

Life Sciences Site Swap: Teachers are the Learners

What Wyoming Educators are Doing to Help Students Succeed

*By Brenna Wanous,
Wyoming School-University Partnership*

Starting college can be, for many students, like moving to a new country. Everything they were accustomed to in high school is now drastically different. Classes can be much larger and involve new technology. Homework assignments ask more complex questions requiring higher levels of writing and comprehension. Teachers' expectations of students' initiative and quality of work are greater. Most significantly, students must learn to do it almost entirely on their own. This transition poses significant challenges to students, their college professors, as well as their high school teachers seeking to prepare them well for the future.

The Wyoming School-University Partnership, a consortium of 21 school districts, two UW colleges, the seven Wyoming community colleges, the Wyoming Department of Education and the Wyoming Education Association, is working to rectify this issue. On Feb. 18 and 19, the Partnership piloted its first district-university site swap involving UW's Life Sciences program and Carbon County



Photo courtesy of Wyoming School-University Partnership

Carbon County School District No. 2 Superintendent Bob Gates discusses issues of importance to his district with the faculty and staff at the University of Wyoming.

School District #2 (Encampment, Hanna and Saratoga). Ten junior high and high school teachers and administrators, including district superintendent Bob Gates, came to UW to attend classes and talk with a wide range of faculty and students. Later this spring, UW faculty and students will complete the swap by visiting CCSD#2 schools.

"This first site swap represents a next step to 'dig a little deeper' on understanding the challenges students face when transitioning from high school to college," explains Mark Lyford, director of UW's Life Sciences program. "While we've

been having statewide K-16 discussions about this in the life sciences for five years, experiencing high school and college from the students' perspective is critical and a real eye-opener for faculty and administrators on both sides."

The site swap came out of statewide summits, workshops and colloquia that the Partnership has supported since 2005. CCSD#2 appealed to the Partnership to coordinate a district-level event to determine where student preparedness in high school and student expectations in college do and do not

Continued on page 5

Sunday, M
St. Ann

CORNED BE
WORLD-FAMOI

Adults \$8 • Cl

WYOMING

OUTSIDE
112 East Bridge,

Congrat
State Pl
201 Mtn View L
Near Saratoga
3 bedroom, 2 bat
3-A garage, 1+ acr
\$279,500
NEW
30 Overlook Re
Near Elk Mount
2 bedroom, 1 ba
log cabin, 12 acr

COMEDY NIGHT

Life Sciences, Continued from page 3

align. "There is a gap between what we get them ready for [in high school], and what they need to do [in college]. We need to close that gap – that's my goal," said CCSD2 superintendent Bob Gates during the site swap event. "What could have been different for a high school student that would have made them more successful in college?"

CCSD#2 participants and UW faculty from botany, zoology, chemistry, and English delved into discussions ranging from student engagement, incorporation of technology in lectures and homework, challenges of state testing requirements, common skill deficiencies, and more. CCSD#2 participants observed a LIFE 1010 (introductory biology) weekly lab preparation meeting with lab coordinator Diane Gorski and eight graduate assistants, in which they discussed the course's learning objectives and in what ways students must meet them. The group participated in a Thursday evening LIFE 1010 lab with the graduate teaching assistants and students, and a large lecture class with Associ-

ate Professor Patricia Colberg the following morning.

Later this spring, the site swap will be reciprocated by UW faculty and graduate students who will spend time in the CCSD#2 schools. The group will interact with students, experience the constraints school districts work under, and brainstorm ways of better aligning student preparedness and college-level expectations.

"This visit was an eye-opener for all of us," said Saratoga Middle/High School science instructor Bob Thrasher. "I think this was the best use of time I have spent during my tenure in this district."

While this event was focused on the life sciences, high school to higher education transition issues span disciplines, school districts and educational institutes. In addition to site swap events, the Partnership facilitates communication and collaboration among educators on all levels through statewide conferences, subject-area summits, book-study groups, guest speaker events, and more.

"Across all levels, academic

performance is about skilled and caring teachers who balance high expectations and strong support," explains Audrey Kleinsasser, director of the Wyoming School-University Partnership. "In a time of aggressive federal and state compliance, it's more important than ever for faculty across levels to talk with one another about learning expectations. Since access to academic opportunity is a core Partnership principle, the site swap is the epitome of Partnership work and benefits to students."

The Life Sciences Site Swap event was made possible by a \$15,000 gift from the Quest Foundation. The funding supported a statewide mathematics meeting that featured work around the ACT district profiles and a "Designing Mathematical Experiences that Matter" workshop. Later this winter and spring, secondary and postsecondary faculty in the life sciences, writing, and world languages will meet. To get involved and to receive email updates from the Partnership about these and other events, visit www.uwyo.edu/wsop.

The *Saratoga* edition is our

GET YOUR

Advertisement

Get



318 N. First St.
307-3
WWW.C
EACH OFF

Great Deal

102 W. Rocheste

Cute bungalow pri
Fenced yard with beau
large front porch for
nings. Property is on
throw from the North
Very well maintained.

Just Listed at \$



214 N. Second-

Cozy 2 bedroom bu
corner lot with lots of f
Mostly new plumbin
furnace boiler. Pri
appraised value!

Now Listed at \$1

Century



ASSOC. BR
SALES ASSOCIATE
PROPERTY MA
OF



LOOK YOUR BEST FOR PROM!

**Tuxedo rentals
available at
Salon Sierra
in Encampment**

Go to www.jlmsformalwear.com
to design YOUR look!

Call Lael at 327-5966
for more info & ordering

**Saratoga
Sun ads:**

**Sell,
Inform
& Notify**