A Word from the Chair... 

Another fall semester is behind us, and a long break is just around the corner. It has been an eventful semester, with the college’s first Boyer Symposium that took place on October 5 and saw six principals from across the nation present on how effective the Boyer school has proven to be in their schools. Their accounts of success were truly inspiring and we look forward to another symposium next fall.

Our faculty has also been very active, with Dr. Melinda Burchard presenting on “Assessing Professional Development Needs and Gains of Teachers for Multi-Tiered Instructional Practices” for our annual fall forum and Dr. Carol Buckley facilitating an open forum discussion entitled, “Unraveling Common Core State Standards: Debunking Myths and Setting the Record Straight.” Dr. Jan Dormer continues globe trotting to promote better TESOL practices, with visits to Indonesia and South Korea this fall alone. She soon heads to New Zealand and plans to go to Portugal next summer.

No doubt the event from this semester that will have the most impact on the department is the retirement of Dr. Anita Voelker. After 21 years instructing and impressing young teachers in preparation for their own classrooms, we bid goodbye to a beloved and well-respected colleague as she leaves our classrooms for the last time.

Change is inevitable. And we look forward to

Merry Christmas!

Department of Education, Chair

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Rachel Peterson ’15 (Education with Certification Pre-K- 4th grades plus certification in Special Education through 8th grades) co-presented with Dr. Melinda Burchard at the Annual Convention of the Pennsylvania Council for Exceptional Children. She explained evidence-based practices, the process of finding and evaluating them for specific populations and purposes, and how she is applying evidence-based practices through specific projects and field experiences. Professors at other universities were impressed with her confidence and competence in evidence-based practices!

Presenting to an audience of youth and children's ministry workers at the ENGAGE Conference, Emily Buncie ’15 (Education with Certification Pre-K- 4th grades plus certification in Special Education through 8th grades), co-presented with Dr. Burchard about how mnemonics help children learn biblical concepts. Her presentations were delightfully interactive and included songs with hand motions and group challenges to create mnemonics for specific Bible passages.

Also at the ENGAGE conference, Bri Loop ’15 (Education with Certification Pre-K- 4th grades plus certification in Special Education through 8th grades) co-presented with Dr. Burchard on the use of visual schedules for children with behavior-related disabilities in the church setting. Bri demonstrated various types of visual schedules, and all participants created visual schedules for their own use and brainstormed ways such schedules could be used in their own church ministries.
Amanda Willson and Ali Sedwick both '15 (Education with Certification Pre-K-4th grades plus certification in Special Education through 8th grades) presented at the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference. They explained uses of foldables that are evidence-based. They then led participants in creating six different math foldables and brainstorming other evidence-based applications of foldables in their own math content.

Also presenting at the PCTM conference, Ali Sedwick and Alexa Kern both '15 (Education with Certification Pre-K-4th grades plus certification in Special Education through 8th grades) shared their experience writing math-related Student Learning Objectives and creating math interventions for non-math teachers in the public schools. Audience feedback included a request by a journal editor for that presentation to be turned into a publication.

Music Education major, Luke Forshey '15, presented at the PCTM Conference on ways to teach the Fibonacci Sequence within the context of music. Participants created musical chords using Fibonacci numbers and examined patterns of the progression of songs also consistent with the Fibonacci Sequence. Luke gave an encore presentation of this material to the campus community on December 11 of this year.

PCTM Conference participants enjoyed a hands on workshop creating math racks out of pipe cleaners and beads, led by Carly Day ('15 majoring in Education with Certification Pre-K-4th grades plus certification in Special Education through 8th grades).
The Keystone State Reading Association (KSRA), an affiliate of the International Reading Association (IRA), is a state-wide organization in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania comprised of individuals who are engaged in reading instruction, literacy development, and the encouragement of lifelong reading habits. KSRA’s mission is to promote literacy, provide instructional leadership, support professional development, and advocate literacy issues. From October 26-29, 2014, the 47th Annual KSRA Conference took place at the Penn Stater Conference Center in State College, Pennsylvania.

Congratulations to 12 outstanding Messiah College senior education majors who submitted competitive proposals and were selected to present seminars at the annual state-wide conference. Additionally, these students applied and were selected to be Ambassadors during the conference. It was my honor to accompany these young women as they represented Messiah College at the conference. They received numerous compliments for their professionalism and work ethic.

