Empowering Deaf Twins with Language
Empowering Deaf Children with Language

By MARTIN FLORSHEIM, E.D.

Language is the most powerful tool we can give our children. The stronger the language foundation, regardless of the specific language, the more likely they are to succeed when reading, writing or communicating.

Parents are often the source of a child’s early acquisition of language. When a baby is born, s/he is exposed to a language from day one. Nonetheless, learning a first language is something every child does successfully, in a matter of a few years and without the need for formal lessons. Be it speech or sign language, the child’s brain is wired to acquire any language. Research suggests that the first six months are the most crucial to a child’s development of language skills.

Sign language is a mode of communication like speaking; it is not a language. American Sign Language (ASL) is a recognized language like Spanish, German, etc. ASL is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body.

I believe that parents should introduce deaf children to language as early as possible. The earlier any child is exposed to and begins to acquire language, the better that child’s communication skills will become. Generally, when a deaf child is born to hearing parents, the child’s exposure to language is delayed because the parents do not know sign language and can’t provide the child with the visual language they require. A deaf child who is born to deaf parents is at an advantage because they will be exposed to sign language from the start.

For a child to become fully competent in any language, exposure must begin as early as possible, preferably before school age. Native signers of ASL consistently display more accomplished sign language ability than non-native signers, again emphasizing the importance of early exposure and acquisition. A deaf child acquiring English as a language in school may demonstrate lower fluency than his/her hearing peers because they did not acquire language in an early age. Deaf children of deaf parents or hearing parents with fluency in sign language tend to acquire English more fluently because s/he already has the foundation of a primary language (ASL).

Research has yet to prove that cochlear implants can benefit all deaf children because this technology is still relatively new. Recipients of this implant will always be classified as Deaf because they will not be able to hear when they remove the cochlear implant from their head when showering, engaging in physical activity, etc.

I strongly believe that regardless of their auditory status, all children must demonstrate a strong foundation in their primary language before trying to acquire a second language. Deaf children benefit from ASL because it is a visual language that provides solid background for conceptual meaning. Furthermore, it is critical that deaf children acquire English for the purpose of developing their literacy skills. Deaf children who communicate using their dominant language (ASL) can then learn English as a second language. I highly recommend that every child with or without a cochlear implant be provided with equal access to a dual language environment thus enabling them to use both languages for academic and social purposes. Exposure to a dual language environment, both at home and in an educational setting, will contribute to later success and unlimited opportunities for all children.

Dr. Martin Florsheim is Principal of “47” The American Sign Language & English Secondary School.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Blind Mountain Climber Erik Weihenmayer Conquers Everest
To the Editor:
This was a very encouraging story. It shows that despite any kind of disability, you can succeed in life.

Frances Priester
Union, NJ

Helping New Teachers Survive
To the Editor:
I am incredibly comforted by a failed teaching experience. I was trained as more of a director of instruction than a facilitator. I had problems that became problems for others. Your insight has been helpful.

Melinda
Neptune City, NJ

Budget Cuts
To the Editor:
From an educator’s point of view: The cuts that have been made to education are absolutely insane. The federal government continues to raise standard for public education, but lowers the monies needed to make these standards work. I have worked in the public education system for 17 years with mostly low socio-economic students. It is rare that their needs are provided for adequately (even during the best of times). The government does not seem to understand that these children may not only lack the classes they need to be successful because they have little or no resources in their home environments.

I am in Florida and our high stakes testing may be improving education in order to pass tests but there are more and more students who are just drifting away and most of those students barely have a fighting chance from the start due to economic conditions of their families. As an educator I continue to advocate for these students and encourage them. I have organized Christmases for the underprivileged and stood by students whose parents were dying. I have shouldered the tears of a 17 year old as yet another of his friends were shot or killed. I have driven these students to shelters after their parents had abandoned them.

I hope this brings a degree of reality to the forefront and provides a window to the education of the poor.

Dr. Martin Florsheim: Visionary in Educating Deaf & Hearing Children
To the Editor:
This article is great. I would like to contact him to help further her education. she will be staying in a women’s prison in Iowa and she wants to go back to school. Please point me in the right direction to help further her education. She will be staying with me and I cannot afford to pay for her school.

Kathy Corbin
Clinton, IA

Integrating Ex-Inmates Into Society
To the Editor:
My daughter will be released soon from the women’s prison in Iowa and she wants to go back to school. Please point me in the right direction to help further her education. She will be staying with me and I cannot afford to pay for her school.

Paula Kuhlmann
Rothschild, WI

Possible"
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Dr. Martin Florsheim: Visionary in Educating Deaf & Hearing Children
To the Editor:
This article is great. I would like to contact him via email. Thanks.

