Renewing experience

2012 NNER conference viewed a success

In October, over 300 National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) members from around the country met at the historic Brown Palace Hotel in Denver, Colorado, for three days of educational renewal. This year’s theme, Simultaneous Renewal: Everyone Teaches, Everyone Learns, generated a wide range of presentations encompassing all grade levels, from pre-kindergarten through college. By the measurement of conference attendees (over 50% provided evaluation feedback), the conference was deemed an enormous success.

The Wyoming School-University Partnership would like to thank everyone who helped make this conference a success! We hope to see you all at future Partnership events.

Accountability lessons from an NNER setting

Brooklyn school implements peer review process

As Wyoming legislators continue to work out details about the state’s educational accountability legislation, one goal is clear: the status quo is not acceptable. The U.S. system of public education demands that educators be responsive to parents, communities, and business/industry, not to mention international comparisons. But what does it take to impact the culture of a school? One answer to that question comes from a high school of 629 students and 27 teachers in Brooklyn where a teacher peer review process has changed the school culture.

Leaders from Brooklyn College Academy presented a session at the 2012 National Network for Educational Renewal annual conference that caught the attention of Wyoming educators. These educators are actively involved in the state’s educational accountability work, including an advisory committee. The NNER session was discussed at the Partnership’s November 8 regular governing board meeting and viewed as a promising practice worth investigating further.

At the NNER meetings, Brooklyn College Academy teacher, continued on page 8
Established 1986

The four of us, I as a teacher educator, and Adam, Ron, and Chad, as prospective teachers, met in a course called *Diversity and the Politics of Schooling* in 2010. Adam, Ron, and Chad asked important questions and went beyond the requirements of the course to learn more about the controversial issues related to diversity.

We decided to continue our conversation beyond the course. From January to December of 2011, we had regular meetings once or twice a month. There are many different forms of diversity, but in our project, we decided to begin our journey with racial difference. We were interested in investing ways to go beyond knowledge and awareness about race and racism and begin searching for ways to actually make changes in how we think by using ongoing self-reflexivity. This goal was brought about in part as a result of the painful realization that having knowledge and awareness of racism, inequality, and inequity in education systems does not necessarily guarantee shifts in our actual thinking and everyday practices. Gloria Ladson-Billing, a scholar, researcher, and practitioner who coined the term culturally relevant pedagogy, argues that transformative pedagogies require transforming how we think. We absolutely agree with her assertion.

Since the NNER emphasizes democracy, we believed that the NNER conference was a natural place to talk about our experience. While the main idea behind presenting at this conference was simply to share our stories, we were also hoping to get feedback on whether there was a wider interest in this topic. Even though we no longer meet regularly, this approach to changing our thinking and being held accountable to each other is something we plan to continue in years to come.

*Editor's note: The students who presented with Jenna Shim at the NNER were Ron Morgan, Adam Schaefer, and Chad Gibbs. Read their thoughts about the project on the next page.*
Working together: by Ron Morgan

To effectively solve a problem or change a behavior we must explore its roots. At the beginning of this project, I agreed we all have prejudices that effect our interactions with others. By participating in this research, I hoped to lessen my own prejudicial thinking through trying to understand why my prejudices exist.

The process was difficult. To change, I needed to catch myself mid-thought. Initially, I would reflect on my day and find that I had entertained a prejudice or cast judgment upon someone. To take this process to the next level I had to begin to change those preconceived notions as they were manifesting.

Since prejudices dehumanize someone, my strategy was to think about the person as a being who is living his or her life just like I am. I would remind myself to empathize with that person, making that person relatable, rather than devaluing and dismissing them.

A crucial component of acceptance is the conscious decision to work against a prejudice. We must ensure that we give each other a voice free from prejudicial judgment. Although I have been progressing, I do not regularly catch myself mid-thought; more often than not, I recognize my prejudicial thoughts after the fact. It would be very nice to live without prejudice or preconceived notions. That way the attributes I believe in - acceptance, compassion, and empathy - could become more pronounced. This is a goal that may require lifelong effort and struggle.

Working together: by Chad Gibbs

Living in Wyoming, most racial or ethnic groups are as foreign to me as the dark side of the moon. My first major interactions with other racial and ethnic groups came from my military experience. In the military, where one slogan is “we’re all green,” I thought I moved past my own negative thoughts and opinions about different groups. After taking Jenna Shim’s class and becoming part of this project, I could see that there were still areas where I needed to grow.

