Happenings In Education

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR . . .

I know that some of you love the snow, but personally I am ready for spring— and I don’t mean spring break, although that is also welcome. A week ago, I was struggling to keep my sunny disposition as the snow just kept falling. Spring brings “new life,” and I am ready for some new life.

Spring semester at Messiah always moves at a fast pace, but this is a particularly busy time on the 4th floor of Boyer. We are currently interviewing candidates for multiple positions within the Department of Education, and when this first wave of candidates have made their visits and we have invited one of them to join us as the Literacy faculty member, we will begin the process again. I am looking forward to the “new life” that these additions will bring to our department, as they assist us to grow and to make the Department of Education stronger. That’s not to say that change is easy—it rarely is, because it is difficult to move away from what is familiar to what is unknown. Yet, I believe that as Christians, that is what we are called to do. We are urged not to become complacent but to continue to seek God’s leading and direction, always pressing forward and looking for what He has in store for us.

With the new life of spring comes the end of another academic year. Let us be mindful of the stress students are experiencing during this time. For our seniors, there is the additional stress of an uncertain future. Many of them are scheduling interviews, attending job fairs, and finalizing portfolios and resumes. Keep them and others in your prayers.

Also, as we approach Easter, let us not forget the love of our Father who sacrificed His Son so that we might live. May we all find peace and comfort in the resurrection of our Savior.

Department of Education, Chair
Welcome to the Department of Education

Tabitha Kleese has joined our team of adjuncts in the Department of Education. This semester you will find Tabitha teaching EDUC 302 Literacy: Climate, Curriculum & Instruction II.

Simone Heisey has also joined our adjunct team. Simone teaches EDUC 226 Children’s Literature.

Presenting with Professors

On Friday February 13, Dr. Jan Dormer presented at a seminar at West Shore Christian Academy on “Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners in Christian Schools.” Lauren Stratton, a Messiah College dual major with a minor in TESOL, assisted by presenting a session comparing differentiating instruction for ELLs and Special Needs. Lauren used a foldable to present her content, thus helping teachers to see a new methodology in addition to learning the content.
Welcoming back some familiar faces, Adjuncts of the Department

Angela Eifert teaches EDUC 342 Social Studies: Climate, Curriculum & Instruction for Elementary School.

Amanda Stanley has returned to teach our EDSP 409 Psychological Testing.

Brendon Clark can be found this semester teaching EDUC 205 Cultural and Political Geography.

Bev Goodling teaches EDUC 212 Language Development.

Christina Simmons teaches our EDUC 308 Instruction and Assessment with English Language Learners.

Kari Dyrli-Hermeling is teaching EDUC 408 Seminar and Field Experience in TESOL.

Connie Bleiler can be found this semester teaching EDSP 207 Introduction to Special Education, as well as EDSP 307 Inclusion Practices.

Karen Schmick has returned this semester to teach EDSP 398 Strategies for Severe-Profound Disabilities.
A year ago, the 15 of us did not know that we would spend a month together on the other side of the world. Yet, at the start of J-term, while most of our friends headed back to Harrisburg for classes, we boarded a plane to Indonesia. We spent a month there, taking EDUC 308, learning about the local culture, and teaching in schools located in cities on two of the islands—Malang on the predominantly Muslim island of Java, and Denpasar on the mostly Hindu island of Bali. Our journey began when we applied to the class last spring, had our first meeting before the semester let out, and began to prepare coursework during the summer in order to maximize our time while we were actually in Indonesia.

Our very first experience in an Indonesian school took place in a Muslim elementary and junior high school located on Malang. We divided into two teams. The first group took different elementary school classrooms and created lessons to teach in pairs. The second team prepared a worksheet “My New Friend and American Culture” to use in small groups with the junior high students, but instead we ended up learning an important lesson about flexibility and improvisation, when we found the students’ English level was much lower than expected. We had to think fast on our feet to discover what the students in our group could understand and build something educationally meaningful for them from there.

Later that week we visited an afternoon English school, that operates as a minis-try to the surrounding Muslim community and is overseen by one of Dr. Dormer’s former students. As a group we sang songs and played games with all of the students, then we divided the students according to age for lessons and the worksheet we had previously done. By pairing one-on-one with students who had a higher level of English, those of us doing the worksheet lesson were able to have deeper conversations about our respective cultures than before. Afterwards, we experienced a traditional Indonesian meal of celebration.

