

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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FUTURE EDUCATORS: The John W. Porter Building is the home of the College of Education. Eastern Michigan University is the nation's largest producer of professional educators.

Gray Matter: A Tale from the COE

By Jerry Robbins, Dean

I got a chuckle during a recent conversation with a new faculty member in the College of Education. "Every time I ask someone about the College of Education," she said, "I think of the story about the blind men and the elephant."

"Oh?" I asked, in my best "tell-me-more" tone.

"You remember the story," she said. "One man was generalizing about the elephant from feeling the ear; another from feeling the leg; another from feeling the tail; another from feeling the trunk; and so on."

"And how is that like the EMU College of Education?" I queried.

Is it like a building?

"Well," she answered, "every time I ask someone to describe the College of Education, I get a different answer. The first person I asked gave me an extensive description of a *building!*"

"Oh!" I responded. "We *do* have a lovely building. We moved into the John Porter Building during the summer of 1999. That brought the whole college under one roof for the first time in anyone's memory. In the Porter Building, we have nice, individual faculty offices, a lot of well-equipped classrooms, increas-

ing amounts of technology..."

"I know all that," she interrupted, "not to mention the computer lab, the smart classrooms, the lecture halls, the distance learning lab, the Educational Resource Center, the CATE lab, the student lounge, and a lot more. But I don't think a College of Education, no matter how well equipped, is just a *building!*"

Try looking at history?

She took a deep breath. Then she went on with, "I think the second person I asked was the one that talked about our *history* and traditions."

"Sure," I said. "We were founded in 1849 as the first normal school west of the Alleghenies and the sixth normal school in the country. We've been national pioneers in physical education, special education, and community education. We were the first..."

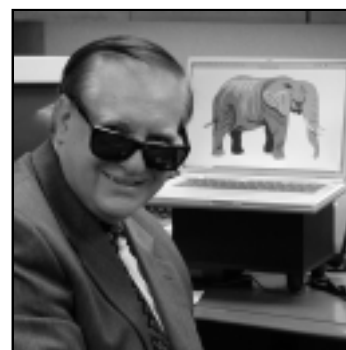
Before I could go on with my recital of "firsts," she jumped in with another comment.

"The next person I asked described the College of Education in terms of being *big!*," she said.

"Right!" I interjected quickly. "For years, we've been the nation's largest producer of professional educa-

tors. We're one of the largest producers of new teachers, too, and the nation's largest producer of special educators, and..."

"All of which comes from the 5,000 students we have each semester," she said. "And that's going to get much larger, isn't it, because of the



**College of Education
Dean Jerry Robbins**

recent huge increases in the admissions to the initial teacher preparation program?"

"Yes, and..." I began.

Maybe it's about feelings?

"But another person described the College of Education as being very *caring* for its students, despite being *big!*," she added enthusiastically.

"In addition to the anecdotal information, there's hard data to back that up," I said. "In our benchmarking studies, student satisfaction with

faculty responsiveness and accessibility was very high. And that's not only in comparison with the other things we do but in comparison with our peer groups as well. Our mean scores were..."

She interrupted again.

"But the next person wanted to talk about how *good* we were, saying..."

"I bet I know," doing the interrupting myself this time. "Continuous full accreditation by NCATE since the organization began; full approval of everything we do by the Michigan Department of Education; specialized association accreditation or approval in everything that we are eligible for..."

Must be talent?

"No, no, no," she said excitedly. "Not all that organizational stuff. Well, maybe all those awards from the national organizations for outstanding and creative programming. I've learned about all the recognitions the alums have received – National Teacher of the Year; all the state teacher and administrator of the year awards; and more."

I jumped in with "Don't forget about the students! Great young people who win

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Academic Service-Learning: Community service used as effective tool for teaching course objectives

Academic Service-Learning (AS-L) is a teaching approach that uses community service to help students gain a deeper understanding of course objectives, acquire new knowledge and engage in civic activity.

In 1994, Dale Rice, professor of special education, “temporarily left” the department of special education to pursue the establishment of EMU’s Office of Academic Service-Learning and built the foundations for AS-L on campus. Now the permanent director of the program, Rice has brought AS-L to many departments on campus, including the department of special education.