In gaining knowledge and trying to overcome my own negative thoughts and viewpoints about other racial or ethnic groups, I’ve also become aware of the need to talk to others about these issues. In certain situations, it is easy to point out the bias and mistakes of others (calmly or not depending on the moment) and in other situations it feels nearly impossible. Honestly, the courage isn’t always there, especially when struggling with my own challenges of trying to improve personally.

Whether Professor Shim’s group goes on forever or not, I intend to find or create a group in my life that will support me in my will to change. I don’t always see my own mistakes or the true origin of my thoughts and actions. It is necessary to have people around me who are not afraid of having those hard conversations. They can help me improve, point out what I’m doing well, and what I’m not. I hope with the support of friends and continued regular analysis, I will continue to improve.

Working together: by Adam Schaefer

This project started off as a tool for new teachers in a diverse teaching environment. My goal with this project has changed to become a tool to help humanity.

What is it like to realize your thoughts have been racist or derogatory? How do you try to change the way that you think? These two questions fueled my participation in this group. Before, I would talk with friends and family, making comments or jokes based on others’ ethnic or religious backgrounds, and I would not think twice about such thoughts or words. This was just part of feeling included. As the research group met, I started looking closer at my thoughts and actions. How did I become comfortable with them? Who or where did I learn this from? It took me several months of constant reflection to be able to catch myself thinking adversely about other people.

Even though most of the time I did not openly act on my thoughts, I realized this was still not right. Thinking but not acting on it used to be ok for me. It’s not now. Even thinking about people in negative terms influences interactions with people in diverse situations.

Just because I am aware of my thoughts does not mean that I have found the solution, and some thoughts still slip past. Trying to break this habit of thinking derogatively about others is a process that has forward gains and steps back and will last the rest of my lifetime.
Teacher education students apply the concepts of *Deep Survival* to teaching

by Terry Burant, Ph.D., Department of Educational Studies, University of Wyoming

I was thrilled to present with nine of my former teacher education students at the recent NNER conference in Denver, CO. In the spring of 2012, my class read Laurence Gonzales’ *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why*, searching for connections between the book and my students’ lives as future teachers.

I first read *Deep Survival* after a friend’s then-boyfriend recommended it to us when we were out for dinner on New Year’s Eve at least six years ago. The man is long gone; the book, however, remains as an important text in my life, one I return to almost daily for guidance. Lorri Nielsen, a researcher of adolescent literacy, calls texts like these “touchstone texts.” I chose this book because I hoped the lessons about survival would become part of my students’ social worlds during the challenging transition from students to beginning teachers.

Besides the obvious connection that teaching, at times, feels like an exercise in survival (and, in fact, researchers have long referred to the first few years of teaching as a survival stage), I was interested in having my students explore the ideas that Gonzales presents about the neuroscience of learning, philosophies of living, and the challenges of surviving difficult and unpredictable situations. To prepare for the NNER conference, my students worked in pairs to examine one of the eleven things Gonzales found survivors do. These include practices like preparing, staying calm, analyzing, being here now, using humor, celebrating successes, and seeing beauty. Then, students made connections between these recommended actions and their lives as teachers to be.

By explicitly focusing part of my course on survival, I hope that my students—most about to student teach in spring of 2013—will be more apt to not only survive, but thrive in their teaching careers.

Editor’s note: The students who presented with Terry Burant at the NNER were Emily Damby, David Galindo, Matt Gross, Caitlin Marosok, Kandase Quinn, Sara Scribner, Jaymie Sheehan, Lindsay Strine, and Beau Youtz. Read about Matt Gross’s thoughts concerning the impact of the book on the next page.

continued on page 5
**Survival Skills: by Matt Gross**

I am pursuing a degree in secondary education social studies with a concurrent history major, geography minor, and English as a Second Language (ESL) Endorsement from the University of Wyoming. I will be student teaching in Gillette at Twin Spruce Junior High School during the spring of 2013 in a 9th Grade World Cultures class.

Reading and talking about the Laurence Gonzales’ *Deep Survival* with my peers influenced all aspects of my life and, most importantly, my perspective as a pre-service teacher. My personal philosophy, inner motivation, self-reflection, and my overall character transformed from the stories in the text.

As I begin student teaching in January, my survival skills must be elevated. The new experiences, challenges, and successes will require me to continually prepare, analyze, adapt, and reflect while in the classroom not only physically, but mentally each and every day. The essential survival skills Gonzales describes—preparing, adapting, celebrating small successes, and being here now—will support me through my student teaching experience.

