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University of Dayton

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Professional development through graduate studies is one component of the Lalanne program. Teachers serving for two years in under resourced Catholic schools are able to take summer graduate courses at the University of Dayton (UD). Lalanne teachers work towards completing a Master's degree in the School of Education and Allied Professions.

Teachers live on the UD campus while taking classes during the summer. Nikki Moorman, who recently completed her first year of teaching, says, "The classes are relevant to our real experiences in the schools."

These summers, however, are not devoid of all fun activities. Teachers continue to live in community with each other, sharing meals, laughter, and activities for six weeks.

"Graduate level education has presented UD students with unique and effective teaching methods that we can bring straight to the classroom."

--Mark Yeazell

One additional component of the summer Lalanne experience is orientation weekends. The first retreat took place on June 21 and 22 at Mt. Saint John in Dayton. Members commented on how it gave them a chance to meet and bond with other Lalanne teachers. Tara Schultz says, "I loved going to the Marianist retreat center at Bergamo. It was so refreshing and conducive to bonding!"

Two additional retreats for returning members happened the weekends of June 26 and July 18. The summer ended with a final retreat from August 2-4.

--Reported by Susan Fairhead

For more information on Lalanne, visit the website at www.udayton.edu/~lalanne
Or contact Bro. Edward Brink, S.M.
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The vision of the school-based Urban Child Development Resource Center (UCDRC) is to empower students and their families to achieve emotional, physical, and spiritual health within their own cultural framework. Reaching 100% of the student population in the three urban Catholic schools served is central to this vision.

Last September, the UCDRC initiated Second Step: A Violence Prevention program that contains a well-developed curriculum for all students in kindergarten – 8th grade. This nationally rated “exemplary” prevention program developed for diverse school populations enables the UCDRC’s emphasis on prevention as well as treatment to be realized.

At the beginning of the school year, a pre-test was administered to each student. Throughout the year, skills in empathy, impulse control, problem solving, and anger management were taught on a weekly basis. At the end of the school year, a post-test was administered. The purpose of both the pre- and post-tests was not for grading, but rather for impact evaluation.

The results of the tests revealed a significant increase in knowledge of the core concepts of the program. Even more significant and directly correlated with the goals of the UCDRC was the decrease in suspensions, expulsions and problematic behaviors in the schools. Based on the success of Second Step, a new curriculum on the prevention of sexual abuse will be introduced during the 2003-04 school year. The clinical counselors are excited about the program and look forward to another school year.

Teachers graduating from colleges and universities have engaged in meaningful conversations about the foundations of education in their philosophy classes, developed deeper understandings in their content classes and practiced strategies in the pre-service experiences. At every step of their learning, student educators are given ample opportunities to dialogue with experts in their chosen profession.

The day of their first teaching experience finds these new graduates “walking the talk” and walking and walking and walking. The very demanding tasks of on the job training while meeting an ever-growing number of mandates from all of the publics involved in schooling all but eliminate any opportunities for dialogue with colleagues. Except for the relatively brief experiences in workshops and graduate schools, teachers seldom have the opportunity to work collaboratively with the experts. “Talking the walk” becomes a long ago, far away experience.

Working in partnership with Sr. Angela Lydon, Director of the Center for Catholic Education, the teaching staff of Dayton Catholic Elementary in Dayton, Ohio, has decided to devote their after school hours and summer break to making time to “talk the walk.” Meeting weekly after school in either grade level teams or as a whole group, the teachers, with Sister Angela facilitating, have crafted definitions for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The staff came to consensus on their understandings of these important foundations for learning so that further conversations were based on common understandings. They also developed strategies that linked the school’s curriculum with current trends and state guidelines.

The staff met once this summer to fine tune last year’s work and began the 2003-04 school year with a day long session to bring curriculum to life. The ultimate goal for the staff is to create a common knowledge base that will create a whole school learning environment that benefits the students first and foremost and encourages learning for all of the adults involved with children.

Despite the challenges of teaching in the urban setting, the teachers of Dayton Catholic, through the partnership with Sister Angela and the Center, are creating a path where they will continue to both “walk the talk” and “talk the walk.” Comfortable shoes are highly recommended!

--Reported by Karyn Hecker
Earth Centered* School: An Integrative Curriculum

On the Southside of Chicago, curriculum development is an on-going process of reflection, discernment of student and community needs, and collaboration. Sr. Angela T. Lydon, SBS, PhD, the Director of the Center for Catholic Education at the University of Dayton, working with the faculty of St. Elizabeth school, developed the Earth Centered curriculum currently being used.

An Earth Centered curriculum is contextualized in a particular Place. In the case of St. Elizabeth, the Place is Chicago, an ecosystem with many problems, but with immeasurable possibilities. This Place is part of an evolutionary history and an evolving culture, both of which deserve recognition and respect. Beginning with the local habitat of the students, an Earth Centered education connects the students' lived experience with the grade level content being taught and then spirals outward to the global and Universe community.

An Earth Centered design utilizes a philosophy and psychology that fosters human growth and development, a theoretical framework that envisions learning and teaching for an Ecozoic Age (Thomas Berry), and an integrative model of practice. Human growth and development, care for all existence, and the relatedness of all knowledge are the core components of an Earth Centered educational system. It seeks to understand the relationships that pattern and govern all existence.

St. Elizabeth's educative design triangulates the curriculum by utilizing the philosophy of Workshop Way®, an Earth Centered theory, and an integrative practice.

Workshop Way, a system of human growth for all children, was developed by Grace Pilon, SBS, and is based on the belief that all children love to learn when the environment fosters human dignity and respect.

The Earth Centered theory is grounded in the self-educative processes of the Universe itself. The theory develops a functional cosmology ** that understands the primacy of the Universe in all existence, acknowledges the sacredness of all existence, and recognizes the three principles of Universe functioning: subjectivity (individuality), differentiation (variation), and interdependence (communion) of all existence.

The integrative components of instructional practices make the philosophy and theory authentic and are structured around Universe themes. The themes connect grade level content to the philosophy, theory, and an experiential base which is necessary for creating active learners who construct meaning. The themes link concepts, content, and concrete experiences to the physical and spiritual realities of all life.

The five themes used at all grade levels are:
- Creation or Origins of the Universe
- Systems within the Universe
- Earth our home & environment
- Destruction violent choices that hurt or kill (genocide and biocide)
- Harmony in the Universe

The goal of an Earth Centered School is to pass on to the human community knowledge and skills that will become foundational for sustainable living in an Ecozoic Age.

As part of the curriculum, the students are involved in planting and growing projects. Teachers, students, and community helpers plant, grow, weed, and trim around the school. In spring, joy abounds as daffodils and trees burst into bloom -- urban gardening at its best; urban gardening as a community activity!

*Trademark applied for
** See the work of Thomas Berry, The dream of the earth (1988) and The great work (1999).

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