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The TIPSTER

Volume 2 Issue 2 March 2004

Valdosta State University
College of Education

Georgia Systemic Teacher Education Program
GSTEP Teacher Induction

VSU Hosts Career Day for Future Teachers

FALL CAREER DAY 2003

One hundred fifty high school students from across the south Georgia region attended a fall career day program at VSU specifically designed for prospective future teachers. After welcoming remarks by VSU's new Dean of Education, Dr. Phillip Gunter, attendees listened to Mr. Perry Wilson, director and creator of the "If I Had a Hammer" Project. During his address Mr. Wilson shared accounts of his school experiences as a student with special needs and how these experiences led him to establish the "Hammer" Project. Whereas Mr. Wilson was successful in school sports, he had difficulty in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. It was not until building a tree house with his father that subjects that had previously alluded him began to make sense. When he had to apply mathematics and science in constructing the tree house, he began to understand concepts he had missed in school. In addition, his reading improved as he began to read manuals and other construction-related materials. As a result of this skill development and hard work, Mr. Wilson, became a successful building contractor.

Mr. Wilson never forgot his early learning experiences in school. When a friend asked him to help his son address academic



achievement issues, Perry remembered his own situation and helped the boy build a tree house. Their project was successful, and from this humble beginning sprang the "If I Had a Hammer" Project. Originally designed as a way to help academically challenged students, it has appeal for students of all abilities. By sharing his life example as well as his "Hammer" project, Mr. Wilson instilled in the future teachers the importance they reach all students with whom they work and how contextual learning can assist in this endeavor.

After listening to Mr. Wilson's inspiring message, attendees participated in physical activities led by Dr. Jin Long Tian and Mr. Pedro Arce. Dr. Tian demonstrated Tai Chi, and Mr. Arce demonstrated Latin fitness dancing. All the future teachers were impressed with the intricacies and beauty of the exercise routines and were challenged as they tried to imitate the demonstrations.

Dr. Louis Levy, Academic Vice President at Valdosta State University, headlined the afternoon program. He encouraged attending

students to pursue careers in education and described how VSU could help them achieve this goal. The day ended with a walking tour of campus after which the tired high school students boarded buses to return to their eleven high schools.

Funding for this visit was provided, in part, by the Georgia Systemic Teacher Education Program (GSTEP).

Maggie Roberts
COE Recruitment

Editor's Note:
Beginning Teachers are
some of the best re-
cruiters for prospective
future teachers...

Announcements

- * VSU Chapter meeting of Phi Delta Kappa
March 23, 2004
- * Induction and Mentoring Conference
April 23, 2004
- * ETTC Conference
May 11, 2004



The Principal's Perspective

TEACHER EVALUATION

Teacher evaluation is one of the most difficult jobs in education—and one of the most important. Our goals for teacher evaluation at Cook High School are to:

- * Help teachers assess and improve their classroom instruction.
- * Motivate teachers to improve their instructional methods.
- * Make teachers accountable for classrooms where students learn.
- * Recognize and reward outstanding teaching.
- * Identify and remediate ineffective teaching.
- * Show parents and community that our school is credible.

The entire process can be quite intimidating to teachers who are new to the profession. Our school administration attempts to lessen the anxiety of these teachers by dedicating strong focus on the TEAM

(Together Everyone Achieves More) concept. We want each teacher to know they aren't working *for* a principal or administrator, but are working *with* him or her. In asking for a strong commitment to the TEAM concept, a faithful commitment is pledged to each new teacher that includes providing good communication and clear messages. Ultimately, as administrators and new teachers work together collaboratively, every effort is made to ensure that everyone gets what he or she needs from the team to turn out their best possible work.

With an emphasis on good communication and clear messages, it is essential that opportunities be created for one-on-one interactions with new teachers.

To make these interactions profitable, extra effort is made to:

1. Be available and show a willingness to provide assistance.
2. Be a good listener.
3. Demonstrate a positive, participative attitude.
4. Encourage creative potential.

