

S.O.E. WELCOMES SEVEN

The School of Education welcomes seven new faculty members who received appointments for the 1998-99 academic school year.

Brenda Lorraine Alston, Ph.D., and Sherry D. Collins, Ed.D., will be teaching Advanced Studies in Education courses. Alston joins the College Student Affairs Leadership program, while Collins will focus on Elementary Education.

Sheryl J. Grove, Ed.D. and Holly A. Johnson, Ph.D. were appointed to undergraduate positions. Grove will be an assistant professor in Foundations and Technology, and Johnson becomes an assistant professor in Reading.

Visiting faculty positions will be filled by Patsy Fox, Ed.D., Elementary; Arthur Haerberle, Elementary Education in the Traverse City program; and Edward Birch, Ph.D., Special Education.

HOME SWEET HOME ...



Smiling faces greet visitors at the new Mackinac Hall.

The School of Education moved from AuSable Hall into its new Allendale campus home in Mackinac Hall for the 1998 Fall Semester. The new facility provides a centralized location and better access between offices and classrooms.

Other places the School of Education has called "home" over the years have included Lake Superior Hall, Lake Huron Hall, the Peacock Building and State of Michigan Building in downtown Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids High School, Grand Rapids Junior College, Union High School, Commons, AuSable Hall, and currently the Eberhard Center and Mackinac Hall.

ON THE COVER: *The School of Education at Grand Valley State University has a slightly different look today than it did some 30 years ago as veteran faculty members Wes Wochholz, Antonio Herrera, Allan Ten Eyck and John Wissink — top and bottom left to right — would attest. Jane Claus, Pat Withey, Martha King, Lydia Cook and Theodore Schmidt, upper right, attended classes at Grand Valley during the 1970s, while Arthur Culver, bottom left, worked with special education students in Muskegon during the same era. Susan Sieracki, middle, is among GVSU's more recent graduates who have taken teaching to heart.*

ROBERT HAGERTY DEAN'S CORNER



KEEP TECHNOLOGY IN TOUCH WITH REALITY

A superintendent of a West Michigan school district recently suggested that classroom technology is turning into a juggernaut that continues to grow with very few checks and balances or regard to traditional models.

"Parents, board members and teachers want more and more," he said. "With finite school budgets, the investment of millions of dollars in technology means that I have to deprive my school of other essential needs. My biggest concern is that I don't even know what kind of return I will get in terms of student learning gains."

Those are legitimate concerns.

To further underscore some of the problems school districts are having with technology is the fact that some of them are bonded for 30 years to pay for computer systems which will be obsolete in less than five years.

A gradual undercurrent has been developing over the past year or so questioning the extent to which classroom technology needs to be utilized.

This fall, the School of Education will sponsor a free evening lecture series with four of the leading authorities on the subject addressing how technology is being utilized in K-12 classrooms. The series will take an in-depth look at technology and its uses and abuses.

Megabytes of Expectations

The U.S. Department of Education claims that the average ratio of students to computers is 7.3-to-1, compared to 25-to-1 a decade ago. The Department has a 5-to-1 goal.

There is little research to support that computers are indeed improving the quality of education, according to Stephen Talbot, author of "The Future Does Not Compute."

Some educators are worried that the art of writing is being lost on computers.

The CEO Forum on Education and Technology — a group of 212 business and education leaders — claims that schools have not measured the impact of technology on achievement. For this reason, the Forum reports that we need to keep a wary eye on the technology frenzy in schools today.

Are schools setting themselves up to raise public expectations as they did about new math and open classrooms?

Five years from now, if test scores have not improved significantly, will the public blame it on the money spent on computers? How difficult will it be to get a bond issue passed if that is the case?

"Some cash-strapped schools are dropping music, art, physical education and librarians to pay for computers."

—Robert Hagerty

Recent test results from the Third International Math & Science Study revealed that U.S. fourth graders ranked sixth in achievement. Studies revealed that the U.S. fourth graders used computers in school three times as much as their counterparts did in the five countries that achieved the better test results.

Paying the Price for Technology

In the San Juan Unified School District located in the heart of the Silicon Valley, computers sit idle in neat rows in the back of a spacious media center. Years earlier, the room had been part of the highly open classroom system

with a sunken common area for middle school teachers. "It is like one dying technology on top of a former dying technology, sort of like layers of an archaeological dig," says San Juan superintendent Gary Bloom. "The school district invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in hardware, but

the ongoing costs were so significant that we opted out of the contract because the cost was so high and the benefits in terms of student achievement were so low."

The problem is not computers. The problem is paying for them. Some cash-strapped schools are dropping music, art, physical education and librarians to pay for computers.

Educators also are concerned that students may become too dependent on technology or spend too much time cruising inappropriate places on the Internet. Some districts have invested in Web filtering and monitoring systems that enable school officials to screen categories that may be inappropriate. Still, nearly one fourth of materials that make it through the screening process are used for entertainment, games and sports.

Electronic communication experts such as Yale University computer scientist David Gelertner caution that the Web should never become a substitute for structured teaching, for encouraging children to love reading books or for insisting on effective writing.

The answer to these dilemmas is not to get rid of computers. Rather it is to use them properly as a supplement to an effective, caring teacher in the classroom who can interact one on one with the students. Computers are a tool to help children learn for themselves. A computer's potential to do well may be modestly greater than a book in some areas. Its potential to do harm is vastly greater.

Robert Hagerty, Ed.D. has been Dean of the School of Education since 1996.