

Happenings In Education

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR. . .

We are mid-way through the spring semester, and as always during this session, time is quickly speeding by. I hope the snow is over, and I am excited to see the spring flowers pushing up through the ground. This is one of my favorite spring quotes—it nicely sums up my feelings about both winter and spring:

“People ask me what I do in winter when there's no baseball. I'll tell you what I do. I stare out the window and wait for spring.”
—Rogers Hornsby

In this season, as in every season, we are always moving forward in the Department of Education. We are looking to add two additional faculty members, and we are excited to see how this expanding collection of education professionals will enhance the experiences of our students while they are with us. Our department was recently awarded a VISTA grant to continue work with Downey. The focus for the next three years will be on parenting and parenting education.

More exciting things are happening beyond the walls of Boyer—later this month, the School will be hosting visitors from Zambia, who are interested in learning how to establish a Teacher Education Program for their nation's schools. They are seeking our input, and we are humbled and honored to see where this could lead.

Our students and faculty continue to inspire, as you will read in the following pages.

Blessings to you and your families.



Department of Education, Chair



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Grace's School

Dr. Jan Dormer with Christina Miller

One of the highlights of each year's J-term Cross-Cultural / EDUC 308 course in Indonesia is a visit to "Grace's School." Grace was a student of mine in the Master of Education program for Indonesian Christian teachers that I developed while serving as a missionary in Indonesia. Grace came into the program with little understanding about education, a seedling Christian faith, and little money. Through that program, however, her faith became strong, and she became zealously committed to fostering critical thinking, learner engagement, and Christian faith through education. She put her theory into practice upon graduation, when she elected to take a very poorly paid position as principal of a low-resource Christian junior high school. Since then, it has been my privilege to witness the transformation of the students in that school through Grace's initiatives. She develops leadership skills and learner autonomy with a continual emphasis on a biblical foundation.



The following is an excerpt from the journal of Christina Miller, a Messiah College student in the 2016 course in Indonesia . . .



Grace's School was our first experience in a Christian school in Indonesia. The students there could not have been friendlier or more welcoming. In terms of hospitality, this school went far above what we could have ever expected. Kelsey and I were in a 9th grade classroom, and we knew that the students would be able to speak a little more English than the students in the schools that we had previously been in. We made the lesson a little more challenging because of this, but I feel like we could have made it even more advanced.

The students picked up everything that we said very quickly. They were also able to understand our instructions, which the students at the previous schools had struggled to do. This helped us in the group and pair work. In most of the other schools, we used our weather cards just to have the students match the words to the pictures. At Grace's School, we were able to have the students actually play the memory game without any difficulty. The kids were so respectful and cooperative. It was amazing to see how effective Grace has been in giving these students critical thinking skills as well as teaching them English.



Then in the afternoon, we were able to learn from the students! They taught us two different kinds of batik, the famous Indonesian fabric art. Learning from the students was a real blessing for all of us. I was very impressed with their ability to teach us, even though they didn't have all the words that they needed in order to do it. When they couldn't figure out the words that they needed, they were able to work together to describe the process. It was an amazing afternoon!



Seeing the fruit of ministry:

I look forward to returning to Grace's School each year, because it is an opportunity to see the seeds of education and Christian mentorship flourishing. Each year, this simple, poor school vastly outshines the others we visit in terms of the English language level, student responsibility, and critical thinking that we observe. I feel blessed to have been a small part of the process in helping to prepare Grace to make a difference in the lives of so many Indonesian young people.

~Dr. Jan Dormer

WHAT'S THE TESOL MINOR ALL ABOUT?

Realistically looking at future classrooms, almost all of them will contain English language learners (ELLs). ELLs are relocating from traditional living areas, such as the southwestern part of the United States, to the rest of the country. This poses a challenge to many teachers who have not had training in this area. It does not simply take a good teacher to assist these students. Teachers may have lessons planned quite well, but their ELLs will be coming to the lessons with significantly different backgrounds and prior learning which may prevent students from participating and benefiting from a lesson.

Skills are needed in order to be more inclusive in lesson planning so that no matter the variety of backgrounds present in a classroom, all may take part and grow. The TESOL minor at Messiah College seeks to equip teacher-students with those skills. Furthermore, it is very practical to add as a minor due to overlapping course requirements. With just a few extra classes, you could have experience that will make a significant difference to a student somewhere and opportunities to bless people at home and globally through mission work.

From my ELL experience, I learned the importance of getting to know each student individually. In order to teach someone other than yourself, you must get to know that individual's culture, experiences, and learning styles.

-Paige Grotte

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he TESOL program at Messiah will be beneficial to any future educator, regardless of whether or not you see a future as an ESL teacher. There is a great emphasis on inclusiveness of students and recognition of the diversity within a classroom that applies to all classrooms. Students will all be coming with unique experiences to a lesson, so teachers need to be ready to adapt.



Moreover, teachers who are willing to learn new methods through the TESOL program are giving hope. There are generally dismal prospects for ELLs as they tend to do poorly due to a lack of proper attention through their school work. Without basic assistance in learning a new language, they struggle throughout their time in the education system. This program takes a look at language itself and how people learn it, new ways of reading, and incorporating new vocabulary. These are transferable skills as these steps take place even when changing from subject to subject.

I was struck by the will to learn a new language for the benefit of one's family even when one is illiterate in their own native language.

-Dayren Soto



On another note, the mission field is vast! As ELLs come into new areas, many churches offer outreach programs for adults to learn English where your skills would be put to good use. Additionally, these skills are tremendously practical if you are considering international opportunities and missions. Knowing these language-learning skills that transcend language barriers is priceless. You can make such an impact on so many people through the skills that you will acquire in the TESOL minor.

