



NEWSLETTER

SERVING FLORIDA ENGLISH TEACHERS SINCE 1924

Jump-starting the Late Starters

By: Antonia Lewandowski

In a perfect world, we'd know the success of our efforts at the end of every year. Students we tutored would line up to say thanks. The middle schooler who never did homework would turn around to earn high school honors. We'd meet the kids who hated reading in our local library. But, as we know, teaching provides us with only part of the picture. Long after shelving the yearbook, we think about those students who most required our time, patience and expertise. Whatever happened to George who just barely passed FCAT? How much progress did Sheena make in her sixth new school? Did Kara go back to school after her pregnancy? These are the kids whose future you've cared about the most.

As post-secondary education becomes essential for a successful future, students who once might have ended their schooling with a high school diploma are entering college. While typically not eligible for selective colleges and universities, these students – many who kept us awake at late-night grading – are enrolled in college developmental programs. These are the students, an estimated 200,000 to 800,000 of the 2 million who enter college annually, who "test into" a program of remedial reading, mathematics, and writing. Gaps in their learning that range from confusion about fractions to indifference about punctuation need to be addressed before formal college work can progress. Who's doing this work and what's the rate of success?

A demonstration project at the Seminole Campus of St. Petersburg College reveals the issues, the curriculum and the

pedagogy that characterizes developmental learning. A cohort of 16 full-time first-year students, led by a team of three energetic professors, achieved a 96.8 % success rate in the LinC program offered during the 2006-07 academic year.

LinC, a Title III program which stands for “Learning in Community” mirrors the best practices recognized by teachers everywhere. Its premise, that given the right conditions, effective and caring teachers can successfully engage and sustain “at-risk” students offers us yet another example of teaching effectiveness. At the same time, the LinC project demonstrates how continuously the mission of the community college interfaces with and shares the concerns of K-12 schooling.

It’s not a quick ‘n easy process by any means. The students entering the program shared many characteristics with low-level juniors and seniors struggling to finish high school. These liabilities included low motivation, lack of maturity, poor self-image and faulty work habits. Many held part-time jobs; social issues included pregnancy, irregular family arrange-

continued on page 4

EDITOR

Allen J. Gorney
Cypress Creek High School
University of Central Florida

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- President*
Diane Bondurant
Lake Region High School
- First Vice President*
Dr. Joan F. Kaywell
University of South Florida
- Second Vice President*
Jane Feber
Mandarin Middle School
- Recording Secretary*
Jennifer Campbell
Columbia High School
- Treasurer*
Shara Holt
St. Johns County Dist. Office
- Executive Secretary*
Paula Clements
Lake Region High School
- Immediate Past President*
Virginia (Ginny) White
Fernandina Beach Middle School

APPOINTED BOARD MEMBERS

- Assistant Executive Secretary*
Linda Tuschinski
FLARE Teaching Center
- Nominations Committee Chair*
Jan Graham
Cobb Middle School
- Conference Registration Chairs*
Megan Harowitz Pankiewicz
Winter Springs High School
- Kelly Metzler**
Indian Trails Middle School
- Conference Facilities Chair*
Kevin Smith
Seminole High School
- Conference Sponsorship Chair*
Jackie Jones
Douglass Anderson School of the Arts
- Historian/Parliamentarian*
Dottie Fletcher
Samuel W. Wolfson Senior High School
- NCTE Liaison & NCTE/SLATE Representative*
Clarissa West-White
Florida A & M University
- Web Master*
Shirley A. Rutter
Fox Chapel Middle School
- Journal Editor*
Tamara Doebling
Melbourne High School
- Ex-Officio Member*
Susan Watt
Florida Department of Education
- Public Relations*
Pam Craig
FlaRE Center Teaching Academy
- FCTE Writing Awards Co-Chairs*
Dr. Susan Wood
Florida State University
- Dr. Barbara G. Pace**
University of Florida
- FCTE Honor, New Teacher and Teacher of the Year Awards Chair*
Virginia (Ginny) White
Fernandina Beach Middle School
- NCTE Literary Magazine Awards*
Debbie L. Keith
Spruce Creek High School
- NCTE Achievement Awards in Writing Chair*
Darian Walker
Pinellas County Schools

FCTE Newsletter is published three times a year by the Florida Council of Teachers of English, an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English. *FCTE Newsletter* is an exclusive benefit of membership. Membership dues help to defray the cost of publishing the *FCTE Newsletter*.

