I’ve heard that exclamation from many: teachers at all levels, administrators at all levels, and pre-service students. Each of these groups may have a slightly different take on what is happening in education now, but we’re all noticing the changes.

Those of you who keep up with the changes happening in education know exactly to what I’m referring. We’re being asked to do more with less and, sure, doing more with less has been a part of the educational system that fluctuates from time to time. However, now we’re going through an economic downfall unparalleled to any I’ve been through in my approximately 25 year teaching career. Resources are being cut, from teaching positions to materials. Regardless, we have important things to do on a daily basis to guide all children’s literacy development. And on top of that, we now have the Common Core Standards to implement.

On April 28, 2011, educators from around the country met in Albany with leading author and architect of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), David Coleman, to understand how the Common Core Standards for College and Career Readiness build on the work New York State has done in developing a standards-based system and their specific implications for teachers and instructional leaders state wide. Coleman talked about six specific shifts in literacy instruction:

- Spending equal time on informational and literary texts
- Building knowledge in disciplines of science, history, and social studies through reading
- Considering text complexity
- Responding to text with evidence
- Writing an argument based on evidence
- Focusing attention on academic vocabulary

Coleman shared some statistics about texts in American classrooms:

We in America in K-5 assessment and curriculum focus 80% of our time on stories, on literature. That is the dominate work that is done in the elementary school and that’s what’s tested on exams and that’s what’s in our textbook . . . yet in kindergarten through fifth grade, the general knowledge that you develop in those years plays a crucial predictive role in not only your performance in those other disciplines, like science and history, but your ability to read more complex texts. So the core standards for the first time demand that 50% of the text students encounter in kindergarten through fifth grade is informational text, meaning primarily text about science and history, text about the arts, the text through which students learn about the world.

As literacy educators and literacy leaders, we need to consider these six shifts carefully. The Common Core Standards lay a foundation for us to think about our own knowledge in these areas and how we might help guide our colleagues’ work in implementing these standards.

For more information on the Common Core Standards, please refer to either of these two websites: engageny.org or usny.nysed.gov/rttt/resources/bringing-the-common-core-to-life.html

And, I haven’t even touched on the APPR! Maybe that’s an item for the next newsletter.

- Dr. Michele Gonzalez
  Department Chair
I am hoping the beginning of another school year finds all new and returning literacy students in good health and spirits. I would like to take a few minutes of your time to remind you of several items that will make progress in your graduate program towards completion of your degree smoother and easier for everyone. First and foremost, keep in touch with your advisor. Make it a point to review your degree progress at least once a semester with your advisor. Your advisor is your first point of contact for questions regarding the program, and it is your responsibility to maintain that contact.

If you have not already, make a degree plan with your advisor detailing when you will take each course in the program through graduation. Have your advisor check this plan to make sure that courses will be offered when you are planning on taking them and you will meet all the necessary prerequisites for courses. This can be done via email or in-person, the important thing is making a plan to graduate and then maintaining contact with your advisor to make sure you are still on track to graduate.

On the subject of course availability, always be aware that a full selection of courses is not offered during the summer. A preview of summer courses is posted during the fall semester, and you can count on the courses in that preview to be offered the following summer. This can assist in planning your scheduling for the following spring and summer sessions.

There are also several pieces of paperwork that you must file for the completion of your program. While this paperwork may seem trivial, it is absolutely necessary that you complete these forms in order to graduate.

First, some of you were admitted to the program with a (W) or (WAIT) designation. If you look at your information on Banner, you will see that you are listed as LED(W) instead of LED. The W designation indicates that we did not receive evidence of your certification when you were admitted. You will not be able to enroll in the final course of the program, LIT 698, until that W is removed. To remove the W, all that is necessary is to download the page from your TEACH account that shows your certification has been issued. Send that evidence along with a Change of Status Form to the Literacy Department Office, and we will process the paperwork to remove the W, and you will then be fully matriculated into the Literacy Program.

A second form that needs to be filed is the Application for Candidacy for the Master’s Degree. You can file this form after you have completed the following prerequisites:

- Fully matriculated into the program (this means the (W) is removed),
- Completion of at least 6 credit hours with a B or better grade,
- An overall GPA of 3.0.