To support faculty in integrating an academic service-learning component into one of their courses so that the activities are connected to course content, Academic Affairs sponsors six Faculty Fellows each semester to attend a weekly faculty development seminar.

To date, seven special education faculty members have been selected as Faculty Fellows. Another faculty member will join their ranks in winter 2002.

Reaching out to the disabled

Gary Navarre, a special education professor, has incorporated AS-L into his graduate course, “Social Psychology of Handicapped Students.”

Navarre reports that through AS-L, students have provided a variety of services to individuals with disabilities, including assisting a grocery store to become more user-friendly to persons with disabilities; coaching children’s soccer; and pro-



LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: EMU students have a chance to learn in a real-world setting through Academic Service-Learning programs that link future teachers to classrooms in projects that benefit the community. Here, elementary and college students work together at Ypsilanti’s George School.

viding music programs for persons with Alzheimer’s disease.

“Through my involvement in AS-L, my students have gained greater sensitivity and understanding of the direct and indirect affects of disabilities on the individual, his/her family, and the community-at-large,” Navarre said.

Nancy Halmhuber, a special education professor, also reports the success of AS-L in her sections of “Education of Exceptional Children,” an introductory undergraduate survey course required of all COE students pursuing teaching certification.

“Academic Service-Learning has brought a richness and depth to my classes,” said Halmhuber. “AS-L pro-

vides students with the opportunity to immediately link course learnings with real-world applications. For my university students, there emerges a better understanding of persons with disabilities and the realization that we are all more alike than different.”

Students provide positive response

Faculty aren’t the only ones who rave about the benefits of AS-L.

Students enrolled in Robert Kreger’s course, “Emotionally Impaired Children and Adolescents,” reported on their positive AS-L experiences.

“Even though it may be hard to schedule, or you might groan going into it — I didn’t! — it is worth the

experience to see techniques applied or not,” said one future teacher. “It makes the teaching experience much more real. For as many examples as we get in class, nothing is as important as seeing the real thing.”

Graduate students pursuing a master’s degree in speech/language pathology participate in AS-L activities in Lizbeth Stevens’ section of “Augmentative Communication.”

“I would like to say that this experience was extremely worthwhile,” said one of Stevens’ students. “Looking back on it, I’m surprised at how much I learned in such a short amount of time.”

“Since the population of augmentative communication users is so small, discussing it in the sterile setting of the classroom makes it seem unreal—as if the likelihood of having clients who use augmentative communication is remote,” she continued. “This experience made augmentative communication real and also made our readings and classroom discussions much more relevant.”

Perhaps the impact of AS-L is best characterized by one student who said, “I think the largest quality that I developed was completely changing my mind and attitudes toward elementary special education and children in general.

“I went from being almost afraid of children to wanting to change my major so I can work with them as a career for the rest of my life,” she said. “I am now much more understanding of special education needs and have a new appreciation for both special education teachers and children with exceptional needs.”

Porter Building creates wireless computing environment

Whether surfing the net for a class project or checking e-mail, College of Education students are connecting to the electronic world from every corner of the John W. Porter Building—no wires needed.

“It’s wonderful!” said COE student Erica Marzouq. “With a laptop, I can check my e-mail and search the Internet from anywhere in the building!”

Another student, Katie Fulkerson, agreed.

“I think it is a good idea,” she said. “You can take your computer anywhere you want to study rather than being tied down to one place”

With the installation of

seven base stations throughout Porter this past summer, the COE became EMU’s first wireless learning environment. New possibilities emerged in the fall with the purchase of a portable cart holding 16 wireless-ready laptops. Now, any Porter Building classroom can be transformed into a computer lab or electronic resource center.

“The wireless solution has given us greater flexibility in assigning classrooms for our faculty, not to mention the benefits associated with pedagogical modeling of technology for our students,” said Michael Bretting, COE associate dean.



“These new laptops are ideal for classes because not every activity requires a computer. Now, students can pull out the laptops just when they are needed,” added Ellen Hoffman, assistant professor, teacher education. “When we need space to spread out on the desks for other kinds of work, we move the laptops

out of the way. It lets me model new ways of teaching in which computers are a tool for learning rather than a static fixture on a desk.”