Gonzales states, “Nature doesn’t adjust to our level of skill.” This quote reminds me that even though I will be a student teacher, the demands I will face in the classroom won’t be adjusted for my level of skill and experience. I need to realize that being perfect in the classroom is unattainable, but improving each and every day will be my number one goal. I will also need to remember, as Gonzales suggests, to “find wealth and happiness in the smallest things” even if the days are hard.
We found the NNER Conference in Denver was the perfect place for us to present our work regarding teacher knowledge development. Our presentation, Pre-service teacher knowledge development in an early field experience, offered findings related to a single case study of a pre-service teacher throughout three semesters of early field experience. The purpose of the study was to investigate what sources of knowledge developed and when these emerged throughout one student’s teacher training program.

As physical education teacher educators, we are located in the Division of Kinesiology and Health within the University of Wyoming College of Health Sciences. As such, nearly all of our colleagues investigate topics related to health and physical activity. Given that physical education is fundamentally about movement and the promotion of physically active lifestyles, we find connections with our colleagues in this intersection. Despite this, we are the only faculty who are preparing future educators and deal almost exclusively with pedagogical concepts. Because of this, we find significant value in connecting with fellow educators within other content areas. It is for this reason that we found the NNER meeting so meaningful and a perfect context to discuss this work.

While at the conference, we had the opportunity to hear presentations specifically aimed at the issues that are most pressing to us in the larger context of education and preparing teachers. Further, the conference provided us the chance to establish and further relationships with other teacher educators that face similar challenges regarding teacher preparation regardless of content area.
We teach elementary and secondary music methods in the fall, and then follow up with supervising the same students during their spring semester of student teaching. We emphasize being a reflective practitioner to our students, and we saw the NNER conference as an opportunity to model that approach. Thus, we gave a presentation entitled What We Learned from Student Teachers in Music.

We began with the stories that we hear from students. They communicate with us in a variety of ways—video, in person, email, and journaling. We specifically asked them what they wanted us to know about their methods class and student teaching experience.

We were able to draw several conclusions focusing on what the students had to tell us. For the mentor teachers, this included the need for better training about the arc of the student teaching experience and giving timely and actionable feedback. For the student teachers, it included helping them understand the political and social realities of education, as well as preparing them for the hard work, complexity, and ambiguity of education.

Attending the NNER conference also gave us a chance to hear other presentations and interact with educators from around the country. We shared a stimulating lunch with educators from New Jersey, Colorado, and Wyoming. We were all involved in different parts of the educational enterprise, and it was interesting to hear some new perspectives.

Art + Math = Collaborative Learning Fun

At the NNER conference, Linda Hutchison and Lydia Dambekalns presented Integrating Transformational Geometry with Silk Painting to Motivate and Learn. Using transformational geometry and printing methods, students created silk scarves during a collaborative class project. Pictured above, Linda and Lydia showcase a few of the student examples they shared with their audience at the conference.

My one thing I picked up (although there were several): I have posted on my bulletin board the Survivor List I picked up at the UW presentation on “Beginning to Teach.” It should help me get myself through the semester, and I intend to take this list out with me to re-share when I visit student teachers in the spring.
Brooklyn peer review process

Laurie Friedman-Adler, and building administrators, Nicholas Mazzarella and David Genovese, reported on their current peer review process. The process is collaborative, deepens the teaching-learning culture of the school, improves and builds professional trust, and has given teachers a mechanism to understand and implement the Common Core State Standards. All three faculty emphasized that the process is not linked to the formal evaluations the principal conducts as part of contractual obligations. With a focus on changing school culture, according to Genovese, the process “has helped teachers be more accepting of new ideas.”

The peer review is used as a tool for providing insight into teaching methodology and how each instructor implements their “best practices.” The teacher being reviewed, along with a three-member team conducting the review, focuses on five specific categories: content and content organization; instructor/student interactions; verbal/nonverbal; content knowledge and delivery; and presentation. The process also includes an examination of differentiated instruction, classroom innovations, evidence of democracy in the classroom, Common Core Standards, and key cognitive strategies. Grant Wiggins’ book, *Understanding by Design*, provided a set of principles to think through and talk about the assessment of learning for the entire school.

For the Brooklyn school, the peer review process involves three classroom visits and culminates with a “fishbowl.” During a fishbowl, the teacher and the peer review team discuss observational and other data while school colleagues look, listen, and learn. One of the chief purposes of the fishbowl is to share best practices.

As they described the peer review process, Friedman-Adler, Mazzarella, and Genovese were adamant about key principles that make their approach successful. First, peer review must be introduced slowly and carefully to earn faculty buy-in. The Brooklyn group started the conversation about peer review during an annual summer retreat away from school and built on that introduction throughout the school year. The slow implementation involved seasoned teachers willing to model the process publicly in the fishbowl described above.