While your registration will not be delayed if you do not complete the Candidacy form, you will not be able to graduate until you complete this form. Both the Change of Status form and the Candidacy form are easy forms to fill out and will only take a few minutes of your time. They can both be accessed at: [http://www2.cortland.edu/academics/graduate/forms.dot](http://www2.cortland.edu/academics/graduate/forms.dot). It is easier to complete the forms as soon as you are eligible so your registration or graduation is not delayed by not having filed these forms.

Finally, while your assigned advisor is your first point of contact for information, do not hesitate to contact me (753-5567, William.Buxton@Cortland.edu), and I will also be happy to answer your questions.

- Dr. William Buxton
Graduate Coordinator
Partnership with the Ithaca School District

Master’s degree candidates seeking secondary literacy certification no longer face the obstacle of locating placements for LIT 550, LIT 684, and LIT 693 with secondary literacy specialists beginning this semester. Following positive experiences of former students in our program who worked with Ithaca High School, inquiries were made about forming a more formal alliance with the Ithaca City School District (ICSD). Consequently, full-time students may complete all of their field placements with ICSD (either at the high school or the middle school level or even a combination of the two).

From our perspective in the literacy department, the Ithaca Collaboration is a win-win scenario for the program and for the Ithaca City School District. While this collaboration is a pilot program presently, and a few challenges may present themselves, we appreciate everyone’s patience as we work through any hiccups that may occur together for more optimal field placement experiences for candidates in the future.

The candidate benefits of completing all field placements with ICSD:
- continuity of instruction at the placement site across courses
- exposure to an exemplary literacy model that incorporates content area labs, PLATO remediation labs, observation of a team teaching by literacy specialists and content area teachers
- opportunities to join Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- the chance to work with a team of secondary literacy specialists with a broad range of backgrounds as well as students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

New Faculty Introductions

Mrs. Christina Caravella completed her undergraduate education at SUNY Cortland, earning her B.S. in elementary education. She went on to earn her M.S. in Education: Literacy birth through grade 6 at Hunter College of The City University of New York. She has been teaching at SUNY Cortland since 2006, as an adjunct professor until this school year, and is an active member of the Cortland County Family Reading Partnership.

Christina loves spending time with her family, which includes Tony, her husband of 12 years, and their four daughters: Lucia, 7, Lavinia, 6, Ruthalina, 3, and Antonella, 19 months. She also enjoys baking—which she finds relaxing when her results are successful—sewing, taking pictures, and getting together with her girlfriends. She also makes sure to eat some form of chocolate every single day.

Christina is currently teaching LIT 371, LIT 372, and LIT 511. Her office is located at Cornish Hall 1315 and she can be reached by phone at (607) 753-2464 or by email at Christina.Caravella@Cortland.edu.

Mrs. Mary-Jo Morse earned her B.S. in Biology at SUNY Geneseo and her M.S. in Secondary Science Education at Syracuse University before changing concentrations and getting another M.S. in Literacy B-6 here at SUNY Cortland. Prior to joining the Literacy Department, Mary-Jo taught at both the elementary and secondary level. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Reading from SUNY Albany.

Mary-Jo and her husband have three children: Maria, a senior at Canisius College; Mike, a Sophomore at University at Buffalo; and Margaret, a Senior at North Syracuse High School. They also have a black cat named Tantra and a domesticated bunny who lives under their deck named Amiee. Mary-Jo loves to travel and is currently planning her fourth trip to Europe, a graduation gift to her daughter Margaret.

Mary-Jo is currently teaching LIT 540, LIT 682, and LIT 372. Her office is located at Cornish Hall 1316 and she can be reached by phone at (607) 753-2461 or by email at Mary-Jo.Morse@Cortland.edu.
Common Pitfalls for Students

- Completing incorrect NYSTCE
- Not filing authorization form
- Wrong program code

Certification Authorization

GRADUATE STUDENTS

- GR students complete a Teacher Certification Recommendation Authorization Form giving us permission to recommend a student to NYSED for certification.
- Once the authorization form has been received and processed, a Student Information Sheet (SIS) is then sent, via email to the student, which provides them with information pertaining to their Master’s program including their program code.
- Once the student graduates, SUNY Cortland then makes an institutional recommendation to NYSED for an initial and/or professional certification via the TEACH website.