Letters, articles, suggestions and story ideas from readers are welcome. The newsletter editor will assume that such letters and articles are offered for publication unless clearly marked otherwise. The editors reserve the right to select and edit articles for purpose and fit. Please send any information or inquiries to 1101 Bear Crossing Drive, Orlando, FL 32824 or by E-mail to gorneya@ocps.net. *FCTE Newsletter* is a member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement. Advertising inquiries and requests should be directed to the address above.

A note from your SLATE Representative:

Greetings!

I want to encourage each of you to participate in NCTE's upcoming Advocacy Day in Washington D.C. on April 17, 2008. During this time, NCTE members and the E-board go to DC to meet with their respective senators and representatives and/or their aides to promote NCTE's Legislative platform which includes:

- NCLB recommendations
- Higher Ed Act Recommendations
- Definition of Scientifically Based Research
- Adolescent Literacy

Also, if you have not done so, please point your browser to <http://groups.google.com/group/fcte-slate> and join the FCTE SLATE Google Group where members can start/join discussions regarding NCTE's position statements, especially regarding censorship, weigh in on a number of topics that have already been posted, email the group if there are questions or concerns regarding NCTE or FCTE positions on a particular topic, or contact the organization should members need the organization's assistance or professional opinion. The email address for the group is fcte-slate@googlegroups.com.

Finally, in case you are unaware or simply need reminding, SLATE - **Support for the Learning and Teaching of English** - is NCTE's grassroots network that:

- seeks to influence public attitudes and policy decisions affecting the teaching of English language arts at local, state, and national levels;
- seeks to implement and publicize the policies adopted by the National Council of Teachers of English; and
- serves as NCTE's intellectual freedom network, providing support for those facing censorship challenges.

A separate membership fee is not required to join SLATE. Every NCTE member will receive SLATE updates on a regular basis, will have an opportunity to participate in SLATE campaigns, and will occasionally be invited to support SLATE through voluntary contributions. You can view past SLATE Newsletters at http://www.ncte.org/library/files/About_NCTE/Issues/March_2007.html.

I can be reached through the email above or directly at noledoctor@yahoo.com.

Thanks,

Clarissa West-White, FCTE SLATE Representative

ments, and a lack of sophistication about using support systems or interacting with teachers. To this mix of issues, Professors Patricia Smith, a doctoral candidate in Higher Education Administration at the University of South Florida, Trudy Williams, assistant professor of English, and math instructor Lisa Borzewski brought a lot of heart and savvy educational planning.

The 12 credit program integrated reading, writing, and math, described by Smith as a “language-based approach to all disciplines.” “We talk about if you can read and write logically, you have the tools to do math.” The three professors combined this approach with “reality-based” assignments. For example, LinC students took monthly field trips that ranged from a hands-on forensic workshop in a Criminal Justice program at one of the satellite campuses to visiting the *St. Petersburg Times* where the students met with columnist Bill Maxwell and the newspaper’s music critic. Predating and following each field trip were assignments styled as life-skills activities. Other activities included a Halloween party where students created and presented horror film shorts, a sociological experiment that involved visiting a shopping mall examining and statistically analyzing salespersons’ responses to attire and self-presentation.

Professor Williams attributes a large measure of LinC success to helping students “change their thought processes.” To foster mastery, she and her team multiplied active learning strategies. To mitigate the stress of tests, she said, “We always gave them chocolate before tests . . . just one piece.” She also described games and competitions that cut the drudgery of basic reviews: animal grammar, stand-up parts of speech and music, movement, humor, manipulatives – anything that worked.

Each course front-loaded vocabulary for comprehension, emphasizing the power of language. In one instance, the professors demonstrated how instant messaging functions as a contemporary tool of communication. Inviting students to

design and administer an IM Test, several professors took the test, which was then graded by the students. The adults' low grades proved a point, confirming and celebrating the students' expertise in this area.

Perhaps most significantly, team teaching for the LinC cohort, involved strengthening the interpersonal skills of the students and the group. Math instructor Borzewski observed how much students' acceptance of others deepened and changed during the year: "[We saw] students come in hating being in class, hating each other, by the end very close." Smith also points out that having an unusual amount of "face time" helped the students. Each LinC faculty member mentored students individually, matched them with tutors, monitored individual study time (10 hours minimum) through the College's online management learning system, conferenced weekly with each student, and as a group, taught the cohort how to access academic advising, counseling, and library services.

At year's end, this dedicated team of professors and their administrators added up the successes and confronted the limitations of this intensive project. Every classroom teacher can appreciate what it means to go above and beyond the call of duty in assisting at-risk students. A program such as LinC demonstrates how "all students can learn." However, such a comprehensive investment of time, energy, financial, and social resources is costly and needs strong professional and administrative commitment.