Lawrene Slims
Washington, DC
Facing History and Ourselves

By JOAN BAUM, Ph.D.

Everyone’s always in a hurry, but though it’s tempting to refer just to “Facing History,” it’s important to invoke the full title of this unusual international educational and professional development organization for educators. It’s “Facing History and Ourselves,” (FHO) as the director of the NYC office, David Nelson, points out. The essential idea behind the 30-year old program is living history—to get middle and high school students to relate what’s going on in the world and in their local communities to their own experiences in order to understand and, it is hoped, effect change that will mitigate intolerance and violence. FHO programs focus on ways in which educators can create and adapt curricula that will prompt students to examine the nature of racism, prejudice and anti-Semitism.

The 2-5 day FHO institutes, which meet all over the country, and abroad, are organized by on-site staff who lead discussions on print and mass media materials and, depending on specific districts and particular requests, make these resources available to classroom teachers. All the institutes subscribe to the same mission, regardless of their geographic location. The goal is to encourage “the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. By studying the historical development and lessons of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives.” Nelson, who has held the position of director since 1993, came to the position by way of his own deepening commitment as a teacher and advisor in math and social studies in various alternative options.

Typically, FHO staff members visit 20-50 schools a year. Nelson himself visits many more, including schools in Westchester and Nassau Counties and New Jersey. Where others speak of particular individuals as mentors, Nelson speaks of the organization itself—its consultants, its staff, its publications, including an FHO staple, the book, Facing History & Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior, a continually updated collection of case studies. Other institute features include promulgating pedagogy research and disseminating study guides and lesson plans, fostering community engagement and instituting special initiatives. There is also, of course, Facing History High School, the result of a partnership between the NYC Department of Education and New Visions. The school, located on west 50th Street (Region 9), has just completed its first year. FHO doesn’t try to effect change by just studying history, Nelson emphasizes, but by engaging students through their FHO-trained teachers to connect humanities, social studies and language arts with their own lives, their own neighborhoods, themselves. If a student sees someone slam another student into a locker, what is the moral obligation to respond? What should that response be? How might others be brought in to support the student who may feel alone or powerless, fearful of doing the right thing? What does history say? What does it mean, of course, that FHO connects with other institutes and with like-minded organizations—museums in the city, the Wiesenthal Center in L.A., for example, and imports what it can to advance its mission. Such connections could also mean using a Bill Moyers series on American history or a rebroadcast of “Eyes on the Prize.” “Whatever is good out there, we will run a best practices workshop on it.”

FHO continues to grow–fuller, richer and, most significantly, online. www.facinghistory.org

FAMILY TRAVEL

Compelling Campobello: FDR’s Summer Home

By JAN AARON

Feel you need a break from summer in New York? You might emulate Franklin Delano Roosevelt and escape to Campobello Island in New Brunswick, Canada. This is where FDR enjoyed many summers; his home is now open to visitors. It’s a wonderful sight and an educational delight. The car-ferry to Campobello departs every 30 minutes from Deer Island, cruising through scenic whale watching waters.

From 1909 to 1921, Franklin, Eleanor and family spent their summers in this rambling, red, two and-one-half story house. He also returned here in 1933, 1936 and 1939. Set amid spacious lawns and begonia, dahlia and rose gardens, the house, built in 1897, was enlarged in 1915 to accommodate their growing family. It has 76 windows, seven fireplaces (heated the entire house), 18 bedrooms and six bathrooms. It was a comfortable home, but had neither electricity nor telephones. Son James would later reminisce that the lack of amenities made it “a wonderful haven against the cares of the world.”

Your first stop is the Visitor Centre to see a film on FDR’s life. The house tour gives a glimpse of the family’s life here. My favorite rooms were the living room and dining room with Roosevelt furnishings, and the spacious kitchen offering ample room for the cook and servants to prepare meals. The assorted hand-driven artifacts in the laundry room made me happy I have an automatic washing machine and dryer. But perhaps most compelling was the master bedroom shared by Franklin and Eleanor until he fell ill with the polio virus in 1921—he was 39. Franklin Roosevelt, Jr. was born in this room.

From a verandah outside the boys’ room and Elliot’s room next door, are beautiful evocative bay views. You can imagine the Roosevelt children giggling and laughing as their dad taught them to sail and swim and explore nooks and crannies that pleased him when as a child he visited Campobello with his parents.

The FDR summer home is the centerpiece of the vast Roosevelt Campobello International Park, established in 1964. Here also are historic Hubbard House, foot and car trails and a picnic area.

The park is open from June 1 to October 12.