5. Coach them to think, solve problems, and take responsibility.

6. Provide challenges and push for continuous improvement.

Quality cannot be created through authority. I have heard educators use many negative terms to describe the evaluation process in schools. Through my years as an educator, I too, have been often frustrated with the procedures used to evaluate teachers and administrators. It would be very difficult to take away all of the negatives associated with the evaluation process. But when the process is approached with a focus on the TEAM concept and when a strong partnership between teacher and administrator is established, frustrations can be lessened or eliminated altogether. When teachers dispel the old notion of the administrator as only a supervisor and evaluator and begin to look upon him or her as a coach and partner, teacher evaluation can become a powerful process focused on continuous professional improvement.

Charles E. Bell
Cook High School Principal



TechnoInfo Corner

Are You Looking for Real World Advice about Classroom Management?

If you are looking for some real world advice and information on classroom management to use with your students, maybe some of the resources developed through the GSTEP program could be helpful. Three of the classroom management resources developed and funded by GSTEP are "Chatting with the Experts," archived chat dialogue, and a Web page with classroom management resources.

Last fall the experts in the "Chatting with the Experts" chat session provided numerous strategies for classroom management in the real world. According to our recent in-service and preservice teacher surveys, classroom management was an area of concern for many teachers. After studying our surveys, GSTEP decided to support the development of classroom management resources to assist teachers.

The first classroom management resource developed was an hour chat session that was led by four experts in the field of classroom management. Our classroom management expert panel included Ms. Jan Godwin, a National Board Certified teacher and works with RESA; Ms. Vallye Blanton, a Georgia Teacher of the Year and National Board Certified Teacher,

who teaches at Lake Park Elementary School; Dr. Mary Ellen Dallman and Dr. Lynn Minor, who teach at Valdosta State University.

The second classroom management resource is the archived chat dialogue from the Chatting with the Experts chat session. This archived chat session includes many real world questions and answers about classroom management. A couple examples of the real world questions asked by in-service and preservice teachers during the Chatting with the Experts session are: Does anyone have any ideas about how to deal with a child with major anger problems? What should I do about a student that throws temper tantrums when told no? The content of the chat session has been saved and archived at the Chatting with the Experts web site. Anyone can access this information by logging in at

<http://borg.valdosta.edu/doc/ChatRoom.nsf/LoginForm?OpenForm>.

The third classroom management resource is a Web page developed by Ms. Jan Godwin, one of the members of our expert panel. Linked on the Web page are two web sites that are highly recommended by Ms. Godwin, www.BehaviorAdvisor.com and www.disciplinehelp.com. Ms. Godwin's classroom management resources at

www.valdosta.edu/~djudd/classroom.html include web sites, articles, and books that could be helpful for teaching in the real world. GSTEP is looking forward to the next "Chatting with the Expert" session. Our plans include a chat session in March with an expert panel on student assessment. Hope you will be able to join us for some real world information.

Dr. Diane Judd
Early Childhood & Reading Education
Chair, GSTEP Technology Committee

If your plan is for one year,
plant rice;

If your plan is for two years,
plant trees;

If your plan is for a hundred
years; educate children.

Confucious

Planting a Seed

Two heads are better than one



“Two heads are better than one”

is an often mentioned statement when two or more people are working together and liking the results of their labor. This is certainly true in the case of the classroom teacher and the school library media specialist. Collaboration with the school media specialist results in several beneficial outcomes:

1. improves student learning
2. develops collaborative partners
3. strengthens the instructional program
4. strengthens the media program

Several studies have provided evidence which supports the positive impact of the media program on student achievement. In a recent study conducted in Ohio (Whelan, 2004), the researchers focused on student and teacher evaluations of media programs rather than just test scores. According to the results of the study, 99.4% of the students (sample included 13,123 students in grades 3-12 in Ohio public schools) believed school libraries helped them be better learners. Another 88.5% of students indicated the media centers helped them get better grades. There are more statistics available, but the bottom line is students and teachers reported the positive relationship between learning and media programs. The media program is organized and administered by the media specialist. It is the media specialist who makes the connection to resources for the teachers and the students. When teachers and media specialists work together, students benefit.