To learn more about these research based routines, visit these journal articles:


“SWIT! A Teacher-Empowering Strategy for Vocabulary Instruction with Dense Nonfiction” was a cleverly designed seminar facilitated by Sarah Hensley, Bri Loop, Katelyn Mikalonis, Ali Sedwick, Amanda Willson, Lauren Yarrington, and Ashley Zellers. Here is the abstract that appeared in the conference program to describe their seminar:

Keith Stanovich (1986) coined the term “Matthew Effect” to remind teachers that the literacy rich become richer and the literacy poor get poorer. To assist students in becoming rich in their word knowledge and acquire “linguistic-experiential capital” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 1082), teachers benefit from first understanding the vocabulary conundrum (Anderson & Nagy, 1993). In this session we provide a brief overview of weaknesses associated with conventional vocabulary work and limitation of traditional resources. We introduce new research on how to select and teach vocabulary that aligns with the Common Core State Standards (Graves, Baumann, Blachowicz, Manyak, Bates, &Von Gunten, 2013).

By employing a dense nonfiction text on coral reef, we will demonstrate an appealing and pragmatic routine supported by social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), transactional theory (Rosenblatt, 1978) and activity theory (Engestrom, 1996). The presentation will provide modeling, guiding practice and independent practice in selecting vocabulary and placing the words into four categories: essential, valuable, accessible, and important. Participants will also learn how to select the least intensive and most effective vocabulary instruction: Powerful Instruction, Brief Explanation, or Inferred Meanings.

The following objectives will guide the presentation:

- Identify Potentially Unfamiliar Words in a Dense Nonfiction Text
- Categorize Vocabulary into the Four Types of Words to Teach
- Determine the Optimal Type of Instruction
- Reflect on the Efficacy of SWIT In Their Own Classroom

Another seminar, entitled Reader’s Theater: A Front Row View of Reader’s Theater and Podcasting, was facilitated by Heather Ba-shore, Clair Cundill, Carly Day, Kendall Fisher, and Carey Heisey. Here is the description of their engaging seminar as it appeared in the conference brochure:

Fluency can indicate any skill learned so thoroughly that it can be applied with little conscious thought (Robinson & McKenna, 2008). Trained dancers exhibit fluency as they manipulate their bodies by gracefully leaping and twirling in carefully memorized patterns that form intricate routines. A more refined view of fluency, with specific respect to reading, denotes the ability to develop basic control over the text one is processing. The ability to comprehend a written passage with minimal effort at surface level means that an increasing amount of energy can be dedicated to a much deeper understanding (Rasinski, 2004). For this reason, fluency is closely related to comprehension and considered foundational in literacy curriculums.

One of the most engaging types of rereading is associated with Reader’s Theater. Recently teachers have added technology to the routine of rereading by using Audacity and Podcasting to record and disseminate readers’ theater performances. Combining readers’ theater with podcasts allows students “to engage in dramatic, repeated reading” (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011, p. 488) because it improves fluency, creates an authentic purpose for reading, enhances expressive reading of text, and allows students to be socially interactive. In this presentation, our participants will

- Review the research support for Reader’s Theater.
- Identify the research support for reader’s theater with podcasting.
- Listen and respond to a podcast of a Readers’ Theater performance.
- Use Audacity effectively.
- Record a podcast independently after actively engaging in guided practice.
Anita Voelker’s Retirement Reception

On Friday, December 5, 2014, Boyer Atrium was filled to capacity as Messiah College bid a fond farewell to Dr. Anita Voelker. More than 150 alumni, students, and campus colleagues came to pay tribute to Anita and to say thank you for all of her work and dedication to Messiah. At the reception Anita was presented with an original artwork from Jonathan Bean’s children’s book *Bad Bye, Good Bye*, that will be displayed in the Murray Gallery in her honor. In addition there is to be an *Anita Voelker Scholarship Fund for Research in Literacy Education*. The scholarship will provide funds for students interested in pursuing research and/or presenting at conference in the area of literacy education.

There is no doubt that Anita’s dedication to her students and love of literacy will be greatly missed.