The wireless project is just one of the new technology initiatives that is transforming the way teachers teach and students learn in the COE. “People forget where we

WIRELESS WORLD: The Porter Building is the first on campus to establish a building-wide wireless computing environment. Here, students can surf the net from the nearby lawn.

were with regard to technology 2 1/2 years ago in Boone Hall,” said Bretting. “We had one classroom with 18 computers that served as both our computer lab and instructional area — assuming a circuit breaker didn’t blow.”

Today, Porter has three fully equipped computer classrooms, the 55-station Bonisteel computer laboratory, two smart classrooms, two smart lecture halls, an Educational Resource Center, and a Specialized Technology Laboratory. A new video-based distance-learning classroom, which will take EMU classes to new locations throughout the state, will soon be available.

Gompers Elementary: A school that inspires teachers

After four weeks of student teaching at Samuel Gompers Elementary in Detroit this fall, EMU College of Education student Jennifer Peace is clearly impressed with the school.

"Teachers have high expectations for the children and the children receive frequent progress reports," Peace said. "The morning assembly really gets the children ready for the day as they recite the Pledge of Allegiance, sing a patriotic song, recite the school pledge, and sing the school song. The children also focus on a weekly goal related to respect for others."

Peace describes a variety of school activities that support the academic and social development of students, while speaking enthusiastically about the dedication of her cooperating teacher, Dollie Osandusky, and the principal, Gale Lewis.

"Gompers is a school where there is a culture of mutual respect and collaboration, "as well as social and academic programs that sup-

port student learning," said Carolyn Finch, COE Associate Dean. "It's a school that inspires student teachers."

EMU's Comer Project in Detroit

Peace's student teaching placement is one of many quality, diverse school settings used by the COE to train student teachers. While Gompers Elementary School is located in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Detroit with a 97 percent poverty level, it also is a "Comer School" — a school that has worked with EMU in a school reform program that has succeeded in making changes that benefit students and create an environment that is positive for learning.

Former principal Marilee Bylsma describes Gompers as "a safe haven for children, a place that inspires learning." In 2000, the students at Gompers achieved the highest Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test scores among elementary schools in their size category in the state. In 2001, the school



ROMPER GOMPERS: (from left) Elementary teacher Dolly Osandusky and EMU student teacher Jennifer Peace work together at Gompers Elementary School in Detroit. The school is part of EMU's Comer School project that brings parents and educators together to improve schools and increase student achievement.

was recognized by U.S. Secretary of Education Rodney Paige as one of the National Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence for 2000-2001.

What has made a difference for Gompers is a group of dedicated educators and parents who have worked together to implement the Comer School Development Program Model, a school re-

form program developed by Dr. James Comer at Yale University.

Since 1994, a project supported by the Skillman Foundation and the Detroit Public Schools has brought together EMU faculty, the School Development staff at Yale University, and the staff and parents at Gompers Elementary to focus on comprehensive

school reform. As a result, the school has enjoyed many successes, including the dramatic, improved student MEAP performance.

Real-world experience for future teachers

Like many COE students, Peace participated in field experiences in the Detroit Public Schools prior to student teaching to gain a better understanding of the needs of diverse groups of children.

She completed field assignments at Bennet Elementary and was a substitute teacher at Cesar Chavez Academy.

Peace describes herself as a "compassionate person who looks for the positive in all school settings." A 1999 transfer student from Olivet Nazarene University and Schoolcraft Community College, Peace is a "typical" COE student with a GPA above 3.5; a genuine interest in working with children; a desire to continue learning; and a desire to instill in children a love for learning.

COE teachers receive education beyond the classroom

Educating teachers isn't just an academic exercise at Eastern Michigan University. Many programs and classes are offered in the schools where teachers teach; online for anytime-anyplace learning; and on weekends and in the summer when teachers aren't in class.

Assignments are designed to immediately allow teachers to put into practice new skills to improve teaching and make learning better for Michigan children. And, in at least one case, a new program started a year ago in teacher education led to major recognition for one of the participating teachers, who was honored for her exceptional achievements in teaching with technology.

Amy LaVigne-Benore, a teacher at Ida Middle School, was a member of EMU's initial class for a new certificate program in educational technology. She not only received her certificate, but she also was recognized for developing a professional digital portfolio to show how she applied technology to improve student learning.