We steal what we can,” he says with a laugh, meaning, of course, that FHO connects with other institutes and with like-minded organizations—museums in the city, the Wiesenthal Center in L.A., for example, and imports what it can to advance its mission. Such connections could also mean using a Bill Moyers series on American history or a rebroadcast of “Eyes on the Prize.” “Whatever is good out there, we will run a best practices workshop on it.”

FHO just held its annual meeting in the city. Approximately 30 educators attended, chosen out of an application pool of 80. As always, participants can sign up for life, if they wish, keeping in close touch with FHO program staff who will help them customize resources and who will visit schools and speak with other teachers and with administrators. Meanwhile, FHO continues to grow–fuller, richer and, most significantly, online. www.facinghistory.org
Lessons on Humanity & Fighting for What’s Right: Reverend Al Sharpton Speaks at Oxonian Society

By GILLIAN GRANOFF

For Reverend Al Sharpton, an activist at the forefront of progressive politics for over ten years and ordained minister at the age of four, speaking to an audience of progressive-minded liberals is nothing new. Recently, the Reverend Sharpton captivated his audience of academics, media and professionals with wit, charm and irreverence at the Princeton Club as part of a program sponsored by the Oxonian Society. Known for his brazenness and outspoken nature, I was not at all surprised by Reverend Sharpton’s passionate evisceration of the current administration. Sharpton accused the administration of committing endless injustices in the name of what he termed “bedroom morality,” focusing attention on policies designed to regulate individual behavior rather than finding remedies for poverty, education, racial inequality, health care, social injustice, and the widening gap between the rich and poor.

Sharpton argued that we need to redefine what is morality in our social life and political order. An obsessive preoccupation with dictating the private lives and domestic habits of individuals, threatens to reverse years of progress in the fight for civil liberties. Sharpton summoned his listeners to be wary of “bible thumping” moralists who design social policies in the name of morality and religion. The Bush administration, Sharpton went on to continued to page 7

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Teachers Learn in the Summer: Unraveling Sonnets with Poet Jill McDonough at NY Public Library

By LIZA YOUNG

Education, as pointed out by Harvard Professor Howard Gardner, does not end with the attainment of a formal degree, but ideally is a lifelong process. Public and private high school teachers from New York recently illustrated this process by becoming students themselves, learning under the prestigious fellows of The Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers of the New York Public Library (NYPL). The seminars do not generally lead to teaching credits; teachers are taking time out of their summers, a testament to the program’s excellence as well the students’ devotion to education.

Recently Education Update visited a session of the seminar: “The Sonnet: 500 Years in a Poem the Size of Your Hand,” taught by poet Jill McDonough, a Cullman Center Fellow (2005-06), widely published and a recipient of a 2005 PEN/New England Discover Award. McDonough indicated that the focus on sonnets stems from her work on her latest book, 50 sonnets covering the rich resources available at the library were accessed by students through LION, a database of online literature and Granger’s Index of poetry.

A unique feature of the program is its inclusion of the teachers’ students into a full day of activities at the library. The high schoolers meet with an illustrious Cullman fellow and explore the wonders of the majestic library. “Students get to see the larger world that resonates alive with the “fellow treated students with great respect.”

Participation in the seminar helped transform the process of research paper writing from a daunting task to one which they could master. Sue Clinton from Passaic Valley Regional High School in Little Falls, NJ, highlighted the impact of participation in the seminar for her students. The Great Expectation’s story of working class Piping having to meet the class standards of the time in order to acquire the affection of the wealthy Estella was a theme not palatable to students until

their immersion in the culture and history of the 19th century, an opportunity afforded through last year’s Cullman seminar.

Participation in these intellectually rich seminars involves a competitive process; to be considered teachers are required to write a 250 word essay. Preference is given to teachers from public schools, although teachers from private schools are accepted as well.

For more information on the Cullman Center visit http://www.nypl.org/research/chora/scholars/index.html

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THE POWER BEHIND EVERYTHING YOU DO
Anorexia Nervosa is characterized by an intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat even when underweight. Anorexics often have unusual eating habits and develop compulsive behaviors around food including repeatedly checking their weight and excessive exercise. They may vomit or abuse laxatives as a way of trying to reduce the calories they utilize. Between 0.5-3.7 percent of females will develop anorexia at some point in their life.

Bulimia Nervosa’s symptoms include recurrent periods of binge or excessive eating in a short period of time often followed by purging behaviors and/or periods of fasting or excessive exercise. Bulimia affects up to 4 percent of women. Binge-Eating Disorder is characterized by recurring episodes of binge eating, followed by periods of guilt and disgust. It differs from anorexia and bulimia in that there is no purging, fasting or excessive exercising. This disorder appears to affect men and women equally and may be the most common of the eating disorders—as many as 5 percent of Americans suffer from it. Most with this disorder are overweight or obese.

