Cutting Corners

By Dr. Michele Gonzalez, Department Chair

On Wednesday, February 8th, adjunct instructor Lynn Olcott was in the crosswalk that leads from the parking lot to her workplace. As she crossed the street, a car struck her. According to auburn-pub.com, the driver had not fully cleared the morning’s frost from the windshield of her car and told police that she didn’t see Lynn crossing so she never slowed down. Although Lynn’s injuries are non-life threatening, her road to recovery will be a long one. At the time of this writing, she has undergone three surgeries and has begun extensive rehabilitation and will eventually undergo physical therapy. All this because a windshield was not cleared of frost.

One of the frightening thoughts that this raises for me is that that driver could have been me. When I’m in a hurry, I’m guilty of not clearing my car windows completely of frost, ice, or whatever the Central New York winter brings. I guess I function in this way because I feel that I’m saving time. I cut a corner (not cleaning my windshield) to save time. The reality is that cutting corners may save time, but at what cost?

I’ve cut corners literally. I’ve hurried into a room and have clipped my elbow on the corner of the doorframe. I’ve gotten up out of my desk chair to hurriedly get over to the department office, moving around my desk quickly and clipping my thigh on the corner of my desk.

I’m going to assume that I’m not alone in this, that there are other busy people out there who are as bruised as I am because we are in a hurry to get something completed and cut a corner to save time.

According to the online version of Cambridge Idioms Dictionary, (2ed., 2006) to cut a corner means “to do something in the easiest, quickest, or cheapest way, often harming the quality of your work.” I agree. I also argue that cutting corners is essential in times of financial hardship or when wanting to save some money. When functioning in this way we decide what we need and what we can live without, and we might be able to remain positive when we see our situation improve.

But what happens when we apply the notion of cutting corners to our professional life; to hurry to get something completed? What happens when we’re so tired that we don’t prepare for teaching in the way that we should? What happens when we don’t completely analyze the current or the next state/federal mandate that comes along? What happens to our work with students when we cut corners? I hope we don’t get physically bruised but I bet we get emotionally bruised, and I’m sure that others are affected.
Complete the Practicum (LIT 693) in your own school!

If you are a full time teacher, you will be able to complete the practicum (LIT 693) in your own school next spring (2013) semester. We will offer one section designated for full time teachers. Registration for this section will be by permission only, and it will be necessary to have signatures and support from your principal plus a reading specialist in your school who is willing to offer you support as you complete the practicum. Contact your advisor next fall for more information on registering for this section. We are piloting the practicum in schools this semester, and the teachers involved are all extremely pleased with being able to complete the practicum in their own schools. Please note, however, that this option is only open to our students who are also full time teachers.

Registration Information

Many questions that arise during registration can be answered by following the various links on the following page: http://www2.cortland.edu/offices/registrars-office/registration/. From this page, a little exploration will take you to a variety of information including course schedules for summer and fall, or what the various section numbers mean. For example, did you know that all courses at SUNYIT have the number ‘9’ as the middle number of the section or that all section numbers that begin with ‘5’ are special permission sections and require a phone call to the department office? Becoming familiar with the contents on the registrar’s web page will save you time during the registration process. Another example of information available from the registrar’s web page is the date on which you can first register. For your convenience, that information is printed below.

Continuing Graduate Student Registration

Time tickets become active on the dates below.

**Matriculated Graduate Students**
- 30 hours + Monday, March 26
- 27 hours + Tuesday, March 27
- 24 hours + Wednesday, March 28
- 21 hours + Thursday, March 29
- 18 hours + Friday, March 30
- 15 hours + Monday, April 2
- 12 hours + Tuesday, April 3
- 9 hours + Wednesday, April 4
- 6 hours + Thursday, April 5
- 3 hours + Friday, April 6
- 0 hours + Monday, April 9

**Note:** Newly accepted grads may begin registering on Tuesday, April 10.

The bottom line is that you will save a lot of time by becoming familiar with information available on the web.

- Dr. William Buxton, Graduate Coordinator
2012 ALA Award-Winning Books

On January 23, 2012, the American Library Association (ALA) announced the top books for children and young adults.

