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The Chat Room, Vol. 18 (September 2010)

College of Education and Professional Studies

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The Chat Room

College of Education and Professional Studies Newsletter

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Editor: Holly Thomas
CEPS Graduate Assistant

Contact us at:

College of Education
& Professional Studies
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, Illinois 61920
cepsnews@eiu.edu

Learning and Teaching in The Bahamas



A group of Eastern students and faculty experience study abroad in the Bahamas this summer.

Submitted by Jenny Fletcher, Senior ELE Major

I never thought I would have a great opportunity like the one I got to experience this summer when I went to Andros Island, Bahamas. During my time on the island I studied many different species of oceanic life and plant life. Although the plant and ocean life were exciting to see, my favorite, most rewarding experience was teaching the young children for two days in the local Bahamian schools.

I taught fourth grade at Freshcreek Primary School in Andros with two other students from Eastern. We planned a good variety of activities that kept the children focused and games that used their listening skills.

I made comparisons of American and Bahamian classrooms. The Bahamians had no source of technology, few posters, and scarce material. We had to bring markers, scissors, crayons and other materials because each child did not have his or her own set. There was only enough for one package per classroom.

New Tenure Track Faculty 2010/2011

Dr. Jeanne Okrasinski
Early Childhood, Elementary-
Level Education,, Middle-
Level Education

Dr. Dejan Magoc
Health Studies

Dr. John Storsved
Kinesiology

Mr. Clinton Warren
Kinesiology and Sports
Studies

Dr. Bernadette Laumann
Special Education

The most important thing I learned in the Bahamas was to be grateful for all that we have in the United States. It is very uncommon not to see a computer in an American classroom because Americans rely so heavy on technology to keep the children focused on the lesson. It was interesting to teach without any technology because it made me think about what it is like in other places around the world that do not have as much as us. I feel many people in the United States take a lot of things we have for granted.

Submitted by Lauryn Coleman, Senior ELE Major

My trip abroad to Andros Island was a wonderful experience. Twenty-eight students from different education programs went together to teach in the different schools in the Bahamas. Teaching in the schools was the best, yet hardest part of the trip.

The teachers and students do not have the resources we teachers in the states have. Paper and pencils are even not the easiest things to come by. As a future educator I really learned not to complain about what I don't have in my classroom. The teachers there do an excellent job with what they have available to them. As a student you could not go into those classrooms with a closed mind, as things are done differently or are just different there. Keeping an open mind was a must in this situation.

"I really learned not to complain about what I don't have in my classroom."

Aside from the teaching, we got to see many parts of the island that many people don't. My concentration is science so to be able to see different places that had so much geology and earth science was really amazing for me. We visited two blue holes which are sinkholes that fill with water. I also saw squids and barracudas and at one point was about two feet away from many sting rays.

All in all this experience has allowed me to learn much more about myself as a person and as a future educator. It is something I would definitely do again given the chance, and my travels are far from over at this point.

Tech Talk for Teachers

TechTalk4Teachers is a podcast for teachers about teaching, learning, and technology.

Dr. Tom Grissom, Director of the Instructional Technology Center in the College of Education & Professional Studies, decided to do something to help educators with the common problem of keeping up with the latest advances in educational technologies and their practical applications in classrooms.

Dates to Remember

Family Weekend
October 1-3, 2010

Homecoming
October 23, 2010
“Bet on Blue”

Fall Commencement
December 18, 2010

Dr. Grissom began the TechTalk4Teachers podcast in 2007 as a way to help fellow teachers utilize technology in the classroom and bridge the theory and practice divide. TechTalk4Teachers is one of the longest running podcasts at Eastern. Since its creation, TechTalk4Teachers has over one-hundred episodes and reaches a global audience with listeners coming from 113 different countries around the world.

A podcast is an audio or video file that is delivered over the Internet that can also be subscribed to using something called a RSS feed. Audio podcasts are like a radio show with a pause button. Dr. Grissom advised that “educators not get caught up with the technical details with podcasts but rather concentrate on the end result of finding good content.”

He said it is very easy to listen to an episode as there is a built-in audio player on the website for all episodes and “all you need to do is click the play button.”

Dr. Grissom puts a lot of research and effort into each episode and models best practices. Transcripts are provided for most episodes so you have a choice of either reading the text, listening to the audio, or both.

“I have made podcasts in both audio and video formats but prefer the audio format”, said Dr. Grissom, “with audio content you can listen to the content and you can be doing other things at the same time, educators are very busy people and multitasking is a survival skill.”

Olive White, Jumping to Serve Others

Olive (Vanatta) White, Eastern Alumna, continues to live an extraordinary life serving her community since earning her degree in Physical Education in 1959.

“Eastern prepared me for a satisfying career teaching Physical Education to young people,” she said.

White began teaching Physical Education at Springfield High School in Springfield, Ill., in 1959. She worked her way up from high school teaching to the college level at the University of Wisconsin Laboratory Schools in Sevens Point, Wis., where she also earned her Master’s degree in 1984.

She said her fondest memory at Eastern was meeting her husband, Charley. The two have been married for 49 years and have two children, Julie and Jeffrey.



Olive White photographed in the CEPS tent during Eastern’s Homecoming 2009 festivities.

For ten years White, along with fellow colleague Martha Schuh, coached a jump rope team, The Wizards, sponsored by the American Heart Association promoting a healthy heart.

“Some of my greatest accomplishments include helping children enjoy life and become better people through cooperation and achievement in Physical Education classes,” she said.

Special Education Student and Faculty National Presentation in Tennessee



Presenters included: Lisa Worman, Margaret Johanson, Jill Friend, Matthew Kennedy, Christine Blankenstein, and Lindsey Dalesandro.