Eating disorders are treatable. The major components of treatment include: intervening early in the course of the illness before symptoms become chronic; restoring normal weight in patients with anorexia; therapy, often cognitive behavioral therapy; and nutritional counseling. Some patients benefit from medication.

Unfortunately, we cannot easily change our culture that celebrates thinness. However, there are some things that parents can do to change the culture of their own home to reduce the risk of a child developing an eating disorder. Start by helping your child develop healthy eating habits, including eating breakfast and having a daily meal together. Help your child develop a positive attitude toward his or her body. It is important to demonstrate this by example. Discourage the idea that a particular weight or body size will lead to happiness or improve self-esteem.

This monthly column provides educators, parents and families with important information about child and adolescent mental health issues. Please submit questions for ASK THE EXPERT to Glenn S. Hirsch, M.D., Medical Director at the NYU Child Study Center at glenn.hirsch@med.nyu.edu. To subscribe to the ASK THE EXPERT Newsletter or for more information about the NYU Child Study Center visit www.AboutOurKids.org or call 212-263-6622.
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Coping with Competition

By DR. CAROLE G. HANKIN WITH RANDI T. SASCH

Competition has become the name of the game. Years ago, it was a common goal to get into college. But that was years ago. Now, it’s not just about getting into a good college, but emphasis is stronger than ever to get into the “best” college. While no one is going to deny that an Ivy League or “near-Ivy” education can serve you well, history has shown that successful people come from all levels of education. Parents need to decide just how much emphasis they want to put on winning a place at the top.

Unfortunately, the competition for achieving these objectives begins younger and younger. How can parents help their children to achieve their potential without getting too overweight in the competition that can take away from the pleasures of childhood and can also result in damage to a child’s self esteem? The best guidance we can give our children is to encourage them to do their very best, and consistently assure them that we are proud of them when they demonstrate their best effort. Celebrate their accomplishments with enthusiasm and appreciation whether they are number one, two, or thirty. Try to downplay competition at least while they are still in elementary school. Our children will meet no shortage of people who may outperform them in any and every aspect of life—academically, athletically, the arts, socially, and on and on. As parents, we need to be our children’s most ardent supporters and let them know that they are always number one with us. However, it would be irresponsible to intimate that all competition is negative. Schools offer many activities that focus on competition, and participation in these events, especially in middle school and high school, gives students an opportunity to have tangible accomplishments that are reasonable measurements for how they compare with their peers.

Competition can provide rewards for their effort and hard work and can also show students when they need to try harder. Competition to achieve also serves as a powerful motivation for students to do their best.

We have often said here that one of the surest ways we can help our children to succeed is to help them find something to pursue in which they have abilities, talent, and a powerful interest. There will always be the handful of top students who seemingly excel at everything across the board. But if your child has one important area in which he or she can feel special and accomplished, that child will be better prepared to face the competition in school and beyond. We can’t shelter our children from the competitive nature of our society. But we do need to let them know that there is room for many, many winners in the game of life. Let’s prepare them to do their best and let them know that we are always on their team.

Dr. Haskin is Superintendent of Syosset Central School District.

Al Sharpton

continued from page 4

explain, is using this distorted moral compass to prevent homosexuals from marrying and women’s right to choose while allowing millions of Americans to live below the poverty line and continue to suffer. Sharpton traces the origins of this “bedroom morality” back to the 2004 Presidential debates that put an inappropriate emphasis on issues of gay marriage and Roe vs. Wade and forced more critical issues of poverty, race, and social justice to the periphery of the political dialogue.

Bush administration’s unilateral focus on “bedroom morality” as a political platform put pressure on Black churches to vote for him to save the institution of marriage and galvanized the attention of the religious right. Sharpton criticized Bush and the leaders of the Christian Right and their “moral compass” of conveniently losing its sense of direction during the crisis of Hurricane Katrina. He accused President Bush’s delayed and feeble response to the disaster as an act of criminal negligence, and believes proclamations that he was not informed of the extent of the devastation in time to be flat out lies.

Sharpton said the solution is the need for a new ethics in politics that replaces “bedroom morality with a morality of man to man.” He urged Democrats to fight harder on issues that matter and to force the political dialogue to confront the broader issues. There is a disturbing complacence surrounding the civil rights movement, he said, and warned those concerned with the fate of progressive politics to take a stand before it’s too late. He concluded his talk reminding his audience that Republicans are not alone in neglecting their duties as Americans. “I do not have a problem with taking a beating; I do have a problem with being beaten.”