In preparation to teach at Charis School, a Christian elementary and junior high school in Malang, we worked together in pairs during the fall semester to create lesson plans using the PPPP format. While in Indonesia, we spent three consecutive days at Charis teaching our lessons, an experience that contrasted with other typical school visits, where we only ever saw a school once and then had to move to the next one. Instead at Charis, those of us whose teams had the same class twice during our three days there had the chance to build a relationship with the school, and even with a few specific classrooms.

Toward the latter end of our time in Malang, we taught at a school that we affectionately called “Grace’s school,” because it was led by one of Dr. Dormer’s former students, and we were pleasantly surprised that the students possessed a higher level of English than anticipated.
We could feel the students’ excitement as we entered the school grounds. They had prepared a Javanese traditional dance to perform and teach us, as well as some songs and a demonstration of how to dye scarves, such as the ones they presented to us as gifts at the end of the day. The Messiah Colleges students that had visited last year had been really motivating for the students, and they were excited to meet another group and practice the English they had learned.

Another particularly memorable and enlightening cultural experience was teaching in a Muslim boarding school one morning. We were warmly welcomed into the school—the students wanted our autographs, and the teachers asked about our plans for the future, encouraging us to return. The female contingent of our group learned the art of the headscarf in preparation for our visit. We ate lunch with the teachers and the administrators of the school, and according to the culture, we removed our shoes before entering the room and sat around low tables on the floor.

We also had the chance to observe an international school when we spent two mornings visiting at Wesley School, where we talked with teachers and students about the opportunities and challenges for missionaries in international schools. During our two weekends in Malang, we divided into groups and attended churches with some of the local missionary families, and also both attended and led an English service hosted at Wesley School.

In addition to our experiences in elementary, junior high, and high school classrooms, we spent time learning alongside and interacting with local teachers and university students.

On our two Saturdays in Malang, we attended teaching seminars led by Dr. Dormer and Indonesian teachers at a local language-teaching ministry called Worldbridge, where we had also studied the basics of Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language) during our first week in the country.

Additionally, we spent two days in each location interacting with our peers from local universities, learning together, participating in a cultural exchange, planning and teaching lessons, and building lasting friendships. In Malang, we collaborated with students from the English department at Ma Chung University, primarily freshmen who were English Literature majors (a common major choice for university students headed into TEFL). For many of these students, their foray into a local public school to teach a lesson in Indonesian with the American teams was their first real experience with teaching. Seeing some of the students really blossom and rise to the challenge, bringing their strengths together with ours to teach the elementary classes was exciting. In Bali, we teamed up with Mahasaraswati University for a similar two-day experience in the culture of a different island.

No matter the context of our teaching and learning throughout J-term, Dr. Dormer taught us to see every experience as both a ministry opportunity and a chance to learn. Although the trip had to ultimately end, bringing us back to snowy Pennsylvania, we didn’t come back as the same people who had left. Our growth academically, professionally, and spiritually from our month abroad followed us back as a reminder that the real adventure—living for God wherever He calls us, whether near home or on the other side of the world—isn’t over.

-Lydia Ham, Indonesia team 2015
Integrating Passions for Campus Ministries and Teaching to Create Practical Supports for First-Time Bible Study Leaders

When Sam Alderfer ’16 started brainstorming options for her College Honors project, the sky was the limit with so many options of interest, but the discussions kept leading back to her passion for support of Bible study leaders through Messiah College’s Koinonia program. As a first-year student, Sam led a small group Bible study with other students from her residence hall. As she began serving on the Koinonia Kore team and supporting other Bible study leaders, it became clear that working as a source of support to first-time Bible study leaders was something she wanted to pursue. As she crafted a path for her Honors project, her two passions came together, and a practical project was born.

With advisors from both the Department of Education and the Chaplain’s Office, Sam researched theories and practices to meet the needs of individuals by learning differences and spiritual approaches. She also researched ways to orchestrate successful group dynamics. That research culminated in a practical guide for first-time small group Bible study leaders with an accompanying on-line module that applies the concepts in her guide to various example scripture passages. On January 20, 2015, Sam presented her research and guide to a standing-room-only crowd.

Plans to extend this project are already in the works and include Sam implementing this in the Koinonia spring retreat. Another Honors student plans to extend this idea even further through development of more theological supports for Bible study leaders.

Congratulations, Sam Alderfer! You make us proud!