Second, the Brooklyn process is not tied to a teacher’s evaluation and does not involve administration. Principal Mazzarella and Supervisor of Instruction Genovese asked Friedman-Adler, who teaches music, to be the “chief worrier” for the process. In effect, the process is teacher-driven. Friedman-Adler emphasized that the process began with teacher self-reflection to open up a culture of sharing.

Third, the New York educators were quick to credit external agencies. The Middle College National Consortium (MCNC) is a group that prizes collaboration while helping schools implement dual enrollment programs. As a member of the MCNC, Brooklyn College Academy received funds a professional development grant.

The peer review process has been successfully implemented for three years. Friedman-Adler, Genovese, and Mazzarella all emphasized the benefits of higher teacher retention rates and increased faculty morale and trust, making the peer review process one that the school is looking forward to continuing in years to come.

Editor’s Note: Brooklyn College Academy has two locations. 350 Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11218 Phone:718-853-6184 2900 Bedford Avenue, 1311 James Hall, Brooklyn, NY 11210 Phone:718-951-5941

Dual/Concurrent Enrollment in Wyoming

The Wyoming Community College Commission recently updated several of their documents concerning dual/concurrent enrollment.

To view these documents, including a manual of procedures, a student handbook, and a counselor and advising handbook, visit

https://communitycolleges.wy.edu/dual/documents.aspx
Established 1986

The NLODS regional coordinators recently decided that the NLODS would continue as part of the Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI). Jim Gaither, social studies teacher for grades 6-8 at the Woods Learning Center in Casper, is Wyoming’s NLODS regional coordinator.

A meeting for NLODS school principals will take place in the spring or summer of 2013 in Seattle. The IEI will reimburse travel, lodging, and meal expenses for each NLODS member school principal who, prior to the meeting, reports in writing connections the school has made with the community or extensive plans the school is currently making.

For more information, please contact Dorothy Lloyd, dorothy_lloyd@csumb.edu

Victoria Gillis
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Literacy Education
University of Wyoming

I encountered several ideas at the conference, but one that really stood out was focused on questions to use with students’ reading. This group elucidated four questions to consider while reading:

1. Who wrote the story/account of the event?
2. Who didn’t write the story/account of the event?
3. What was included in the story/account of the event?
4. What was not included in the story/account of the event?

I have generally had my students do reactions to reading in seminars, but have not structured them in this way — I am teaching a course in spring in which I plan to use these questions as a guide to their reactions to readings.

Save the date!

World Languages Day
with Drama and Poetry declamation contest
University of Wyoming
Saturday, February 1-2, 2013
8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Register by January 11
$5 registration fee includes participation, meals, and lodging at the Laramie Junior High School

Friday evening schedule
- Campus tour
- Dinner at Washakie
- Foreign language movie for students
- Get-together for instructors
- Sleepover at Laramie Junior High School

Saturday schedule
- Breakfast
- Declamation contest / Booths and activities
- Lunch
- Prizes for declamation contest

For more information, contact
Rebecca Steele, rsteele4@uwyo.edu
or
Kevin Larson, KLarsen@uwyo.edu

Sponsored by
- UW Department of Modern and Classical Languages
- Office of the President and the UW Foundation Board
- Global and Area Studies
- Office of Academic Affairs
- Wyoming School - University Partnership
- International Programs
- Department of Secondary Education - Modern Language Teacher Education
- Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs

National League of Democratic Schools
Update

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Spring, 2013
EDCI 5900:
Practicum in College Teaching:
Transition Issues for Dual/Concurrent Enrollment Faculty

This course, taught by Partnership director, Audrey Kleinsasser, will focus on the unique challenge of teaching and learning in dual and concurrent enrollment courses. The main text for the course will be John Bean’s Engaging Ideas.

Some of the goals of the course include:

- Addressing Common Core State Standards across secondary and postsecondary levels
- Examining existing assignments and assessments for instructional improvement
- Enhancing teaching strategies for reading, writing, and analytical thinking

Enrollment is limited to 15.
For more information, please contact Audrey Kleinsasser, dakota@uwyo.edu.

Victoria Gillis
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Literacy Education
University of Wyoming

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7th Annual Life Sciences Lost in Transition Summit

Friday, February 22, 2013

Casper College, Casper, WY
Strausner College Student Center, Room 217
8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

PTSB credit will be available.

**Summit Goals**

1. Consider what student work on assessments of key concepts tells us about teacher expectations, student learning, and student success in the life sciences.

2. Work collaboratively to integrate Common Core State Standards. Specifically, discuss how current summative assessments address the first Common Core State Standard for Writing in Science, grades 9-12: Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. Find the full standards at http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf

3. Gain a greater understanding of how we approach instruction and formative assessments that lead to these summative assessments.