Whether a political strategy, or simply self-promotion, it is certain, however that whether playing the role of political activist, or spiritual leader, Reverend Al Sharpton’s outspoken nature and talented liturgies make his arguments compelling and are rallying cries not only to all democrats, but indeed to all men.

Reverend Al Sharpton formed the National Action Network in 1991 to fight for progressive, popular-based social policies by providing extensive voter education and registration campaigns, economic support for small community businesses, and by confronting corporate racism. That same year, Sharpton was stabbed in a Bensonhurst schoolyard. This represented a turning point for him. Eventually, he met and reconciled with his attacker.

Can You Answer This?

By CHRIS ROWAN

Which U.S. General has a street named after him in New York City and has his right leg bone on display in Washington D.C.? Where is the street and where is his leg?

Answer: Daniel Edgar Sickles. (1819 – 1914). The street is in the Inwood section of northern Manhattan and his right leg bone is on display at the National Museum of Health and Medicine at the Walter Reed Medical center.

Background: Daniel Sickles was a prominent figure in New York City politics, and served as a Congressman in the 1850’s. When the Civil War began, he supported the Union and volunteered for military service. The future General, who would lead tens of thousands of men and boys into battle at Gettysburg was an unusual—and to put it mildly—controversial choice to command troops. In 1859, Sickles murdered Philip Barton Key (son of Francis Scott Key) one block away from the White House after he discovered that Key was having an affair with his wife. A jury found Sickles not guilty on grounds of “tempo-
MEANINGFUL LEARNING THROUGH INVENTION, INNOVATION & INQUIRY

Every child has the natural curiosity to invent the latest, greatest gadget. In an ever-changing technological society, education needs to encourage this creativity. Children today see a technological world where things change at an astounding rate, and it does not faze them. Many teachers grew up in a less technological world, and are sometimes intimidated by the rapid changes. Many parents feel the same way. How can we make up for this difference in understanding of our current world, and the potential ways of spending our time inventing, and people’s lives change so fast that a person is born into one kind of world, grows up in another, and by the time his children are growing up, lives in still a different world? Technology is all around us, yet the classroom usually resembles the same atmosphere as forty years ago. A look at our changing technological society and the schooling process begs the question, “How do we prepare students to enter a technological society?”

The International Technology Education Association (ITEA) is the largest professional educational association, principal voice, and information clearinghouse devoted to enhancing technology education through technology, innovation, design, and engineering experiences at the K-12 levels. Still many people do not understand the breadth of technology. In a 2004 Gallup poll, 73 percent of adults described technology as computers and electronics. The same group, when given a broad definition of technology as “modifying our natural world to meet human needs”, overwhelmingly (97 percent) said that the study of technology should be included in the school curriculum.

Recognizing the need for teachers to include the study of technology curriculum is just one of the foci of ITEA. Recently, with funding from the National Science Foundation, ITEA developed 10 instructional units that enable teachers in the upper elementary/middle school levels to deliver technology through the study of design, engineering, and innovation. This project is entitled Invention, Innovation, and Inquiry (I3). Each standards-based unit is designed to last eight to ten hours by engaging students in “hands-on minds-on” learning that integrates mathematics, science, and writing. Students follow the engineering design process to help them solve a technological design challenge. Each challenge requires students to work as a team, create sketches, build a prototype, test their solution, give a presentation, and see their design ideas change into technological products.

For additional information about Invention, Innovation, & Inquiry, see www.itea.org. The ten units developed for this project include: Invention: The Invention Crusade; Innovation: Inches, Feet, & Hands; Communication: Communicating School Spirit; Manufacturing: The Fudgeville Crisis; Transportation: Across the United States; Construction: Learning Support; Power and Energy; The Whispers of Willing Wind; Design: Tying with Technology, Inquiry: The Ultimate School Bag; Technological Systems: Creating Mechanical Toys.

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What Are You Reading During the Dog Days of Summer? Here’s What Education Update’s Friends & Advisory Council Members Replied

Compiled By Liza Young

In the sweltering days of August we can link back to ancient history, when the term “Dog Days of Summer” was coined by the Romans and even earlier to the ancient Egyptians who named the brightest star of the night sky “Sibhu”, based on a dog-headed divinity. The Greeks later named the star “Sirius,” meaning serious or ardent. The ancients noticed an association between rising temperatures and the “dog star’s” appearance with the sun and began to refer to this coincidence as the “dog days.”