**John Newbery Medal** (outstanding contribution to children's literature)
*Dead End in Norvelt*, by Jack Gantos.

**Randolph Caldecott Medal** (distinguished American picture book for children)
*A Ball for Daisy*, illustrated and written by Chris Raschka

**Michael L. Printz Award** (excellence in literature written for young adults)
*Where Things Come Back*, by John Corey Whaley

**Schneider Family Book Award** (books that embody an artistic expression of the disability experience)
Middle school award (ages 9 - 13):
*close to famous*, by Joan Bauer
*Wonderstruck: A Novel in Words and Pictures*, by Brian Selznick

Teen award (ages 14 - 18):
*The Running Dream*, by Wendelin Van Draanen

**Alex Awards** (the 10 best adult books that appeal to teen audiences)
*Big Girl Small*, by Rachel DeWoskin,
*In Zanesville*, by Jo Ann Beard,
*The Lover's Dictionary*, by David Levithan
*The New Kids: Big Dreams and Brave Journeys at a High School for Immigrant Teens*, by Brooke Hauser
*The Night Circus*, by Erin Morgenstern
*Ready Player One*, by Ernest Cline
*Robopocalypse: A Novel*, by Daniel H. Wilson
*Salvage the Bones*, by Jesmyn Ward
*The Scrapbook of Frankie Pratt: A Novel in Pictures*, by Caro line Preston
*The Talk-Funny Girl*, by Roland Merullo

**Mildred L. Batchelder Award** (outstanding children's book translated from a foreign language and subsequently published in the United States)
*Soldier Bear*, by Bibi Dumon Tak, illustrated by Philip Hopman, translated by Laura Watkinson. Originally published in Dutch in 2008 as “Soldaat Wojtek”

**Odyssey Award** (best audiobook produced for children and/or young adults, available in English in the United States)
*Rotters*, written by Daniel Kraus and narrated by Kirby Heyborne.

**Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award** (most distinguished informational book for children)
*Balloons over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy’s Parade*, written by Melissa Sweet

**Stonewall Book Award - Mike Morgan & Larry Romans Children’s & Young Adult Literature Award** (given annually to English-language children’s and young adult books of exceptional merit relating to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender experience)
*Putting Makeup on the Fat Boy*, by Bil Wright

**Theodor Seuss Geisel Award** (the most distinguished beginning reader book)
*Tales for Very Picky Eaters*, written and illustrated by Josh Schneider

**William C. Morris Award** (debut book published by a first-time author writing for teens)
*Where Things Come Back*, written by John Corey Whaley

**YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults** (best nonfiction book published for young adults, ages 12 - 18)
*The Notorious Benedict Arnold: A True Story of Adventure, Heroism & Treachery*, by Steve Sheinkin

**Coretta Scott King (Author) Book Award** recognizing an African American author and illustrator of outstanding books for children and young adults:
*Kadir Nelson, author and illustrator of Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans*

**Coretta Scott King (Illustrator) Book Award**
*Shane W. Evans, illustrator and author of Underground: Finding the Light to Freedom*

**Coretta Scott King – Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement**
*Ashley Bryan*

**Margaret A. Edwards Award** for lifetime achievement in writing for young adults:
*Susan Cooper, whose books include: The Dark Is Rising Sequence: Over Sea, Under Stone; The Dark Is Rising; Greenwitch; The Grey King; and Silver on the Tree.*

**Pura Belpré (Illustrator) Award** honoring a Latino writer and illustrator whose children's books best portray, affirm and celebrate the Latino cultural experience:
*Diego Rivera: His World and Ours*, written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh

**Pura Belpré (Author) Award**
*Under the Mesquite*, written by Guadalupe Garcia McCall
**Juggling Life:**

The Perspectives of an Instructor, Wife, Mother, AND Graduate Student

By Mary-Jo Morse

Let’s face it, it isn’t easy being a graduate student while attempting to maintain a “normal life” in the world that exists outside of academia. Sometimes, as I am walking down the hallways or going into a classroom, I’ll overhear graduate students sharing their frustrations, and occasionally lamenting that their professors don’t understand how hard it is to do it all. Be aware however, that we DO understand, we have all been there, and some of us, like myself, are still there!

