types of assessments as well as a rich repertoire of problem-solving approaches, but she provided little information about the long-term affects of TFA corps members on the schools and the students where they are placed. When I questioned Kopp about the five-week summer institute as corps members' only training, she told me TFA corps members learn on the job. This remark accentuated my feeling of TFA's "long tradition of devaluing students and deprofessionalizing teachers," as Linda Darling-Hammond put it (1994).

Kopp's positive examples reminded me of a discussion I was part of at a recent meeting of teacher educators from around the state of Iowa where Aida Walqui, a prominent national education scholar, said that effective teaching practice grows over time out of deep disciplinary, pedagogical knowledge and contingent

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action. In other words, effective teachers have a complex understanding of their discipline and of multiple teaching approaches to help students learn. They assess each situation and make decisions about how to act, decisions which depend on their deep pedagogical knowledge.

College graduates that join the corps of TFA are undoubtedly among the best and brightest, but a strong academic record does not prepare them for teaching, especially in schools with some of the most vulnerable and historically under-served students. Placing ill-equipped and under-prepared teachers in classrooms, as TFA does, seems a further injustice to the students in schools that need the best prepared teachers, and doing so potentially serves to exacerbate the achievement gap rather than alleviate it.

It seems that the efforts of TFA may be misplaced. Instead of supporting a general recruitment of students into a stopover "on their way to their 'real jobs' in law, medicine or business" (Darling-Hammond, 1994), the organization would better serve their mission to eliminate educational inequity if they recruited and supported top college students who choose to become licensed teachers and then work in high-need schools. If this were the focus of their mission, under-served students would learn with teachers who are better prepared at the beginning of their two-year commitment and teachers might stay long enough in the classroom and the community to make a difference.

Kopp said that during the decade she and I came of age, college graduates had two choices, to go to Wall Street or to enter the Peace Corps. I made a third choice, to become a licensed public high school teacher. I agree with Kopp when she states that the inequity in schooling opportunities is one of our nation's greatest injustices. But what our schools need is more well-prepared professionals who are committed to the communities they serve and to their own on-going professional development. Strong leadership is only one component of good teaching. Grinnell College students who want to lead the reform effort and work to close the achievement gap have a choice. They can become professional educators and more effectively, and justly, serve students in any community they choose, for as long as they choose.

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