Today, the “Dog Days of Summer” provides a wonderful opportunity to sip an iced tea and catch up on reading lists, from the metaphorically rich works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez to the intriguing tales of Margaret Atwood and the socially perceptive dramas of Jane Austen. Here is the complete list of wonderful reading choices from friends and Advisory Council members of Education Update:


NY State Regent Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez: Playing with the Boys by Aline Valdez-Rodriguez—Fun, predictable, and an easy read; Live To Tell The Tales by Gabriel Garcia Marquez -great, a bit melancholy; Dandelion: The Life of a Mistify by Sheelagh Mawe—easy read, but very insightful, similar to SoulBiscuit; NY State Regent Karen Hopkins: Brookland, Emily Barton: Two Lives, by Vickram Seth; NY State Regent Harry Phillips, 3rd: Ron Suskind’s One Per Cent Solution and Taylor Branch’s At Canaan’s Edge (3rd volume of the M. L. King Bio) and Charles Mann’s “1491” (America before Columbus);

Howard Gardner, Ph.D. Artists tell us what the future might hold. I am interested in the pros and cons of biological engineering. So I just finished reading Kazuo Isiguro’s Never Let Me Go and am taking on a trip next week Margaret Atwood’s Oryx And Crake;

Bonnie Kaiser, Ph.D. Rockefeller University: Mask of Arjuna by A. J. Hartley—Archaeological mystery purely for escapism; Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen; Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope by Shirin Ebadi with Azadeh Moaveni; Istanbul: Memories and the City by Orhan Pamuk; Pauline Smith-Gayle, Principal P.S. 202: blue blood family, the Armstrongs, and with his wife produced three sons. One, Henry, married a farmer’s daughter and was ostracized by the family for marrying beneath his class. The other two, John Jacob III and William Backhouse, Jr. lived side by side in adjacent brownstone mansions on Fifth Avenue between 33rd and 34th Streets. They shared offices in the family business, but did not get along well and this conflict continued with their sons. The book’s main focus is on the two cousins, William Waldorf, son of John Jacob III and John Jacob IV, ‘Jack’, the Astor who went down with the Titanic, son of William Backhouse, Jr. and Caroline Schermerhorn Astor, the famous Mrs. Astor of the New York 400. A moving story within a story is that of William Waldorf, an avid art lover who as a youth on a trip to Italy fell in love with a young Italian, but was not allowed to marry her and was called back to his duties as an Astor heir in the USA. It was he who had the Waldorf Hotel of the original Waldorf-Astoria constructed on the site of his family mansion, where he grew up, between 33rd and 34th Street on Fifth Avenue. His cousins, ‘Jack’ Astor joined in this venture by building the Astoria Hotel right next to the Waldorf in the same style, but seven stories higher. Both hotels remained there until demolished in 1929 to make way for the Empire State Building. This book is well illustrated with wonderful black and white photographs of the original Waldorf-Astoria, as well as pictures of the Astors themselves and William Waldorf’s Cliveden estate in England. During the month of August, Children’s Story Time with Dvora will resume Monday, August 21, 2006 at 3 P.M. Celebrating 30 years of Logos bookstore there is an ongoing sale.

Pola Rosen, Ed.D., Education Update: These choices are based on my studies this past summer at Oxford University on Churchill: Winston and Clementine Letters, edited by Mary Soames (daughter of the Churchill); Churchill by Roy Jenkins (winner of British Book award) and Churchill a Life by Martin Gilbert (both published in Great Britain); Will in the World by Stephen Greenblatt (Pulitzer Prize finalist about William Shakespeare).

Joel Klein, Superintendent of Schools, NYCDOE: The Knowledge Deficit by Daniel Goleman; The Time Machine by H. G. Wells; The Art of War by Sun Tzu; Educating the Rich by E D Hirsch, Jr.; Dean Mary M. Brabeck, Ph.D., NYU School of Education: I just finished re-reading Herodotus’ Inquiry (aka History). His discussion of the Persian War and examination of what is “Greek” (meaning “what is human?”) has its parallels with the current political situation and the global discussion of what marks us as a human community and what is culture/religious identity. Deb Weinstein’s Apprentice to the Flower Poet Z is lyrical and a funny insightful take on higher education. The Kurds: A People in Search of Their Homeland by Azadeh Moaveni gives the history of the largest ethnic group in the world, without a country. Jhumpa Lahiri’s The Namesake is the book we have assigned all our entering freshmen to read. It examines the question of how one develops autonomy while remaining connected to one’s culture and history. Brilliant and well crafted story.

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AUGUST 2006 • EDUCATION UPDATE • SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOOLS
DR. GEORGE ALEXIADES, PIONEER IN COCHLEAR TRANSPLANTS

By JOAN BAUM, Ph.D.