As a doctoral student myself, I am aware of the immense juggling act that you are dealing with. Aside from the intensity of the work load, and demanding schedule of assignments due, there are also the additional demands, responsibilities and obligations that each of us has in our own “real-life world.” There never seems to be enough time, or enough energy. Stress seems to be our constant companion on this journey through graduate school, even when we try to “get away from it all.” For example, as I write this, I am half-way across the Atlantic Ocean, on my way to Europe with my youngest daughter as part of a school sponsored trip. Lucky ducky you may say, and you’d be right, I am one lucky lady to share this time with my daughter! But what I haven’t told you yet is that while I am on this trip, I have three research articles and part of a book to read AND, as a consequence for missing my doctoral class, I also must write a paper that is due electronically the morning of the class. But that is only the beginning! I will then have four additional research articles, as well as 125 pages of a book to read, so that I will be able to actively participate in class the day after I return from Europe! Although I wouldn’t miss this trip for “all of the tea in China,” participation in this trip is, and will continue to be, causing me stress.

So, why am I sharing this with you all? Because, although you may not be traveling abroad, each of you has obligations and events going on in your own life that may cause you to experience stressful times during your program of study. This is not unusual and it should be expected. The important points to consider are how do we take care of ourselves, and how do we maintain the important relationships in our lives? In other words, how do we keep from “cracking” under the stress? I offer you a few ideas that I have found especially helpful.

For me, the most important component of dealing with my current “stressful lifestyle” is maintaining a positive attitude. “Stinking thinking” is not helpful. It might initially feel therapeutic, but in actuality it engages you and others in a nonproductive use of your cognitive and emotional energies. I believe that a “can do it” attitude is much more likely to result in a positive attitude, as well as a positive end-product of our work. I can either complain and stall or I can smile, take a deep breath, and move forward.

Prioritizing and being proactive are two additional strategies that I have found beneficial to reducing my stress levels. For example, prior to leaving for Europe, I had read ahead for my classwork, and proactively planned to utilize any “down” time to write this article, read my homework and write my paper. Therefore, each day as we have taken the 45 minute train ride into or out of London, I have diligently worked on my Nook Tablet doing these things. I can therefore enjoy the sightseeing, activities and meals with my traveling companions. In other words, plan ahead so that you can enjoy those important times with others. DON’T wait until the last minutes to attend to your academic work, because waiting will only cause you stress not alleviate it.

However, we all know that “life happens.” Things occur that are beyond our control, and that can throw our best laid plans out the window. What to do? What to do? Accept the reality of life, and fall back on a positive attitude as a coping mechanism. Whatever the situation, “it is what it is,” and being snarky with others because you are feeling stressed doesn’t make things better.

So, in the end it really is all up to us. We each play an enormous role in deciding how enjoyable, or stressful, our course work and our lives become. For me, I proactively choose less stress and more enjoyment. After all, I only pass through this path of my life but once, and I’d rather enjoy it, wouldn’t you?
Literacy Newsletter: You applied to three schools? Did you get accepted to all of them?

Amie Patchen: I got into all three, which was a HUGE surprise. I was not expecting that at all.

LN: What are the three schools? How did you decide where to apply?

AP: So the three schools are Michigan State University, University of Michigan, and Boston College. I picked those three schools because there were faculty there researching and working on projects that I was interested in. I searched through ERIC and through the library databases and found papers related to urban science education and literacy and science, and then looked up the people that had written those papers. I think that’s what people usually do when they get a PhD because it’s really about the advisor and the opportunity and the introduction to the community. I looked at, I don’t even know, like 50 schools and I read through professors’ bios and looked at papers and picked the schools that had people who thought about things how I wanted to think about things and doing things that I was interested in. People who were thinking about “how do you make science education better in urban schools?” and were doing projects about that, or about literacy in science.

LN: So you have to choose between the three schools. How is that decision going?

AP: I don’t have such a good answer. I’m visiting all three. I have talked to the people who would be my advisor, and other faculty who are doing related things, at all the schools. I’ve met with students, I’ve visited all the schools, I’ve gone to classes there. And visited a couple of their research projects.

LN: What made you decide to pursue a PhD in that subject? How did that idea come to be your plan for the next five years of your life?