The teachers who utilize the media specialist in

their schools have an instructional partner. Information power: Building partnerships for learning (AASL, 1998) lists student learning as the unifying theme of every aspect of the media program. Media specialists are teachers. Many are media specialists after having worked in the classroom for many years and understand the instructional process. Collaboration with classroom teachers is the key to developing lifelong learning skills in students. Collaboration also provides a way for teachers to learn what resources are available, share responsibility for instruction and evaluation with a team partner, and have input into the development of an integrated media program in their school. Through collaboration, both teachers and students benefit.

Collaboration also strengthens the instructional program. The media specialist is in a key position to know about the whole curriculum of the school and not just a single subject or grade level. With the broad overview of the school curriculum, the media specialist is able to assist with curriculum alignment and sequencing so units of study are not repeated from grade to grade or the same resources are not used repeatedly from grade to grade. The media specialist can also connect people on the staff who can help each other with units of study or instructional strategies. Collaboration again benefits the teachers and students.

The media program and the media specialist benefit from collaboration as well. By involving teachers in evaluation of the media program and its resources, the media specialist supports the needs of the curriculum and the instructional program of the school. Addressing the needs of the curriculum keeps the media collection aligned to the curriculum and the media specialist keeps in tune with the faculty and student body. Better teaching resources impact instruction which in turn increases student learning. The media specialist, the teachers, and the stu-

dents benefit from collaboration. Collaboration with classroom teachers keeps the media program actively involved in the learning process of the school.

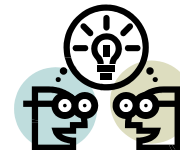
Collaboration is definitely a win-win situation for all involved. It has worked well for me as a high school media specialist and I have seen it work well at the middle and elementary levels as well. I encourage you to get to know your media specialist. He or she is a ready advocate and partner in education. The media center houses the resources both in materials and personnel to help you make learning more exciting each year. Just ask. We want to help.

American Association of School Librarians. (1998). Collaboration, leadership, and technology. In *Information power: Building partnerships for learning* (pp. 47-57). Chicago: American Library Association.

Whelan, D. L. (2004). 13,000 kids can't be wrong. [Electronic version]. *School Library Journal*. Retrieved February 13, 2004, from

http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/C_A377858

Dr. Dianne Dees
Head Media Specialist, Valdosta High School
Adjunct Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology,
Valdosta State University
National Board Certified Teacher



Notes from the GSTEP Director's Desk

This semester has begun with a flurry of activities sponsored by GSTEP to promote teacher development. Approximately 400 educators recently participated in the Academic Service Learning Safari held February 17th at the Lowndes County Conference Center in Valdosta. This conference, collaboratively sponsored by Georgia Serve and Learn, Valdosta City Schools, and GSTEP, showcased academic service learning activities employed by educators from the P-12 and higher education sectors to promote learning and service in their respective communities. Participants gained strategies for employing academic service learning in their classrooms and received ideas for projects they can implement in their communities that supported student learning. A special treat was luncheon speaker, Dr. Myra Dunn, an Australian educa-

tor, who shared inspirational stories from her country related to service. Please take a look at our website (www.teacherresourcebank.com) for highlights of the conference.

Another undertaking was the Teaching/Learning Conference held at VSU on February 21, 2004, attended by over 175 area teachers. This “hands-on” conference, co-sponsored by GSTEP and the Department of Early Childhood and Reading Education, introduced participants to strategies teachers can employ to manage and monitor student learning in mathematics and language arts. Led by Oconee RESA educational consultants, Ann Hatchell and Ginny Kasper, attendees were taught “looking at student work” protocols that they can implement in their class-

rooms to examine student work to determine the impact of their instruction. Key issues emphasized by the speakers were the need for collegial review of student work and how even small samples of student work can inform instruction. GSTEP plans further programs this summer that will feature the collegial review of student work to improve instruction. Further information will be forthcoming.

Dr. Pamela Hertzog
GSTEP Director





Cook County Schools: "Help Center"

Cook County School System has implemented a HELP CENTER designed to provide support and assistance to teachers in the induction phase of their teaching career. While the Help Center this year has been a "Work-in-Progress", we believe that it has been successful in accomplishing its goal of providing support and assistance. We have also learned from our process some things to do differently next year. But is not education a "Work-in-Progress"? Each of us continues to learn each year of our career as times as well as the students that we work with continue to change.