With what can only be called serendipitous coincidence, Education Update caught up with Dr. George Alexiades, an amiable and expert ear surgeon of Greek extraction, to talk about “cochlear” implants. The word “cochlear” comes from Greek, kochlais, which means snail with spiral shell—which is exactly what the cochlear implants look like. Dr. Alexiades, who has been performing the operation in the Department of Otolaryngology at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary (NYEEI)—now “the only such institution in the city”—notes that the surgery, which has been around since the eighties and was once considered experimental, has now entered the mainstream, though for sure, the entire procedure, including device and hospital care can be costly—approximately $50,000. Still, as cochlear implants become more common—NYEEI performed about 120 a year and, Dr. Alexiades says, “the number is growing”—and as insurance companies now cover one ear—the public can probably look forward to some diminution in cost, especially because the field of ENT (ear, nose, throat) itself, of which cochlear implant research and surgery is a specialty, has become incredibly competitive, particularly in New York City.

There has also been a remarkable change in the deaf and hearing-impaired community. Formerly opposed to cochlear implants, the community now supports cochlear implants and in fact sees its own role growing as a provider of ancillary social services. Indeed, as Dr. Alexiades points out, though cochlear implant surgery can be performed on infants as young as seven months and on elderly adults into their nineties, as long as they are in general good health, the best candidates are the very young, children two years old, for example, which means that older children who receive implants will do well if they also receive assistance from the hearing-impaired community, instruction in lip reading or ASL. And no doubt this community will also be providing pre-surgical counseling as well as assist in general education. It’s important to note, for example, that a cochlear implant will not create so-called normal hearing conditions. What it will do is provide a child (or adult) with sound that is interpreted as speech. (Hearing aids, by contrast, amplify sound.) Cochlear implants involve a microphone, a speech processor, a transmitter and electrodes, all of which work together to allow a profoundly deaf child or adult to process speech sounds and communicate. Those who receive an implant early on can even talk on the telephone.

Of course, there is great need for post-op therapy to assist in the development of language and social skills, but Dr. Alexiades, a well regarded researcher as well as surgeon, does feel that cochlear implants have had marvelous results. He cautions, however, that prospective candidates should understand what “success” means, and he notes that this tricky word means different things to children and adults. A government health web site indicates that so far approximately 22,000 adults and 15,000 children have received cochlear implants. (Australia and Austria have also forged ahead making the devices.)

The device itself, which looks like a hearing aid, with a wire and coil, and can be made of titanium or ceramic, has two parts: an internal component—receiver/stimulator, which receives signals from the processor and by way of electrodes carries those signals to the brain, is surgically imbedded under the skin, behind the ear. The external component—a microphone, which is mounted on the outside environment, and a speech processor—is removable at night. As the technology is refined this component can easily be upgraded.

Research does not yet show why some children are born with severe hearing deficits—which might be congenital—whereas others come after birth. Dr. Alexiades says, “In 15 to 20 years we still research may be able to make such determinations. Meanwhile, he is thrilled to be part of a unique field of medicine, the only area that can restore a sense. What “an incredible fact,” he says. And what a remarkable man to say so."

EDUCATION FOR HEARING IMPAIRED STUDENTS

OPENING NEW WORLDS FOR THE DEAF

By VICTORIA FLORSHEIM & ASHISH MALHOTRA

The Auditory/Oral School of New York was founded in 1999 by Pnina Bravmann, an outgrowth of her personal experiences. In 1992, while she was a speech pathologist and pregnant, she was working with a child who, unbeknown to her, had the German measles. Shortly thereafter, her child was born deaf. Bravmann bravely mainstreamed her child from the outset, irrespective of the fact that she was doing it alone, without the supportive services she now offers to hundreds of deaf children in New York City.

The Auditory/Oral School offers programs for children who suffer from a language delay, whether they are profoundly deaf, slightly deaf, or normal with two deaf parents. By the time the children are 5 years old, about 97 percent of them are mainstreamed into regular classes, which is the ultimate goal of the school. The 3 percent who may not be mainstreamed are often cases in which the language delay was identified late. The students undergo a multidisciplinary evaluation, of not just auditory skills, but also sensory and motor/balance skills. Methods of education vary, highlighting auditory, verbal, listening and language skills. Teachers wear microphone headsets to enhance the sound of their voices. Even exercise related activities and games require communication: for instance, differentiating a green beanbag from a red one. All the teachers at the school are certified in the field, but Michelle Bornfeld, the Supervisor of the Speech Therapy Department, made it clear that the efforts of the certified staff are not enough. What is needed is the commitment of time and energy from parents. It is essential that parents act as primary facilitators, by coming to the school on a regular basis to learn teaching strategies so that they can be reinforced at home. “Having the parents buy into this philosophy is essential to making it happen,” Bornfeld asserted. One fascinating aspect of the school, a testament to its commitment to helping families, is that it offers pictures of events in the school day for parents with busy work schedules.

