

CELEBRATIONS OF SUCCESS

Convocation ceremonies honoring Teacher Education graduates in elementary, secondary and special education were hosted by the School of Education on April 28, 2000, at Sunshine Community Church in Grand Rapids.

Pamela J. Wells, principal at C.A. Frost Elementary School in Grand Rapids, was named Administrator of the Year, while James L. Aldridge, 30-year teaching veteran at Spring Lake Middle School, was named Teacher of the Year. Retiring School of Education faculty members F. Weston Wochholz and Philip M. O'Connell also were honored.

Convocation for the Fall 2000 semester is scheduled for Dec. 8 at Sunshine Community Church, 3300 East Beltline NE.

S.O.E. WELCOMES ITS NEW FACULTY & STAFF MEMBERS



Paula Lancaster, Jacquelyn Melin and Emily Lin, left to right, are three new members to the School of Education's faculty lineup.

Several new faculty and staff members are being welcomed to the School of Education this fall.

Joining the Teacher Education faculty at Mackinac Hall are visiting faculty Susan F. Carson, Ph.D., and Robert R. Fortin. Nancy Dausman has been appointed Student Services Coordinator, while Bonnie Bowen, Patti Eddy and Amy Blackburn have joined the office staff.

New to the Advanced Studies in Education Department at the Eberhard Center are Assistant Professors of Education Kelli D. Peck-Parrott, Ph.D., Paula E. Lancaster, Ph.D., Sean J.C. Lancaster, Ph.D., Emily Shu-Ung Lin, Ph.D., and visiting faculty Jacquelyn Melin and Harold D. Herman. Claudia Sowa has been named Professional Development Coordinator, while Veda Hodges, Kim Busman and Laurie Heyboer are now office staff members.

On The Cover: Education professors Barbara Reinken, left, and Caryn King cuddle a koala during their trip "Down Under." Recent teacher education graduates enjoy a moment during spring 2000 convocation ceremonies hosted by the School of Education. Distinguished visiting scholar Dr. Harold Herman and his family, lower left, extend warmest greetings to — and from — South Africa. Betsy DeVos and former Michigan Governor James Blanchard, lower right, disagree on Proposal 1.

ROBERT HAGERTY DEAN'S CORNER



REDUCING SOCIAL INEQUITY: CAN SCHOOLS DO IT?

Students in many U.S. schools have achieved great success through research-based programs. The equity gap, it appears, does not have to exist.

Once thought of as the most equalizing institution in our society, public schools play as much of a role in magnifying differences between our children from middle class and impoverished and/or ethnic backgrounds as they do in overcoming these differences.

The differences in academic performance among children from different social class and ethnic backgrounds are unacceptably large, and they are not diminishing rapidly enough. These differences underlie many of the polarizing issues in the United States, from affirmative action to immigration policies, to school vouchers for the poorest children.

There will always be achievement differences among groups of students. Children of high school dropouts and those of college graduates can't be expected to perform at the same levels. Yet the gaps that do exist are far greater than they should be. Differences among ethnic groups are unacceptably high and they can be greatly reduced. Schools can have a powerful impact on the educational success of all children and can greatly increase the achievement of disadvantaged and minority children.

As educators, we cannot wait for society to solve the problems of economic inequity.

School climate makes a big difference in shaping the conditions for optimized student learning. Even in high-poverty areas, powerful school leaders can shape school structure. These deeply committed leaders come in early, are always willing to meet with students and are constantly upgrading their skills.

These successful leaders also:

- Communicate core values of character in what is said and done;
- Honor and recognize those who serve the students and purposes of the school;
- Observe rituals and traditions to support the school's heart and soul;
- Recognize heroes and heroines and the work these exemplars accomplish;
- Celebrate accomplishments of staff, students and community;
- Concentrate the focus on students by recounting stories of success and achievement.

Reducing the Equity Gap

No single policy or program can ensure success in school for every child, but a combination of approaches can. Student success can be optimized within the framework of a positive school culture.

More and more, research is identifying approaches that could be used to end poor academic performance of so many of our children.

Schools can begin to accomplish this by hav-

ing a vision for all children as being at PROMISE. The current mindset of educators and policymakers is to see children as being at-risk. By moving away from the thinking of children being at-risk to being at-PROMISE, we can insist on high-quality instruction, and respond immediately and intensively if children begin to fall behind — rather than thinking in terms of remediation or compensation.

We can also over-determine success and work on many fronts at once. Being over-prepared helps to ensure the success of every child.

There are several cutting edge approaches that are revealing drastic improvement in many areas. Two of those programs are Success For All — developed by Robert Slavin at Johns Hopkins University — and Reading Recovery.

In virtually every Success For All study, the children who gain the most are those who in the past have been thought of as most at-risk, including low-achievers, special education students and speakers of languages other than English. Success For All emphasizes follow-up and assessment to be sure that all students are on track. If a student begins to fall behind in reading, teachers or para-professionals give them one-on-one tutoring until the child is able to progress on the same level as the rest of the class.

Reading Recovery achieves similar success by providing intensive one-on-one tutoring to first-graders who are falling behind in reading.

Both of these programs are expensive to implement, of course, but a large number of schools have shifted resources to fund them. Success For All is in over 1,000 schools, and Reading Recovery is in more than 6,800 schools.

More and more, schools and districts are funding these types of programs primarily through Title I, but high-poverty, underfunded schools face very difficult choices in the use of these funds. High-poverty schools should be given additional resources specifically targeted at these highly successful and proven programs for improving student achievement and reducing educational inequity.

By paying fervent attention to the symbolic side, good leaders can build a shared sense of purpose by creating norms of collegiality, improvement and hard work by nurturing success, joy and humor. They can preserve and create positive traditions which celebrate student accomplishment, teacher innovation and parental commitment.

If this happens, schools which are now marginally performing or underperforming can become schools where all children experience success.

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