She submitted her project to the Consortium for Outstanding Achievement in Teaching with Technology (COATT). COATT provides a special recognition, the Michigan Certificate for Outstanding Achievement in Teaching and Technology (M-COATT), to teachers who show superior skills in using technology in teaching.

"I was really interested in continuing my education," said LaVigne-Benore. "But what was really wonderful was the opportunity to have graduate classes come to me and focus on the interests of teachers in my region. This was an exciting way to



LEARNING CLOSE TO HOME: Teachers from the Monroe County area who are enrolled in the EMU College of Education graduate educational technology certificate program take classes in their own backyard. (from left) Jim Dornberg, Amy Janssen, Amy LaVigne-Benore (center), Gwen Dusa and James Chiang.

learn that classes were different from what I'd experienced before in college. And it works!"

Jane McCraight-Wertz, a fourth-grade teacher at Haggerty Elementary School in Belleville; and Beth D'Angelo, a mathematics teacher at East Middle School in the Plymouth-Canton district; and both masters students in EMU's educational technology concentration program, were other award winners.

The EMU educational technology certificate program requires 12 credit hours of graduate-level class work for completion and is designed to help

schools and districts provide advanced professional development to help teachers integrate technology into the curriculum. The program is offered off-campus, combining in-person classes with online learning.

The first cohort in the new program was organized in summer 2000, in cooperation with the Monroe County Intermediate School District. Teachers who joined the program teach students of all ages and in many disciplines, from English and science to music and drama.

"I think that a great part of the program was working through it with the same group of people," said LaVigne-Benore. "We really gained some nice connections."

To make it convenient for teachers who live too far away to easily attend classes at EMU, classes were offered at the Monroe County Intermediate School District building and at Ida Middle School.

"With schools having new technology millage resources available to them here in Monroe County, we were looking for a way to enhance our own professional development programs targeted at helping teachers use technology effectively in the classroom," said Donna Schmitt-Oliver, an EMU emeritus faculty member in leadership and counseling, and now associate superintendent for the Monroe County Intermediate School District. "Having EMU offer the certificate program was a way to develop a core of intensively-trained teachers in the county, as well as provide teachers with a chance to take college courses that focused on their particular needs."

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all those student teacher of the year awards and first-year teacher of the year recognitions. And who make a lot of presentations at state and national conferences.”

“I was thinking of the faculty recognitions, too,” she added. “The various faculty members who have won national and state awards; the eight books that were published this past year; the chapters in books. And the hundreds of articles written and presentations that the faculty made last year. I’m just amazed at the number of COE faculty members who are leaders in international,

national, regional, and state professional organizations.”

“As the dean,” I added, “I have to be very proud of the faculty members who wrote proposals, and of those who brought in almost \$3 million this past year in sponsored projects.”

“Oh, that’s even another way to describe the ‘elephant,’ isn’t it?” she chimed in. “And, from what I’ve learned in my early weeks here, those dollars support a lot of faculty and student interactions with schools, don’t they?”

Bigger than a classroom?

“They sure do,” I replied. “But they also support im-

proving our ability to prepare teachers to teach with technology, academic service-learning, traditional research, and other valuable activities as well.”

“We must be doing a great job for all those new teachers,” she said.

“We are,” I responded. “But we’re not just about new teachers. We’re also about large numbers of teachers, school principals and counselors who are returning for an advanced credential. And don’t overlook all of our programming that is for non-school personnel as well – community counseling, col-

lege student personnel work, recreation, dance, and a number of other fields.”

“Gee,” she said. “There is so much going on. No wonder people have different views of the College of Education! Just like the blind men and the elephant!”

There was a moment of silence while she was deep in thought. “So,” she asked, “how would *you* describe the College of Education?”

“Briefly,” she added.

Making a difference

Without hesitating, I answered, “from the Latin, *collegium*—community. People. Great faculty and staff mem-

bers. Dedicated students. Wonderful colleagues on campus and in the field. We’re many things to many people, but all of us are trying to do the best we can for the benefit of society. *We impact the way America learns.*”

She looked at her watch and quickly left. I smiled, proud of all that we do, trying not to think about elephants.