Six Eastern Illinois University Special Education majors, along with four faculty mentors, presented at the Council for Exceptional Children International Annual Conference, April 2010, in Nashville, Tennessee. The six majors included a graduate student, Christine Blankenstein and five undergraduates: Lindsey Dalesandro, Matthew Kennedy, Jill Friend, Margret Johnson, and Lisa Vitale. The student faculty mentors joining in the presentation were: Frank Mullins, Jennifer Stringfellow, Christine Edmonds-Behrend, and Melissa Jones.

The CEC program is a refereed program and the presentation was selected to be part of the student strand. The title of the session was: Service Learning at the College Level. The six students shared their student learning experiences and what they learned through the involvement in their thirty-hour experiences. Attendees of the session found the student presentation to be interesting and informative. Several commented on the professionalism, demonstrated poise and communication skills of each of the students.



Christine Blankenstein presenting in Nashville, Tennessee.

Faculty mentors are the departmental advisors for the student organizations. Service learning activities are varied, with some being related to activities initiated by the two student organizations: The Student Council for Exceptional Children (SCEC) and the Special Education honorary, Sigma Rho Epsilon. Service learning must be completed in non-school settings with individuals with disabilities. Candidates choose the activity and the setting in which they complete the required hours; activities are focused toward an intended positive contribution to the lives of individuals with significant disabilities.

Illinois Shapes Up in Springfield

“Shape Up Illinois” originated six years ago when two public school teachers decided to meet in Springfield, Ill., to talk to legislators about the importance of Physical Education in the public schools.

“It grew into an annual event that draws about 50-60 students, teachers, professionals, and professors from across the state who set up a variety of health and physical education displays in the capitol building to educate legislators about health and physical education in the schools,” said Dr. Mark Kattenbraker, assistant professor of Kinesiology.

Participants also meet individually with their hometown legislators to lobby for continued, mandated PE in the schools, he said.

“Fit Kids Learn Better” was the theme of the 2010 Shape Up Illinois, supported by research and demonstrations. Dr. Kattenbraker said participants made about 100 personal contacts with legislators to deliver the message.

“We had a very noticeable presence in the capitol building,” he said. “The event highlights the need for continued PE given the current health of kids in the state. It is our opportunity to meet face-to-face with legislators to drive our message home.”

Dr. Kattenbraker also said the event “provides EIU undergrads a unique opportunity to witness our state government in action and gain an understanding of the political process in Springfield.”



Students lobby the importance of Physical Education in the public schools.

Health Studies Mini Thesis

A thesis is most often written by graduate students, yet Dr. Misty Rhoads, assistant professor of Health Studies, decided to prepare her undergraduate students for graduate school and advanced careers in a two-semester course, Research Methods I and Research Methods II, by requiring a “mini-thesis.” The students were to research and write a five-chapter thesis on a health topic of their choice.

“The project resembled that of what a master’s student would produce,” Dr. Rhoads said. “They wrote literature reviews, developed surveys, conducted their own study, and wrote up their findings.” Topics researched by students included: childhood obesity, HPV vaccine, steroid use in sports, body image, organic food, tattoos, relationship satisfactions, tanning, oral health care, lung cancer, STIs on a college campus, college sleep habits, and testicular cancer.

“I set the bar high, but no students disappointed me,” Dr. Rhoads said. “The students were able to handle the research and workload well since we broke it down and worked on each chapter together as a group.”

The class presented their projects at the Research Fair held at Buzzard Atrium in April, and some were submitted to the Booth Library’s Excellence in Research and Creativity Awards.

“They now have an appreciation for both research and statistics,” Dr. Rhoads said. “This is a research project that each student could use for graduate school admissions or take the skills learned for their future careers.”

Reading Software to Prepare Students

The Reading Center, located in Buzzard Hall, instituted a new software program called Merit. Janet Carpenter, assistant professor of Early Childhood, Elementary, and Middle Level Education, is Eastern’s Reading Center program coordinator.

“The software is crucial in helping prepare students who are admitted to the university (through the Gateway Program) who need to work on basic reading and writing skills,” she said.

Merit software programs help students build their skills in vocabulary, reading, grammar, and writing. The programs take students through practice test assessments with prescriptive exercises to build these skills.

“Students will prosper in their studies once they identify their problem and know what they need to work on,” Carpenter said. “All college students are welcome to use the software.”

Student's Plunge for Special Olympics



Students participated in the 2010 Polar Plunge to raise funds for the Special Olympics.

Eastern had 144 student participants in the 2010 Law Enforcement Torch Run Polar Plunge for Special Olympics in Illinois. The Polar Plunge is an annual event in which people statewide volunteer to jump into freezing cold water in the middle of winter to raise funds for Illinois' Special Olympics. Over 2,600 Illinoisans participated this year. Polar Plunges took place from Feb. 26 to March 20 in 17 different locations around the state.

Students at Eastern plunged into Lake Sara, Effingham, Ill., on March 6, 2010.

“The reason I did Polar Plunge is because I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to bring awareness to this event and its importance. Without this event there wouldn't be funds for Special Olympics,” said Cynthia Friesen, special education major.

Dr. Kathleen Shank, Chair of the Department of Special Education, said that special education majors do this event annually; however, they raised more money this year, a little over \$35,000. The EIU Polar Plunge committee consisted of, Cynthia Friesen, Abigail Lee, and Alexandra Underwood. These special education majors organized two teams for the event: the Polar Bears (special education majors); Carter's Ducklings (EIU Dr. Carter's Block 1 class).



Photo after the cold water plunge.

“It's important to make the community aware of these events and encourage them to participate. My goal this year was to get as many EIU students involved; not only EIU special education majors involved but all majors at EIU,” Friesen said. “I also wanted to help them understand that by participating in this event they are making a difference to each and every Olympian.”