

# Colleagues

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GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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## SCHOOL OF EDUCATION WELCOMES NEW FACULTY

Five new faculty members received appointments for this fall from the Grand Valley State University School of Education.

Jolanda Westerhof-Schultz and Barbara L. Lubic were appointed to undergraduate positions. Westerhof-Schultz was assigned to undergraduate foundations in classroom management. Lubic joined the undergraduate special education faculty.

Lisabeth Margulus, Ed.D., Karen L. Barnes, Ph.D., and Andrew G. Topper, Ph.D., were appointed to the graduate faculty. Margulus will be teaching educational leadership. Barnes joins the graduate special education faculty. Topper specializes in educational technology.

## GRADUATE ASSISTANT HIRED AS THE DOCTORAL LIAISON

Mary Strom has been named graduate assistant and new liaison to the GVSU-Eastern Michigan University Doctoral Program. She is completing her Master's Degree in Language Arts/Reading and teaches part-time at Ferris State University.

Strom replaces former graduate assistant Amy Moore, who has been hired as the coordinator of special projects for the School of Education.

Applications and information pertaining to the next doctoral cohort (see page 3) may be obtained by telephoning Strom at (616) 895.3554, or leaving her a voice mail message at (616) 336.7315.

## CONVOCATION CELEBRATION SCHEDULED FOR DEC. 10



*Professors Wes Wochholz and Ram Chattulani at the School of Education's inaugural convocation.*

The School of Education's inaugural convocation was held April 23, 1999, at VanSingel Performing Arts Center in Byron Center. Special recognition was given to graduating GVSU students Rebecca Seyfried, Tim Woznick and Jill Niemeyer. Barbara Lindrup and Richard Carlson were honored as distinguished alumni.

This fall's convocation is scheduled for Dec. 10, at Sunshine Community Church, 3300 East Beltline NE, Grand Rapids, Mich.

**ON THE COVER:** Principal Pam Wells, center, is surrounded by C.A. Frost Elementary School students who actively practice character enhancement in their everyday activities. The medium is the message for faculty, staff and students at North Park Elementary School, left.

## ROBERT HAGERTY DEAN'S CORNER



## TIMING IS RIGHT FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

In July of this year, I attended two national conferences, one sponsored by the State University of New York at Cortland and the other sponsored by the Character Education Partnership, which is a consortium of hundreds of school districts in Missouri. Each of these conferences was attended by nearly one thousand public school teachers and administrators who came together to learn how to integrate Character Education into their school's instructional program.

What is Character Education? It is the long-term process of helping young people know about, care about and act upon objective, core ethical values such as honesty, service, patience, self-control, integrity, justice, loyalty, responsibility, hard work, and respect for self and others.

This fall, the School of Education will host four prominent national leaders in Character Education for its second Fall Education Lecture Series beginning Oct. 11. The series, scheduled for four consecutive Monday evenings, will be held at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum in downtown Grand Rapids.

Why the Character Education theme? A consortium of 20 local and intermediate school district leaders came together in the fall of 1998 and asked that the theme for the 1999 lecture series be Character Education. The yearly Gallop Education poll perhaps really tells the story. Forty years ago educators' biggest concern regarding student misbehavior was gum chewing. In 1998, bullying of students and violence toward students and teachers are at the top of the list! As an example, a well respected and experienced Campbell County, Kentucky, high school teacher was awarded \$33,700 by the circuit court to be paid by an ex-student who had intimidated and threatened the teacher over a period of time.

University researchers Kevin Ryan, Henry Huffman and Jim Leming report that our nation is confronted with a lamentable truth: the moral foundations of the society in which we live have become weak and unstable. These researchers believe that the causes of moral crisis include family breakdown, racial injustice, alienation, cynicism, media glorification of sex and violence, disrespect for self and others and greed. Far too often, they say, concern for individual rights is not balanced by a strong commitment to personal and civic responsibility for families, communities and nation.

Although America's moral crisis affects all of society, it is having a particularly devastating impact on young people. In recent years, youth crime, violence, pregnancy and substance abuse have reached record levels, with much of the fallout creeping into classrooms of even the finest suburban schools. The massacre at Columbine High School demonstrated the ter-

ror that can result when young people are without moral compasses.

A consensus among university and public school leaders has established a list for the basic premises of Character Education. It includes:

\*In a free and democratic society, every citizen has personal and civic responsibilities, as well as inalienable rights.

\*Only a virtuous people are capable of sustaining a free and democratic form of government.

\*Good character is not formed automatically; it is developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, example, learning and practice.

\*Creating civil and social communities is indispensable to developing good character in students and to effective academic teaching and learning.

\*Effective Character Education helps make schools more civil and caring communities; reduces negative student behavior such as violence, substance abuse as well as disrespect for teachers, parents and peers; improves academic performance; and prepares young people to be responsible citizens and productive members of the work force and of society.

Should schools be value neutral? The leading Character Education researchers affirm that there is no such thing as value-neutral schools. Schools teach values every day by design or by default. When there is no unity regarding teaching positive values, schools teach values which may be unimportant or those which contribute to a vacuum that is quickly filled by negative values such as selfishness, aggressiveness, sex, dishonesty and violence. Schools cannot achieve their educational mission in such a vacuum. To succeed, schools must teach such values as academic integrity, civility, perseverance, responsibility, etc.

Character Education is an idea whose time has come. It has broad and growing support. The latest Gallup Education poll reports well over 90 percent of the public want their children taught core ethical values in the schools. Furthermore, The Character Education Partnership reports that the concept is supported across a wider and wider spectrum of political and intellectual viewpoints, by people of liberal and conservative spiritual beliefs, and by individuals unaffiliated with any religious group. It is my hope that you will take advantage of listening to the four lecturers to learn about and examine the possibility of integrating Character Education into the curriculum and instructional program of your school.

*(Robert Hagerty, Ed.D., is Dean of the School of Education at Grand Valley State University. Questions, comments, suggestions? Hagerty may be accessed via e-mail: hagerty@gvsu.edu)*