The SUNY Cortland Teacher Certification Officer

- The Teacher Certification Officer (TCO) recommends SUNY Cortland graduates to the New York State Department of Education for teacher certification after they have completed an approved teacher preparation program. The Teacher Certification Officer also verifies program completion for graduates applying for out-of-state certification and serves as a resource for a variety of teacher certification related topics.
- SUNY Cortland’s TCO is:
  - Dr. Marley S. Barduhn, Assistant Provost for Teacher Education
  - 1314A Cornish Hall 607-753-4704
  - http://www2.cortland.edu/teacher-education/teacher-education-forms/

Finding Your Advisor

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Buxton</td>
<td><a href="mailto:william.buxton@cortland.edu">william.buxton@cortland.edu</a></td>
<td>Cornish 1321</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christina Caravella</td>
<td><a href="mailto:christina.caravella@cortland.edu">christina.caravella@cortland.edu</a></td>
<td>Cornish 1315</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michele Gonzalez</td>
<td><a href="mailto:michele.gonzalez@cortland.edu">michele.gonzalez@cortland.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary-Jo Morse</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mary-jo.morse@cortland.edu">mary-jo.morse@cortland.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
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If you aren’t sure who your advisor is, you can find out through myRedDragon. Log in, click on the Student tab, and within the Registrar channel you’ll find a link called “Who is my advisor?”
Registration for Graduate Students

Web registration for Spring 2012 will begin Monday, October 31.

Every student is given a registration “time-ticket” based on how many credit hours have already been completed at the time of registration. Starting on October 31, one “time-ticket” will become active each day, allowing those students to register for classes. The chart below outlines which time tickets become active on which days.

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Web registration takes place through myRedDragon. You can register for classes by clicking on the Student tab and navigating to the Registrar’s channel. From there you can check your registration status, register for classes, and add/drop classes.

For a more detailed description of how to register for classes through myRedDragon, go to: www2.cortland.edu/offices/registrars-office/registration/web-register.dot

Literacy Department Events

Review

On Tuesday, September 6, the literacy department hosted a panel discussion featuring four literacy specialists from nearby schools. Topics discussed included: a day in the life of a literacy specialist, the difficulty students have transitioning between grade levels, and practical tips for interviewing for a job as a literacy specialist.

The panelists were: Tracy Kurtz, Dryden High School; Sarah Marcham, Dryden Elementary; Jocelyn Blizzard, Ithaca High School; and Gwen Freeman, Ithaca High School. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Charlotte Pass.

Preview

Dorothy Troike, professor emerita of the Literacy Department, will present a PowerPoint presentation titled “Images of Tibet” on Tuesday, November 8th at 7PM in Sperry 204, followed by a Q&A session. The presentation combines photos from a 2007 trip to Tibet with children’s books about Tibet, its people and customs. An emphasis is placed on the culture of Buddhism, the dominant religion of Tibet for more than 1000 years. A brief history of Tibet and its relationship to China over the centuries will also be included.

Another panel discussion is being planned for the spring. It will be similar to the one held in September, but this one will focus specifically on working as a literacy specialist in elementary school.

It's important to stay up to date on current issues in the literacy field. Keep an eye out for details about these and other future events.
Community Outreach

The Literacy Department is supporting CAPCO’s Snackpack program.

“We heard from teachers that recognized the difference in children who weren’t coming back to school hungry.”

The Literacy Department supports CAPCO’s Snackpack program.

The Cortland County Community Action Program (CAPCO) started the “snackpack” program (initially as a pilot program) in the spring of 2010. It was in response to realizing how many families in the community struggle to make ends meet, and learning that children in our community were actually going hungry over the weekends (between lunch on Friday and breakfast on Monday when they got back to school). CAPCO started the “snackpack” program in Marathon and the response was immediate and overwhelming.

“We heard from teachers that recognized the difference in children who weren’t coming back to school hungry. We heard from parents appreciative that there was food for their children that included fresh fruit that they often couldn’t afford. The children were excited to have food to share with siblings” (Lindy Glennon, CAPCO).

