

TESOL PROGRAM ADDED TO MASTERS CURRICULUM

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has received approval as a state endorsement and been added to the Masters of Education curriculum.

The program provides training in linguistics principals, theories in language acquisition, issues of language and culture and other critical issues in multilingual and multicultural education.

English faculty member Laura VanderBroek, Education professor Anthony Herrera and others in both departments worked for two years designing the program.

"Changing demographics in West Michigan school districts have prompted many area teachers to want specialized training in ESL and TESOL," VanderBroek said.

The initial TESOL masters program began this fall.

"The state has realized how badly we need ESL teachers, and we already have 42 teachers in the pipeline to begin the program," Herrera said.

FACULTY MEMBERS CITED FOR EXCELLENCE IN FIELD

Dr. Allan Ten Eyck, who is concluding his final semester of teaching at Grand Valley State University, has received the first Pew Teaching Excellence Award, presented to the outstanding educator in each of the university's six divisions.

Ten Eyck was selected by his peers in the School of Education. The award was based on recommendations from faculty, staff, and students.

"It is a great honor," said Ten Eyck, who is retiring Dec. 13 after 28 years at Grand Valley.

Connie Widdis, a School of Education instructor, accepted a commendation from the Muskegon County Environmental Excellence Awards Committee for her work as the chair of the steering committee for Schoolyard Habitats/Outdoor Classrooms in Muskegon County.

Widdis — who helped establish model Outdoor Schools that incorporate daily lessons with wildlife habitats that have been established on the grounds — also was recognized by the Muskegon Conservation District as its Outstanding Educator for 2000.

GVSU GRAD HONORED AGAIN

Special honors continue to pour in for GVSU graduate Tricia McCrea.

McCrea, who graduated with a certification in elementary education in 1999, was recognized at the Council for Exceptional Children 2000 International Convention as the Outstanding Undergraduate Student and CEC Member of the Year. She is the first general education major to win the CEC award.

Board Member: Improvement Over Abandonment

Claudia Bajema has witnessed the successful side of urban education firsthand. She has also dealt with the issues that have led to the decline of urban schools across the state. But instead of running away from the problem, she ran for a position on the Board of Education in an attempt to make a difference.

Bajema, the director of the MBA program at GVSU, sent all four of her children through the Grand Rapids Public Schools system. "All have been extremely successful in college and beyond," she said, "and that certainly reflects their education from Grand Rapids Public Schools."

Bajema is a six-year member of the Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education in a district where more than 30 percent of the children attend parochial schools. Others have elected to attend charter schools. She believes that declining enrollment is the biggest contributor to the decline of urban education.

"As a board member, you have to look at things that can stabilize the neighborhoods," said Bajema, who served as board president for the 1999-2000 calendar year. "My wish for urban public education is that it maintain its diversity. In order to do that, it has to maintain its middle class. Unfortunately, we are following the national trend and are losing our diversity to suburban schools, to charter schools and to parochial schools."

Almost universally, urban school systems are faced with several obstacles.

"Infrastructure of the buildings is a big issue," Bajema said. "Parents who can afford to send children to other schools choose not to send stu-

dents to buildings that are not in good repair."

And while suburban districts are passing major bond issues for new buildings, athletic fields and fine arts facilities, urban districts such as Grand Rapids are unable to pass bond issues to repair the old buildings.

"Money is a major issue in urban schools because they are disproportionately poor, have disproportionately needy students and tend to get less money than suburban schools," Bajema said. "The neediest schools needing the most money are getting the least. In that way, the other middle class people remaining in the district are realizing they are not getting as big a piece of the pie and — if they can — they are leaving the districts."

The charter school movement has also affected enrollment and funding at many of the existing public schools, although only two charter schools exist within the city of Grand Rapids. Bajema said she believes that problems for urban school districts would grow by allowing vouchers for schools of choice.

"The declining diversity is a self-perpetuating phenomenon," Bajema said. "The more schools lose their middle class, the more nervous the remaining middle class becomes, and it's a domino effect."



Claudia Bajema

Educator: Radical Departure Desperately Needed

As the head of Urban School Studies at Marquette University and a former superintendent of the Milwaukee Public School system, Dr. Howard Fuller has witnessed the decay of inner city schools.

Before existing trends can be reversed and to upgrade educational opportunities for disadvantaged children in both urban and suburban school districts, Fuller claims there needs to be a radical departure from the status quo — even if that means implementing a voucher system.

Fuller, a dynamic speaker, addressed a mixed audience of both proponents and opponents of school vouchers in the first of the four-part October Lecture Series conducted by the School of Education at the Gerald R. Ford Museum in Grand Rapids.

"In order to help these children, we need a radical departure from the way things are," Fuller said. "To do this, we need a system that allows dollars to follow students and a new configuration of existing systems. We need to create effective learning communities, smaller schools, public-private partnerships, interactive uses of technology to create multi-learning sites, and assure that coursework is available to those who need it."



Dr. Howard Fuller

Fuller said that current methods, approaches and perceptions toward teaching must be altered — if not completely revolutionized.

"You cannot deal with new realities by operating at the same level of thinking that existed when the problem began," Fuller said. "With almost every change, there are unknowns. You cannot have an answer to everything before change. Sometimes you must leap before you look, because if you look too long, you may never leap."

"If fear of the unknown is going to judge us, we'll never do anything."

As for the voucher issue, Fuller said that it's only fair to allow all students a choice in their education instead of being bound by financial constraints.

"I support vouchers because I believe poor parents should have the right to make choices for their children," Fuller said. "Those of us with money have a choice. Those without it, do not."

"I think it's somewhat hypocritical for teachers to say that they would never put one of their own children into a school system, but it's good enough for another child. Wouldn't justice and equity demand that all children have that same choice?"