To steadily provide such resources means supporting teachers who get excited not only about content, but also about the delivery process. Teachers like these have disciplinary flexibility, the ability to see one's own subject in the light of other perspectives. Schools need to find, encourage and support teachers willing to work on interdisciplinary projects and field trips that demonstrate the application of knowledge. It's a tall order. Yet, the social costs of not meeting the needs of at-risk students is daunting high as well. All across Florida we have teachers

alert to the potential in these students. It will take many teachers in many schools to overcome the dulling effects of teaching to high stakes tests. At the same time, it is good to know that the continuum of creative teaching extends the full spectrum of schooling from kindergarten through post-secondary education.

Conference Update

The conference preview is now online at www.fcte.org and will be in the U.S. mail to all members next week. All conference registration forms can be found in the preview.

The pre-conference institute on Thursday, October 18, with Laura Robb and Janet Allen will provide you with a wealth of strategies to implement in your classrooms. You will also have the opportunity to hear keynote addresses from Kyleene Beers, Doug Fisher, and Jeff Anderson. More than thirty concurrent sessions and one poster session have topics ranging from *Hip-Hopping Through Literature: A Cultural Responsive Approach for Teaching Reading to the Black Adolescent Male*, *Writers on Wheels*, *Daily Grammar Practice: Making Grammar Make Sense*, *Great Ideas for Vocabulary and SAT Prep*, *Write More, Write Better with 6 Trait*, *Managing Small Groups for Effective Instruction*, *Verse for the iPod Generation*, *Getting to the Heart of Sentence Fluency in Writing and Reading*, *Pumping Technology into Your Lessons*, *Using Pop Culture Events to Engage Reluctant Readers*, *How to Engage and Develop Writers*, *Critical Literacy: Strategies to Produce High Level Thinking*, and SO much more.

Don't miss out on this opportunity for professional development. Come meet with professionals from across the state. Share in collegial conversations; see that other teachers' concerns are your concerns; other teachers' students are like your students. Come and learn from our illustrious presenters. We hope to see you at the Hilton in Altamonte Spring October 18 - 20. Register now!

Spotlight on Teacher Excellence

Congratulations to Megan Harowitz Pankiewicz, *Recipient of the 2007 NCTE Teacher of Excellence Award*

Pankiewicz, a teacher at Winter Springs High School in Winter Springs, FL, was nominated by the Florida Council of Teachers of English, an affiliate of NCTE. She is in her fifth year of teaching, and has demonstrated leadership and excellence in the classroom. She graduated the University of Florida with a Master's in Secondary English Education, and has presented at both the NCTE and FCTE conferences. Pankiewicz, will be honored, along with other winners, at the Affiliate Roundtable Breakfast at the Convention on Saturday, November 17, 2007.

Congratulations to Kelly Metzler, *Recipient of the 2007 NCTE Leadership Development Award*

Metzler, a teacher at Indian Trails Middle School in Winter Springs, FL, was nominated by the Florida Council of Teachers of English, an affiliate of NCTE. She is an early career teacher with one to five years of teaching experience who has demonstrated a capacity for professional leadership and a willingness to serve the affiliate during the 2007-2008 academic year. Metzler will be honored, along with other winners, at the Affiliate Roundtable Breakfast at the 2007 Convention.

Teaching: The Heart of Learning
2007 Conference For Professional Development October 18-20, 2007
Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs

Membership Application

The membership year is from October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008.

Dr. Mr. Ms. Mrs.

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone () _____ Other Phone () _____

E-mail _____

**E-mail is required in order to receive FCTE correspondences such as the newsletter and Newsbox

Alternate E-Mail _____

In some cases, servers block mass e-mails. In this case, FCTE will use the alternate address.

School Name _____ County _____

Public Private Other _____

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

- New Member.....\$20.00
- Renewal.....\$20.00
- 2 Year Renewal.....\$35.00
- Retired.....\$10.00
- 2 Year Retired Renewal.....\$17.50
- Student (One Year).....\$10.00

AFFILIATION

- Administration
- Elementary
- Middle/Junior High
- High School
- Community College
- Four Year College/University

Signature of Sponsoring Professor/school

Return this form with your check or money
Order (made payable to FCTE) to:
Paula Clements
4912 Toni Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33813

Are you...

- a member of NCTE?
- willing to become involved in FCTE?
- a member of a local council?

Name: _____

- a local council officer?

Title: _____

****FCTE will not distribute e-mail addresses to any other entity.**