The way the “snackpack” program works is children are identified by school personnel (teachers, nurses, etc.) and referred to CAPCO. CAPCO purchases backpacks that look like the backpacks that everyone else is carrying. “We didn’t want them to be identifiable as “CAPCO Snackpacks” so there was no stigma on the children” (Lindy Glennon). The backpacks are packed on Fridays and given to the children. They take them home, eat the food and bring them back to school with them on Monday.

With 46% of the children in the Cortland City Schools eligible for free/reduced price lunches, there are a lot of families struggling to make ends meet and provide healthy food for their children. Unfortunately, the numbers are very similar in the rural school districts.

The Literacy Department is supporting CAPCO’s efforts in supporting children and their families. Please consider making a contribution to this project by bringing in an item (see the list to the right) to give to your instructor or the drop-off box in the Literacy Department Office.

CAPCO is the Cortland County Community Action Program. No one knows why the letters and organization don’t match.

Christina Caravella, Instructor, brought this idea to the literacy department.

Some Current Statistics:

* The national poverty rate is 15.5%. More than 46 million people lived in poverty in 2010.
* In Cortland County, the poverty rate in 2010 was 15.4%. Almost 7,000 people lived in poverty. 17.2% of the children in Cortland County live at or below the federal poverty line.
* Between 2007 and 2011, the number of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps) households in Cortland County increased by 62%.
* 46% of the children in the Cortland City School District are eligible for free/reduced price lunches based on family income.

SNACKPACK DONATION LIST

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

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

SPECIAL TREATS
- HOLIDAYS & SPECIAL OCCASIONS
- CANDY
- COOKIES
- SMALL TOYS
- VOUCHER FOR HOLIDAY MEAL

CASH DONATIONS TO PURCHASE
- FRESH FRUIT
- FRESH VEGETABLES
- MILK, YOGURT AND CHEESE
- MEAT VOUCHERS
- SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Items can be given to your instructors or brought to the drop-box in the Literacy Department Office.
Remembering Mary Ellen Sanford

By Michele Gonzalez

I started my career at SUNY Cortland in the fall of 1992. As with any beginning, there was a whirlwind of personal change: new state, new town, new job, new colleagues, new friends. Some of that beginning was a blur, and remains so to this day, but what I remember best is my colleagues. And, of that group, none stood out more to me than an adjunct faculty member, Mary Ellen Sanford. She stood out for many reasons. Most memorably, she was teaching full-time for the Ithaca City School District and part-time for SUNY Cortland. This has always seemed quite the juggling act, especially when she did both with the grace, knowledge, and professionalism required in both settings. She NEVER appeared flustered. Over the years, I learned that her lack of anxiety came from her focused passion for guiding learners’ literacy development. When we’re focused and passionate, we don’t have the time to be frustrated.

Students, both those in high school and those in college, were her focus. For high school students, her passion was to help them develop agency as learners and reap the rewards of reading. For college students studying to be reading specialists, she focused her passion on guiding their understanding of how to help all students join Frank Smith’s “literacy club.” Also, her calm nature came from the confidence she exuded. Mary Ellen was confident about what she taught. She supported her opinions with research and with experience, which Vogt and Shearer (2011) refer to as “principled practice.” She could tell you why she was implementing a particular teaching approach and call on the research to support her stance. “Principled practice” provides educators with the confidence to make sound decisions in the classroom. Educators who have been in the field of education for a while often, rightly or wrongly, are referred to as being stagnant. Not so with Mary Ellen. She was fresh, always learning, and always passionate.

Mary Ellen was not only a confident educator, but also confident in who she was as a person. In my opinion, only a confident person can be a fashionista. I looked forward to seeing Mary Ellen for many reasons, one being to see what she was wearing. Her sophisticatedly playful wardrobe rounded out the Mary Ellen I knew. Knowing her, or more specifically seeing her, actually gave me the confidence to play around with my own wardrobe. I know that sounds silly to some, but you’ll know what I mean when you reach 50. I’ll miss that. I’ll also miss the time we spent together. I’ll miss hearing about how her “wonderfully lovely” grandchildren were growing as literacy learners. I’ll miss her insightful analysis of this growth. I’ll miss hearing about the wonderful things her children were doing and how proud she was of them. I’ll miss our lunches. I’ll miss her. May we all be so lucky to have a Mary Ellen in our lives.