AP: Actually it’s the same reasons why I applied to the masters program. I taught science in Chicago and I taught in a large, very overcrowded, underfunded public school. I had 45 kids in each class. I had few resources: more students than chairs or textbooks and my lab supply budget for the year was $100. So I wasn’t given a curriculum, I created everything. I was literally given 9 bullet points on a list – these are the 9 topics to cover in the year. [And the textbook] was grade 16 reading level and my students were all English Language Learners. Even if English was their first language they couldn’t have read that textbook.

I just could not figure out how to do what I thought science was with my students in Chicago. They just didn’t have the background in analysis and reading and writing to be able to approach a problem and solve it, and try to solve it. If the answer wasn’t obvious, they didn’t know what to do. And that’s the whole point of inquiry-based science, is that you figure things out. So I couldn’t do it. So when I started to think about going back into teaching, I thought, just remembering being in Chicago, one of the big problems was the textbook and the language of science.

So I came [to the Literacy Program] to try to be better at that, thinking I would go back into classroom teaching. But … well it turns out that’s a big area of research right now – literacy and science, or language and science, and inquiry-based science in urban schools and urban science education in general. All those things are current fields of research. So, when I found that my questions weren’t really being answered because there isn’t really any research, I started looking at where could I find the answers. Who’s studying this? Who’s working on it? What are they thinking? What are they working on? And, I mean coming from a science background – that’s what you do. You see the problem and you say “Well how am I going to figure it out? How do you do this?” Well, we don’t really know, but somebody has to know. There has to be an answer. It can’t just be that these kids are going to fail; there has to be some answer.

LN: Most people who complete this program take what they’ve learned right back into the classroom. How do you think that your work here has prepared you for this different path?

AP: Well I think one really important thing for me about researching education is having taught. It seems like a critical thing to have been a teacher and to know what teachers are actually dealing with to look at education and to research education. And I think not everyone who becomes an education professor has been a teacher, and for some research that’s fine, like policy or things that are not specifically about curriculum. But I feel like to research curriculum and instruction in a classroom, it’s important to have been in a classroom.

And specifically literacy. Science and literacy don’t go together very easily. I did a Master’s in science education and we didn’t talk about literacy. And I talk a lot about science here [in the literacy program] but other people don’t talk a lot about science. Which is probably annoying for everyone else but me.

LN: What is your ultimate goal? What do you want to do with a PhD?

AP: There are a lot of possibilities. Some PhD programs, once you have a PhD the only thing you can really do is be a professor and that doesn’t seem to be the case with these programs. So, potential things I could see myself doing are being a professor, like a research oriented professor or a teacher education professor. Or there are research organizations that just do research education, non-profits that work on curriculum or like equality in schools or something related to education. So doing that outside of the university setting but still doing research. People also become curriculum specialists in school districts or work as something else in a school district. There are a lot of possibilities. And my main interest right now, although that has changed for me every other year, is in improving how you do science education in urban schools. Especially when the kids don’t have a strong preparation, don’t have the literacy skills, the analysis skills to do inquiry science at a high school level. So I imagine I will want to keep looking at that or working on that.
The State of Poverty Simulation and Community Outreach

Christina Caravella’s two sections of LIT 371 participated in The State of Poverty Simulation on February 8, 2012, in Corey Union’s Function Room. This event was coordinated by John Suarez, Coordinator of the Office of Service Learning, and Lindy Glennon from the Cortland County Community Action Program, Inc., better known as CAPCO (no one knows why the acronym and organization do not match). Christina’s students became part of an “impoverished family” for the duration of the simulation. Students all became either a parent or child and had to simulate their role as best as possible while keeping in mind the details stated on the “family data sheet.” For example, one family might consist of a single mother and two young children living on a certain amount of income. The data sheet informed the family of monthly bills to be paid, how much monetary assistance would be received, specific information about each family member such as if the member worked or not, had a disability, etc.

Each family’s goals were to keep their “house” secure, feed the family on a regular basis, pay all bills, tend to any unexpected circumstances, use transportation passes to get to and from the “staged” locations, and send school age children to school. The families would have to complete forms at the Department of Social Services, go to the Unemployment Office, get food at the food pantry, pay bills, try to sell their possessions at the pawn shop, and get their checks cashed. Seems simple, right? Not without enough money or transportation passes! Christina’s students really were serious in participating in the simulation and became frustrated at how difficult it can be for families living in poverty. The tasks were all time-consuming and students began to see the obstacles that can get in the way for families living in poverty, such as offices closing early, rude employers, being taken advantage of because the impoverished can be desperate, etc.