Please consider the benefits of this area of study and feel free to contact our highly qualified professors if you are curious or have questions:
Dr. Jan Dormer, jdormer@messiah.edu;
Dr. Tina Keller, tkeller@messiah.edu.



To check out what is going on currently with the TESOL program, take a look at their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/mctesol/>

Working in the English class held at the Heart of Harrisburg Church has given me the opportunity to bring the information I learned in class into a real-life situation. More important than the pedagogical knowledge that I gained through teaching and observing English lessons, my time working with ELLs at Heart of Harrisburg has given me a much clearer image of the daily challenges of immigrants. It seemed that almost every week I would hear a tragic tale of parents who felt ashamed that they were unable to help their children with homework, or of college graduates who were relegated to peeling potatoes or assembling cardboard boxes because their English was unsatisfactory. There was a general downtrodden feeling that arose from being unable to communicate in their new country. It was truly a privilege to help these students, learn their stories, and obtain a clearer image of a demographic that is too often depicted in a negative light.

~Robby Lyon



(Re)Visions

to the Junior Field Experience

**Dr. Jennifer Fisler, Dr. Carol Buckley,
and Dr. Sarah Fischer**

An Innovative Focus

If you've spent any length of time in a K-12 public school setting, you've likely heard terms like "standards-aligned curricula," "targeted intervention," "data-driven decision making," and "progress monitoring": a reflection of the changing face of public education. Beginning this spring semester, this kind of professional vocabulary will be heard around the fourth floor of Boyer as well, thanks to some innovative changes to the junior field experience. In addition to the basic requirements of junior field experience, such as teaching whole-group lessons, juniors in the field this spring will design and implement targeted, data-driven interventions for small groups of learners in their assigned classrooms.

The children with whom they work will have been identified by the teacher (using district assessment instruments) as needing remediation, acceleration, or enrichment in math and/or literacy. Pre-student teachers will be given access to a diverse array of assessment data for the children in their intervention groups and have the unique opportunity to practice using this information to design and deliver specialized instruction. Throughout the semester, pre-student teachers will implement and analyze progress monitoring assessments and report on students' progress to the classroom teacher.

A Fresh Format

The most obvious change to the format of the junior field experience is that students will be in their field experience placements for the full school day on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This allows for a cohesive, big picture perspective on the elementary curriculum that wasn't possible when pre-student teachers were only present in schools in the mornings.

Another interesting change in format of the junior field experience is that weekly, one-hour workshops will be provided on campus by our Messiah College math and literacy curriculum and instruction faculty, Dr. Carol Buckley and Dr. Sarah Fischer. During these workshops, Dr. Buckley and Dr. Fischer will be able to assist in all stages of the process of identifying and planning appropriate interventions that are aligned with those used by the school. They will also support students in reflecting on the effectiveness of the implementation of these interventions.

In order to provide the pre-student teachers with experience in both math and literacy interventions, students will spend half of the semester working with learners in math and half of the semester working with learners in literacy. In this way, the K-8 learners will receive math and literacy support for the full semester. Based on ongoing assessment of progress, the K-8 learners may be moved in or out of the groups so that group membership could change as the semester progresses.

In conjunction with EDUC 302 and EDUC 304, juniors will be building a math and literacy intervention portfolio that will not only scaffold their learning throughout the experience, but will also serve to showcase their professional development in this area as they head out into the job market.

Invaluable Collaborative Relationships

We anticipate significant learning opportunities for our students as they use assessment data to drive their instruction; practice designing and delivering targeted interventions; and implement ongoing progress monitoring, which has only been made possible through the willingness of local teachers and administrators to mentor our students in this area. They are already finding that new opportunities have opened up for collaboration with various faculty and staff in their placements as a result of this new focus, such as learning support teachers and math and literacy specialists. We expect that the greater emphasis on small group instruction will allow our students to focus on implementing high quality, evidence-based strategies so they can confidently use them when they are responsible for a full classroom of students. Our students will also provide an invaluable service to classroom teachers and the children with whom they work by giving them individualized instruction and attention.

Scholarship Award

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ho's that laughing in the hallways of Boyer Hall? It just might be Dayren Soto, a junior dual major who radiates joy in learning and teaching. Dayren serves as a resident assistant in Mountain View Residence. Under the expertise of Dr. Tina Keller, she is currently participating in an honors study about the impact of tutoring on her development as a teacher. Additionally, Dayren serves as a parent tutor, partnering in a scholarship project with Dr. Carol Buckley. Through that program, Dayren partners with one area school teacher, learning in advance about the math content for the next week. Then once each week, Dayren tutors parents of struggling students so they might be empowered to support the homework success of their children.

During a Chapel in February, Dayren was awarded the first ever Wittlinger Award. In 2014, the Class of 1964 reunion committee created a new student award in recognition of Dr. Carlton Wittlinger, their class advisor, as part of their 50th class reunion celebration. A graduate of Messiah Junior College in 1935, Dr. Wittlinger returned to Messiah and served more than 35 years as a teacher and visionary administrator. The **Class of 1964 Wittlinger Award** seeks to honor students who demonstrate Dr. Wittlinger's broad academic accomplishments, including his qualities of persistence and unselfish dedication, as they pursue and develop their own academic leadership skills. Criteria includes being a junior of high academic promise with a minimum 3.7 GPA, strong character, integrity, and a commitment to service.



The Department of Education extends our congratulations to Dayren!