WHAT: Help Center

WHEN: Three ½ day workshops during the school year

WHERE: Cook Middle School Staff Development Lab

WHO: First & Second Year Teachers

TOPICS: * "Chatting with the Experts " Technology Session

*Assessment Issues and Concerns

*Topic to be based on needs of inductees

*Celebration

A look at a Help Center Session...each session has a topic with an agenda. At the beginning of each session, participants are asked to write on an index card the concerns/issues that they would like addressed during the session. The agenda also includes time for discussion among the inductees. An under-lying goal of the Help Center is for all participants to feel good about themselves, and to believe in themselves and in the students that they teach. Sharing experiences from their classrooms has lead to some excellent discussions with each person to feeling valued and respected.

Sessions this year: The first session included "Chatting with the Experts" as well as a look at technology available in classrooms. Dr. Shirley Andrews also reviewed many sites available for the teachers to find additional help, lesson plans, and resources. QCC and Georgia Learning Connection were explored. Another session held this year has been the Assessment Issues/Concerns session which included the following topics:

The state of testing in Georgia

What do we "do" to kids?

Preparing students for testing time

Kinds of Tests

What everybody needs to know when interpreting test data

Evaluating for the future: Will the help center be continued? Based on the feedback from Cook County's inductees, the HELP CENTER concept has been beneficial and needs to be continued. The major area suggested for improvement would be to include a session with inductees and their mentors. Our goal for next school year is to improve the training and assistance available to the Mentor teachers.

Thanks to VSU and GSTEP: Cook County Schools could not have offered the Help Center without the assistance of VSU and the GSTEP Teacher Induction Program. For this we are thankful and hope that our partnership with VSU will always continue as we all strive for excellence.

Jere Anna Hargett
Cook County Schools



Valdosta City Schools: Mentoring For New Teachers

Last year I became a "new teacher" in the Valdosta City School System. I had moved from a system in another state. As a veteran teacher, I was required to go through the beginning teacher program. This involvement helped me learn more quickly and deeply the values and expectations of the system. Knowledge of the school and system were helpful before school started. The Central Office was also helpful with paper work during my transition from my system to Valdosta City Schools.

The most helpful thing the system did was assign me a mentor from my grade level. (Close proximity to my mentor was most helpful!) My mentor provided moral and emotional support and was my sounding board for ideas and questions throughout the school year. My mentor was also a veteran teacher, so we shared the knowledge about planning strategies, curriculum development and teaching methods.

The second most helpful thing was time provided for me by my administrator to observe other teachers and begin to know and understand the different models of teaching that existed within my school. This helped me also become familiar with specialty teachers at my school and to see how closely the faculty works as a whole to meet the needs of the children in my school.

A school system can help new teachers coming in by making sure the support given during in-service is continued. Mentor logs should be turned in to the principal or Central Office each nine weeks to assure teachers are being seen by a mentor. School handbooks should be discussed and questions answered because new teachers need specific knowledge of essential resources, policies and procedures relevant to their school.

Donna Rickman
Sallas Mahone Elementary School



Greetings from the Editor

As signs of spring are approaching and we are moving away from the winter "blues" we are happy to be able to bring you another edition of the TIPSTER newsletter. I have to once again thank those of you who so generously gave their time to write articles and send in information. As you read the newsletter I would like to remind you that you may contribute to the newsletter in two ways: 1) submit articles or information (beginning teachers, this also means you); and 2) provide feedback about the articles, features, and information you would like to see in the newsletter. Please do not hesitate in letting us know how we can improve the newsletter to make it more useful to you. You may contact me by phone (229-293-6068) or e-mail: spandrew@valdosta.edu

Of course the publication of the newsletter would not be possible without contributions and it also would not be possible without the support from the GSTEP office. Therefore, I wish to express my appreciation to Cindy Musgrove, Jessica Joy, and Brooke Brewer. Brooke is a new graduate assistant in the GSTEP office and worked diligently on the tedious task of inserting the information into the newsletter format. Thanks to all of you!

Shirley Andrews, Editor
Chair, GSTEP Induction Committee