

CHARACTER ED CONFERENCE CONTINUES TO ENLIGHTEN

The third Annual Character Education Conference was held at the Eberhard Center in November, 2002.

Dr. Jim Kern was the keynote speaker of the event, which featured 16 breakout sessions and was attended by approximately 200 area educators.

The conference was sponsored by the School of Education in conjunction with the Kent and Muskegon intermediate school districts and Character Unlimited.

PROPOSALS ARE SOUGHT FOR ADOPT-A-DISTRICT

Proposals for the School of Education's Adopt-A-District program are being sent out in June.

The program, which officially begins in the Fall 2003, will partner the School of Education and its resources together with a district that demonstrates a need and aspires to continually work at raising standards and methods of learning.

Currently, the School of Education is piloting the program with the Godfrey Lee School District. The School of Education is assisting the district with field days in June and in a collection of empty computer ink cartridges that can be turned in for additional dollars for the district. Carol McIntyre (616.331.6203) is spearheading the cartridge collections efforts.

Districts interested in applying for the Adopt-A-District program should contact the School of Education Community Outreach Office at 331.6230. The adopted school will be chosen and selected in July. The "adoption" will run from Aug. 2003 to June 2004.

GVSU HOSTS PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TEACHERS

The Fire-Up Conference for student teachers was hosted by GVSU this spring.

The program was held March 3, 2003, and included students from Aquinas, Calvin, Cornerstone University, Hope College, Ferris State University, Western Michigan University, Michigan State University and GVSU.

Attending students visited the Field House and Mackinac Hall where more than 80 speakers and 70 breakout sessions were featured, including a keynote address by Bert Bleke, superintendent of Grand Rapids Public Schools. Approximately 900 students attended this event.

GVSU president Mark Murray was the featured speaker at the Cooperative Teacher Breakfast held on March 6, 2003, at the Kirkhof Center.

The breakfast serves as both a "thank you" and professional development opportunity for all GVSU supervising teachers. More than 900 cooperating teachers attended.

Schools Facing Shortage Of Leaders

A recent *Associated Press* story indicated that fewer teachers in Michigan are moving into administrative roles at a time when many of those currently holding those positions are nearing retirement age.

Long hours, marginal pay increases and added stress have discouraged teachers from becoming building principals, according to a report by Dr. Philip Cusick, chairman of Education Administration at Michigan State University.

"Over the past 10 years, it has become very evident that the jobs of school leaders and ability to provide instructional leadership have become very difficult," says Dr. John Shinsky, GVSU School of Education's director of Leadership and Human Services. "There are facility issues, safety issues, accountability issues they need to respond to, paperwork for state and federal legislation issues they have to abide by, not to mention the human relation issues in dealing with parents, families and the general public."

The report stated that candidates for principal jobs have declined by up to 50 percent over the past 15 years.

"I think it is of major concern," Shinsky said. "Educational leaders are critical to the success of our schools."

"Teachers need leadership, parents and students need leadership. Leadership makes things run efficiently, and we have to have good leaders replace the old ones."

"Principals need to be very knowledgeable about the law, very skilled in personal administration matters and have to be extremely talented in dealing with difficult situations. They need excellent communication skills and have to pull



John Shinsky

people together to make things happen.

"It is a very complex job."

School administrators are also faced with increased pressures from standardized testing expectations, discipline issues, long hours and dealing with budget reductions from the state.

"There is no question that there are significant challenges in today's schools," Shinsky said. "We need good competent, energetic and enthusiastic people in our schools to meet our challenges. Sure, it's going to be difficult, but anything worth achieving is going to be difficult to get to."

Ed Leadership Program Underway In Lansing

Faced with a looming shortage of school administrators, Grand Valley State University's School of Education has begun an Educational Leadership master's program that is held Lansing.

"There has been a significant interest from individuals in this area to have an Educational Leadership masters program in Lansing designed to be convenient and responsive to the students," according to Dr. John Shinsky, director of Leadership and Human Services for GVSU's School of Education. "For the working individual, it is difficult to take classes during the week, so we are offering it during the weekend to make it more accessible for them."

"Grand Valley has done an excellent job and has an excellent reputation for extending out from the Eberhard and Allendale campuses."

Classes, which began in 2003, are held on weekends at Lansing Community College. The initial cohort consists of 20 students.

"We expect it to grow, but we want to keep it at a reasonable number," Shinsky said. "With a cohort like this, we can foster mentorships and go out and recruit potential administrators into the program because it is convenient and local."

The customized program is geared toward teachers who want to transition into administra-

tive roles in their respective school districts. Classes are taught by practical and respected leaders in the mid-Michigan educational community.

The cohort provides participants with a master's degree in two years.

"Students can see the application and they can be available to transition into opportunities in their local communities," Shinsky said. "It also serves as a professional development tool where they can see it, apply it and use it on a routine basis."

Studies have shown in the Lansing area alone that nearly 50 percent of administrators will be leaving their school districts over the next five years. Many other districts throughout Michigan are faced with similar shortages of qualified leaders.

"It is sometimes very difficult to get teachers ready to transition into a position," Shinsky said. "But good leaders have generally been good teachers."

Additional information on GVSU's Educational Leadership programs — at both the master's and doctoral levels — may be obtained by contacting the School of Education's Student Information & Services Center at 616.331.6650.