Indeed, there’s no way to describe the EMU College of Education in a few words or photos. But we hope you enjoy some samples of our work and our accomplishments that are included in this supplement.

Achilles: Changing schools through extensive research

Charles (Chuck) Achilles, professor of education leadership, leadership and counseling, has been referred to as a “living legend.”

Achilles’ reputation has resulted from the major national and international influence that his research has had on education legislation, policy, and practice for more than a quarter century. He takes it seriously that research should make a difference, and that the real questions are about students and learning.

Achilles’ influential work began with two early lines of research in the 1980s. His studies of adjudicated delinquents and institutionalization of neglected and dependent youth raised questions that affected the practice of those times of “locking up” young offenders, such as habitual truants and wards of the state, along with adjudicated delinquents in institutions or “reform schools.” His expert testimony and data analyses on uniform codes of conduct, student discipline, staff development, and safety influenced major desegregation cases in four different states.

Achilles’ long-standing research on the positive effects of small (14-17 students) class size on student achievement in early elementary grades has impacted policy through legislation at the state and federal levels.

Since the 1980s, more than 30 states have enacted small class-size legislation, citing in their deliberations the findings of Project STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Ratio). Achilles has been a leading researcher in this longitudinal education experiment involving 11,600 students and 1,340 teachers in Tennessee.

In Michigan, these findings have led to class-size pilot studies and pending legislation to limit class sizes in grades K-3.

Class-size results have figured prominently in funding equity cases and in court-ordered desegregation remedies. The results have had international implications as well, with use of STAR results in class-size initiatives in Australia, Canada, England and the Netherlands.



Achilles

He currently is studying the “enduring efforts” of early (grades K-3) small-class education on later achievement and behavior. A related area of study looks at the generally negative effects of regular instructional aides in K-3 classes.

Achilles finds that there are three required conditions for long-lasting effects of small classes in K-3. Children have greater success if they are included in early small-class intervention, beginning at the kindergarten level or before; if they are kept for a sufficient duration — three and, preferably, four years — in small classes; and if the intensity of the class size is all day each day. The lack of such continuity may help to explain the ubiquitous Head Start fade.

On average, students who meet these small-class conditions are about one year ahead of large-class peers on tests in all subjects by grade 12. Even more important, effects seem to be behavioral. These students see increased high school graduation rates, less grade retention, better behavior and greater participation.

Exercising doesn’t have to hurt anymore

The long accepted theory of “no pain, no gain,” is under the microscope in a new study being directed by Stephen McGregor, assistant professor of exercise science, health, physical education, recreation and dance (HPERD).

“We can all relate to the example of someone who goes out to shovel a big snowfall and wakes up the next day with muscle pain,” said McGregor. “Our first response is to take a couple of aspirin and get immediate relief from the pain. However, preliminary studies have shown that using such anti-inflammatories may actually hinder the natural healing process.”

In a collaboration with the EMU Department of Biology, the University of Toledo, and Genomic Solutions Incorporated of Ann Arbor, McGregor is investigating the physiology of muscle injury to eventually determine how trained and weekend athletes can maximize their performance and minimize their chance of injury.

To learn more about exercise effects on muscle, McGregor is studying both muscle in tissue culture and transgenic mice. The utilization of muscle in tissue culture enables a researcher to isolate the specific response of the muscle to the injury, while the use of the mice allows the investigators to study the muscular response to overuse in the physiological context. Information derived from this study could help assist people interested in starting a new exercise program.

Concurrently with that study, McGregor also is testing a new nutritional supplement designed to in-



NO PAIN, NO GAIN: Stephen McGregor, professor of exercise science, HPERD, is studying exercise effects on muscle and how muscles recover from injury.

crease muscle mass and improve athletic performance.

Subjects in the study will be given a number of trial doses of the supplement to assess its effectiveness. This information will be used to determine optimal safe dosages for future follow-up studies that will be conducted on trained athletes. The first of these studies, to be conducted this summer, will look at long-term effects of utilizing this supplement with weight lifters.

“My interest in research was originally kindled by Ira Jones, my undergraduate advisor at Tri-State University,” McGregor said. “Dr. Jones’ intense curiosity moved me to pursue research and teaching as a career.”