This way, the parents can study the pictures and try to reinforce exercises at home. Another clear philosophy of the school is to force the students to think, and not pamper them because of their impediments. This attitude is a major reason for their high success rate. Creating independent thinkers is how the school gauges its success. During our visit we were introduced to Chana Sklar, the mother of two beautiful 17-month-old twin girls, Dvorah and Hadassah. The baby girls are healthy and were playing water games with their classmates. A very different scene would have faced the viewer only one year ago when Mrs. Sklar turned to the Auditory/Oral School with many questions and concerns as to how the twins would succeed in a “hearing” world. The school, in a massive team effort, helped the young mother and her daughters cope with their deafness by first performing a comprehensive and extensive evaluation; the girls were diagnosed profoundly deaf and the decision was made for them to receive cochlear implants, a procedure where the damaged auditory nerve is replaced with a wire that is threaded through the eardrum into the nerve. A microphone is attached at the outer ear, increasing the capability of noise traveling through the eardrum and nerves. Mrs. Sklar openly admits, “I did not know what decisions needed to be made until I came here.”

Through the services of the Auditory/Oral School the twins participate in parent-child groups, offered to children under the age of two, where they have the opportunity to socialize and learn with their peers, while their mom is provided with tools to enhance the children’s learning at home. Their teacher focuses on improving language, listening, cognitive, speech and socialization skills. In every classroom there are colors, words, shapes and additional tools to boost child’s sensory skills. The Auditory/Oral School of New York uses advanced technology and expertise along with open-minded thinking to facilitate the incorporation of families and children into a hearing society, enabling them to enjoy a fulfilling life.
What do Harry Potter and Oxford University have in common? The magnificent wood-paneled, high-ceilinged Hall at Christ Church College, was the site for Harry and his fellow students to dine as well as the setting for all meals for my 120 classmates in the Oxford Continuing Education Program that I participated in this summer. Surrounded by old, beautiful stained glass windows and hundreds of large portraits of illustrious graduates including prime ministers and notables such as Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), a math don from 1852-1898 and author of Alice in Wonderland, WH (Wystan Hugh) Auden and WEGladstone, it was easy to “think great thoughts” along with the superbly trained faculty and students from around the world. The Department for Continuing Education makes Oxford University accessible to men and women offering several hundred part-time or short full-time courses, covering most subjects taught within the University. During recent years about 16,500 students have enrolled annually for the Department’s courses. The Department is today one of the United Kingdom’s leading university departments for continuing education. It is also one of the oldest, having begun its work in 1878.

There are thirty-nine independent, self-contained and self-governing colleges and six permanent private halls at Oxford. My group was housed at Christ Church, a lovely square surrounded by dormitories and classrooms, fountains and statues, labyrinthian corridors and passageways all enclosed by a 20 foot wall whose entrance, called Tom Tower, was topped by a cupola built by Christopher Wren. At Tom, an old wooden door had 24 hour sentries called porters, dressed in traditional white shirt, black tie, black pants and black bowler hats. These men were guards and ensured proper entrance and security of all buildings.

The history of Christ Church, traditionally known as “The House”, was interesting. Originally founded in 1525 by Cardinal Wolsey as Cardinal College, when Wolsey fell from power before his ambitious grand plan was completed, Henry VIII re-founded the college as Christ Church in 1546 with a dual foundation of college and cathedral, a unique function which it performs to this day. There were 101 students on the original foundation and the college bell, known as Tom, chimes 101 times each evening to mark the traditional curfew.

Wherever we were, we heard Tom tolling its chimes each evening just as it had done for hundreds of years. I was privileged to be a part of a group of about 120 adults ranging in age from 21 to 80, articulate, educated, from all parts of the world, some with spouses, many alone, all brought together by a common thirst for knowledge and intellectual camaraderie. Each class was limited to 12 students, ensuring lively participation by all. Classes ranged from Gardens to British History to Winston Churchill to Great English Novels.

Each day after breakfast in the Hall at 8 am, classes met from 9:15 to 12:30, followed by lunch in the Hall and then various field trips as part of the course work, or free time to explore Oxford and its environs. Evenings were wonderful as well, with a variety of theater, music and lectures around the campus.

My class on Winston Churchill had a field trip to the Cabinet War Rooms and Churchill Museum in London (our private bus took about 2 hours).

On another afternoon, four classmates rented a car to visit Chartwell, the favorite home of Churchill. