Curriculum & Teaching Newsletter

Letter from the Chair

As you can see in this newsletter, I am blessed to be the chairperson of a department community with a vibrant research, teaching, and service orientation. In order to showcase the depth and breadth of our full faculty, adjunct faculty, and student stories, we are planning to have three newsletters a year!

In this newsletter, you can witness our full time faculty excellence in research, teaching, and service at the international, national, and regional level. We are also including the marvelous work of our liaisons across the university. Here, we are featuring Dr. Dorothy Heard’s innovative program in Newark public school district. We are also proud to showcase work from one of our devoted adjunct professors (Janet Goldstein) in one of our field-based classes in one of our partner schools in Newark.

I believe that students benefit greatly from these combined efforts!

A new section of this publication is now dedicated to be a “display case” for our C&T students’ work: graduate and undergraduate, Initial Certification and Special Education majors.

Thank you to our graduate assistants for putting this newsletter together. I would like to acknowledge in particular Mary Fuchs and Chris.

Good News From Our C&T Family Members

• Congratulations to Dr. Rich Wolfson, who was recently elected President of Local 1904 of the American Federation of Teachers, which represents faculty, professional staff, and librarians here at Montclair State University.

• This is the second year in a row that Susan Hagen has been nominated for MSU’s Outstanding Academic Advising Award. Hagen says she is honored to have received nominations and support from more than a dozen advisees and colleagues. This award program is recognized by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and those who are selected for the awards at the university level are considered for awards at the national level.

• What does Dr. David Schwarzer have in common with one of this year’s Academy Award winners? A love for a certain primary school in Israel! The Bialik-Rogozin school, now famous for the educational opportunities it offers refugee children from all over the world, was featured in the film Strangers No More. Film directors Kirk Simon and Karen Goodman won Best Documentary Short for their portrayal of students transitioning to their new home in Israel. But before the awards, Dr. Schwarzer served as principal of Bialik-Rogozin. He says students who were refugees were just starting to come to the school when he worked there from 1991 to 1992.

Hermosilla. I would like also to welcome our newest faculty member, Dr. Danielle Parisi, to our Curriculum and Teaching family. ¡Bienvenida!

At the end of my second year as Chairperson, I am honored and humbled by your hard work and devotion. Keep it up!

Dr. David Schwarzer.

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Walencik Planting STEM Across N.J.

Dr. Vince Walencik has been working with several schools from pre-K through high school and collegiate levels to implement STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Some of the programs he has been working with include Wood-Ridge High School, Watchung and Bradford elementary schools in Montclair, the PISA (Partnership to Improve Student Achievement) project of Stevens Institute of Technology, and PRISM (Professional Resources in Science and Mathematics) on the Montclair State University campus.

In an illustration of pedagogical practice, a teacher reads a story to students before having them identify the key problem, then brainstorm possible solutions.

The goals of STEM

- Apply science and math to engineering concepts.
- Provide interdisciplinary, problem based, hands-on learning experiences.
- Demonstrate risk-taking as part of learning process.
- Increase student’s creativity skills.
- Make students aware of multiple “right” answers.
Staley Continues Assessment Work

Dr. Charlene Staley, in her second year in the Curriculum and Teaching Department, teaches a number of courses to both undergraduate and graduate students regarding the instructional planning, assessment and evaluation of students in the inclusive classroom. This past semester, Dr. Staley taught Curr 310 for undergraduates, and Sped 567 and Sped 584 for grad students.

Prior to joining Montclair State University, Dr. Staley worked in public education for 27 years in a variety of positions. She began her career as a special education teacher in a special school, then taught at the elementary and middle school levels, moving on to become a resource specialist. She eventually became the charter school and special education supervisor for a school district in Florida. During her tenure as supervisor, the number of charter schools in the district increased from 3 to 25.

Dr. Staley’s research interests include the development of successful coteaching teams, as well as exploring the preparation of principals in special education and the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Wolfson’s Office a Window to the Soul

New president of teachers’ union chapter proudly displays his history.

The walls of Dr. Rich Wolfson’s office tell the story of his life.

The magic tricks and toys show his love for magicians. The technology books are a reminder that Dr. Wolfson was a pioneer in implementing educational technologies into his courses and designed, installed and maintained the first classroom of the Future in our College of Education and Human Services.

Information about the teacher's union was recently added to the collection after Dr. Wolfson was elected president of Local 1904 of the American Federation of Teachers, which represents faculty, professional staff, and librarians here at Montclair State University.

Dr. Wolfson’s office provides glimpses of his past experiences—his past hobbies—as well as shows the shift of a professional into a different phase in his career.
Taylor Helps Urban Teaching Interns

Providing guidance to candidates in MSU’s teacher residency program in Newark.

Dr. Monica Taylor, a longtime member of the Curriculum and Teaching Department at Montclair, works often in the areas of urban teaching, school/university partnership, teacher leadership, and social justice.

Currently, she is involved with the Montclair State Urban Teaching Residency Program in Newark, working closely with the teaching faculty at East Side High School, where interns in the program will complete their residencies.

Dr. Taylor, along with the other MSU colleagues involved in the project, presented a paper at the Penn Urban Ethnography Conference, and they are excited to present on two UTR panels at AERA this Spring.

In addition, Dr. Taylor has coauthored an article titled "Changing Leadership: Teachers Lead the Way for Schools that Learn" along with DRS. Jennifer Goeke, Emily Klein, and Cynthia Onore. The article has recently been accepted for publication by Teaching and Teacher Education.

Keiser Earns Grant for Link to Thailand

Dr. David Lee Keiser recently received a Global Education Grant for his proposal, “Fostering Pedagogical Collaboration with Burapha University.” This project is the culminating effort of a March 2010 visit to Thailand.

While at Burapha University in Thailand, Dr. Keiser observed many of the same nurturing pedagogical practices that occur daily at Montclair State University.

During his enlightening visit, Dr. Keiser was asked to be on the editorial board of a Burapha University journal and to write a chapter in a book about contemplative education, which is titled “Fitting in Breath Hunting: Thai and US Perspectives on Contemplative Pedagogy.”

He plans to take a March 2011 trip back to Thailand, not only to give a lecture to educators at Burapha, but also to lay the foundation for taking an undergraduate education class from Montclair to Thailand to visit Burapha University.

Dr. David Lee Keiser, right, stands with faculty member Dr. Saratid “Tong” Salulkoo at Burapha University in Chonburi, Thailand.

Faculty Presentations at AERA Conference

Fernando Naiditch
Session: Democracy, Social Change, and Economic Justice: Beyond the Class Reductionism.
Paper: Marxism, Learning Cycles, and the Promise of Social Change Through Education.
Poster Session: Second and World Languages Teaching and Learning
Session: Uncovering the Complexities of Space, Race, and Praxis in Social Justice Education

David Schwarzer
Session: What Next for Education for Social Justice?
Paper: Linking Internationalization and Social Justice Initiatives for the Local and Global Public Good.

Mayida Zaal
Session: Democracy, Freedom, and Tolerance: Immigration Discourses and the Education of Immigrant Youth.
Paper: In the Shadow of Tolerance: Dutch-Born Muslim Youth Seek Academic Support in the Context of Islamophobia.
Session: Prioritizing Student Voice: Integrating Youth Participatory Action Research Into Schools and Classrooms.
Paper: Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) in the Classroom: Meeting State Standards With Youth Civic Action Research.
Undergrad TFL I class is Hands-On in Newark

Professor Janet Goldstein and the undergraduate students in her section of Teaching for Learning I celebrated their second day of class on Feb. 8, 2011, with a group picture together at University High School of Humanities in Newark. The students, faculty, and staff of University High all welcomed the chance to interact with Professor Goldstein’s class.

Professor Goldstein says she loves how her daytime TFL I class gives her teacher candidates an enhanced opportunity to learn about the current face of education by physically meeting in area high schools, which immerses students in real-world teaching environments. “The students are learning a lot from seasoned teachers,” she says, “and they get to experience the culture of the school.”

Kobza Helps Teachers Set Students on Road to Success

Professor Donna Kobza is an adjunct professor who has taught Special Education courses for the past eight years. She has worked with the Montclair State University Network for Educational Renewal (MSUNER) for nearly 20 years and serves as a coordinator for the Montclair school district.

What do you enjoy most about the courses you teach? I give my students the chance to study ways they can make a difference in children's lives by understanding different disabilities and applying different methods and strategies to help them excel. My favorite assignment to give is the Functional Behavior Assessment and Positive Behavior Plan in SPED588 (Promoting Prosocial Behaviors in Inclusive Settings). It incorporates studying inappropriate behaviors of a child or person, collecting a variety of data, and writing a positive behavior plan to change the target behavior to an appropriate social behavior. Former students have told me it was a very challenging assignment that also taught them new skills to help classroom management.

What positions do you hold outside of MSU? I work for the Montclair school district as a Learning Disability Teacher Consultant for the Mount Hebron Middle School Child Study Team. Before that, I was a special education teacher at Montclair High School. I have been in the district for 23 years and really love the community.

How do you bring your own experiences into your classes? I give examples and tell stories about working with special needs students. I discuss my relationships with teachers and how we need to come to an understanding of how to help their students function successfully.
Naiditch Embraces Teaching Diversity

If you haven’t heard Dr. Fernando Naiditch laughing in the halls of University Hall, you don’t know what you’re missing.

When not in his office talking to students and giving out chocolate, Dr. Naiditch can be found in Bloomfield, working with district teachers to address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. This is the second year Dr. Naiditch has participated in the project, called Building Learner Centered Schools.

Dr. Naiditch is currently a journal editor for the Action Research section of Language Learning & Technology, a fully refereed international journal sponsored by the prestigious Center for Applied Linguistics, the National Foreign Language Resource Center, and the Center for Language Education and Research. In a 2009 Thomson Reuters report in ScienceWatch, the journal was ranked in the top 20 education journals.

Dr. Naiditch’s most recent article, “Friends or Foes? Communicating Feelings Through Language in Cross-Cultural Interactions,” was published in the March issue of the International Journal of the Sociology of Language, the top journal in the field of sociolinguistics.

Another article, “International Students in American Universities: An Interlanguage/Interculture analysis,” was published this winter in the American Journal of Educational Studies. He was recently invited to participate in a panel of the National Association of Bilingual Education. He is a grant reviewer for the National Science Foundation and its Canadian “cousin,” the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Most of all, Dr. Naiditch loves catching up with former students from CURR 305 and 509. Stop by to see him anytime!

For Art Educators, Project Goes Beyond Content Lessons

Dr. Dorothy Heard, a professor in the Department of Art & Design and program director of Art Education, can’t say enough good things about how her Art Backpacks program in Newark has helped both students and in-service educators improve the future of urban education.

The art program is now in its seventh year at MSU partner school Franklin Elementary School in Newark. Throughout the year, Dr. Heard and students from her Art Education Methods course visit the school with backpacks full of art supplies and learning materials for fourth-graders at Franklin. Each backpack focuses on a different master artist; students get hands-on lessons in learning about that artist’s work and life.

Students take home the backpacks, choose which materials and projects to work on over the weekend, and bring them back to share and discuss their work.

For Dr. Heard, the program works on multiple levels: It teaches art and art concepts, but its primary goal is to “positively affect students’ attitudes toward learning,” she says. It helps students “change their attitudes toward learning ... to make them want to learn.” With this freedom, students are given “another avenue to understand and create themselves.”

Joan Fernandez of the Women’s Club of Upper Montclair helps students in the MSU Art Backpacks program at Franklin Elementary School on Jan. 5.
Robert Sokol is a graduate student in the Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Special Education program.

What prompted you to apply to the M.Ed. program here at Montclair? And what has been your favorite experience in the program?
I was recruited through the TRUST (Teacher Recruitment of Science and Technology) program and wanted to teach science at an urban high school. I have enjoyed the M.Ed. program in special education, and more specifically the TRUST program for teachers of science and mathematics in the urban schools.

After completing the program, what would you like to do?
I would eventually like to become an LDTC (Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant), and become a member of a child study team.

What other activities are you involved in outside of MSU?
I am employed as an environmental science teacher at Great Falls Academy, an alternative high school in the Paterson public school system. I teach students who are going through the juvenile justice system of the courts, the Department of Probation, Youth Service Bureau, and Superior Court of New Jersey Family Division. I work with students who have difficulty coping in high school.

I am involved in a group counseling program called Positive Peer Culture groups. Through Positive Peer Culture, I work with a team of professionals, trying to help troubled high school students, and transition them back to finish and receive their high school diploma. And during the summer I teach biology at a summer residential camp for elementary, middle and high school students who are interested in hands on science.

I'm also married, with a 13-year-old daughter, and I work part time as an insurance broker!

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Undergrad Student Teacher Strikes Up the Band

Jamey Vavra, an undergraduate music education major who is student teaching in the Bergenfield school district, knows all about keeping a steady beat. But he was on hand to help the Bergenfield High School marching band give pointers to someone newer to the music scene: television news anchor Ann Curry!

As part of a special segment for NBC’s Today show, the school’s music department was chosen to help Curry live and learn all about the experience of what it’s like to be in a high school marching band. The event was capped off with a live Today show performance on Jan. 20, 2011, where Curry played her bass drum along with the other nearly 200 members of the marching band—and Vavra was there in New York City to cheer on his new students.

Vavra said the chance to watch the students perform live was great, and doing his fieldwork and student teaching in his district is just as exciting. “The students are lucky to have a lot of community support” for the music program, he said. The high school’s bands routinely put on four to five concerts a year, and they are packed to the walls by parents, teachers, and other music fans.

“Music is a core part of what goes on there,” Vavra said, adding that he’s grateful his cooperative teachers have given him the chance “to see the ideas I have implemented in new ways.”

Grad Student Helps Young Students Learn

Frank Kasper is currently a first semester graduate student in the Teacher of Students with Disabilities Program, and will be moving into the M.Ed. in Special Education program.

Kasper is a teacher’s aide for the South Bergen Jointure Commission who works with children with autism and children with behavioral disorders. He also works five days a week as a Youth Development Professional for the Boys and Girls Club of Clifton. There, he spends time with young people by helping them with their homework and playing games with them.

Kasper chose to work with primarily 1st through 5th graders to gain a better knowledge and perspective of the various age levels in a school system. After completing his degree at MSU, Kasper plans to continue working in Special Education.