4. Continue fostering conversation and collaboration across secondary and postsecondary levels after this summit.

**Agenda**

8:30-9:00  Registration; coffee, tea, juice, breakfast treats
9:00-9:15  Welcome, table introductions
9:15-9:30  Overview of the day and ground rules
9:30-10:40 Table discussions – sharing participant summative assessments
10:40-10:50 Break
10:50-12:00 Table discussions.
12:00-12:30 Lunch
12:30-2:00 Table discussions.
2:00-2:10 Break
2:10-3:15 Large group sharing and group discussion
3:15-3:30 Evaluation of the day’s work
3:30 Adjourn

**Register by February 15**

Follow the link below to register

**Event Sponsors**

Wyoming School-University Partnership - www.uwyo.edu/wsup
UW Life Sciences Program - www.uwyo.edu/lifescience
Qwest Foundation - www.qwest.com/about/company/community/foundation
Lost in Transition events, Spring 2013

Since 2006, the Wyoming School-University Partnership has hosted Lost in Transition events that bring together faculty and administrators from the K-12 community and postsecondary institutions, including Wyoming’s community colleges and university. These events foster discussions that address strategies and specific topics for closing the academic gap students encounter when transitioning from high school to higher education. This spring, watch for a focus on Common Core State Standards. PTSB credit will be available at all events.

Sign up to receive email updates about the Lost in Transition event in your subject area and for more information, visit the Partnership website at www.uwyo.edu/wsup

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3rd World Languages Lost in Transition Institute
To be announced
for past events, including agendas and other information, visit http://www.uwyo.edu/wsup/lost%20in%20transition/languages.html

3rd Social Sciences Lost in Transition Colloquium
To be announced
for past events, including agendas and other information, visit http://www.uwyo.edu/wsup/lost%20in%20transition/socialsci.html

6th Mathematics Lost in Transition Colloquium and Articulation Meeting
Thursday-Saturday, April 4-6, 2013
Gillette College, Gillette
for past events, including agendas and other information, visit http://www.uwyo.edu/wsup/lost%20in%20transition/mathematics.html

5th Teaching Writing in Wyoming
Lost in Transition Colloquium
Sunday-Monday, April 7-8, 2013
UW Outreach Building, Casper
for past events, including agendas and other information, visit http://www.uwyo.edu/wsup/lost%20in%20transition/english.html

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Save the date!
Colorado Council International Reading Association
CCIRA Conference on Literacy
February 6-9, 2013
Denver, CO

In 2013, super teachers, librarians, administrators, coaches, and literacy heroes will gather together to recharge and refocus their super power of working with children.

For more info, contact nicole.bonato@ccira.org

To see the full list of events and speakers and to register visit http://www.ccira.org/w/w?cmd=goconference
Quick Facts
• Over 80 presenters from Wyoming
• Nearly 100 attendees from Wyoming who received Partnership scholarships
• 13 educators received 1.0 PTSB renewal credit

Affiliation of Wyoming Presenters

Partnership settings represented
Albany #1
Fremont #14
Goshen #1
Laramie #1
Sublette #1*
Natrona #1
Sweetwater #1
Washakie #1
University of Wyoming
  College of Arts and Sciences
  College of Education
  College of Health Sciences

*2011-2012 Partnership member

Calendar of upcoming events

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 30, 2013</td>
<td>Partnership Governing Board Meeting</td>
<td>WEN, times to be announced</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 1-2, 2013</td>
<td>UW World Languages Day</td>
<td>University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 6-9, 2013</td>
<td>CCIRA Annual Literacy Conference</td>
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<td>Partnership Governing Board Meeting</td>
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<td>April 4-6, 2013</td>
<td>Mathematics Lost in Transition Colloquium and Articulation Meeting</td>
<td>Gillette College, Gillette, WY</td>
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<td>April 7-8, 2013</td>
<td>Teaching Writing in Wyoming Lost in Transition Colloquium</td>
<td>UW Outreach Building, Casper, WY</td>
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Update your bookmarks – there’s a redesigned NNER website!
http://www.nnerpartnerships.org/
Username: member
Password: NN3R20!2

Wyoming School-University Partnership
www.uwyo.edu/wsup
412 Wyoming Hall
1000 E. University Ave., Dept. 3374
Laramie, Wyoming  82071
Audrey Kleinsasser, Director
dakota@uwyo.edu, 307.766.6358
Beth Wiley, Office Associate
ewiley2@uwyo.edu, 307.766.3274

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