This event was quite informative for all students. At the beginning of the event, CAPCO provided current statistics about our local community in terms of poverty. Did you know that there are approximately 48,000 people that live in Cortland County as of 2010, and seven thousand of those people live in poverty? About 1,700 of those 7,000 individuals are children which translates to 1 out of every 5 children in Cortland County living in poverty. Almost 16% of the families that live in Cortland County do not have health insurance. These statistics are devastating. You could be teaching these children at present or in the future.

Think about yourself as you sit in class; how do you concentrate when you are hungry? What happens to your attitude and work ethic as you impatiently watch the clock waiting for class to end just to grab something from the vending machine? Have you ever felt stomach pains from hunger, as some local children do? Now try to think how it might feel for a child living in poverty!

How would this child be able to concentrate and perform to the best of his ability in your class? It is hard to understand how they might feel if you haven’t experienced it yourself.

You may recall from the fall newsletter that CAPCO has a “snack pack” program for identified needy children in our community. These children receive a backpack on Fridays filled with food to help get them through the weekend until they arrive at school on Monday morning for their free breakfast. Think about these children. Can you help? The Literacy Department would like to continue to assist. We began collecting the listed items last fall to help fill the “snack packs,” and CAPCO was quite appreciative of our efforts collecting items for the families in need. If you are able to contribute, please drop off the suggested items to the Literacy Department or give them to your instructor! If you also have a new or gently used children’s book that you are willing to part with, we will be collecting books for the children as well.

Thank you for your support!

SNACKPACK DONATION LIST

FOOD
- CEREAL BARS
- JUICE BOXES
- FRUIT CUPS
- INSTANT OATMEAL
- SOUP
- SPAGHETTIOS
- MAC & CHEESE
- DRIED MILK
- PUDDING CUPS
- TRAIL MIX
- CHEESE & CRACKERS
- RAISINS
- FRUIT SNACKS
- INSTANT MASHED POTATOES
- SPAGHETTI SAUCE & NOODLES
- PEANUT BUTTER (PLASTIC JAR)
- JELLY (PLASTIC JAR)
- CRACKERS
- GRAHAM CRACKERS

PERSONAL ITEMS
- TOOTHPASTE
- WASH CLOTH/SOAP IN BAGGIE
- SHAMPOO

SPECIAL TREATS
- HOLIDAYS & SPECIAL OCCASIONS
- CANDY
- COOKIES
- SMALL TOYS
- VOUCHER FOR HOLIDAY MEAL
- CHILDREN’S BOOKS

CASH DONATIONS TO PURCHASE
- FRESH FRUIT
- FRESH VEGETABLES
- MILK, YOGURT AND CHEESE
- MEAT VOUCHERS
- SCHOOL SUPPLIES
SUNY Cortland Literacy Dept.

1303 Cornish Hall
SUNY Cortland
Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: (607) 753-2705
Fax: (607) 758-5006

Department Chair: Michele Gonzalez
Department Secretary: Pat Alter
Email: pat.alter@cortland.edu

www2.cortland.edu/departments/literacy

Questions?

Many basic questions about the program can be answered by checking the Department of Literacy Education Advisement Manual, located on the literacy department website (just click the advisement manual link on the left side of the page).

Otherwise, the best source of information is your academic advisor. Don’t hesitate to make an appointment with your advisor to discuss any questions or concerns you have.

You can also stop by the literacy department office in Cornish Hall any time Monday to Friday from 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM and someone will be happy to help you.

Looking for a job for the 2012-2013 school year?

Becoming a graduate assistant is a great way to have fun, share knowledge, and work with department faculty! If you are interested in becoming a graduate assistant for the Literacy Department for the 2012-2013 academic year, apply through the Graduate Admissions Office by April 13.

Information about Graduate Assistantships can be found at:
http://www2.cortland.edu/academics/graduate/assistantships.dot

Specific info about the Literacy Department GA position can be found at:
http://www2.cortland.edu/dotAsset/e22ea0d1-8b0c-43ee-8157-f163f95a5ef7.pdf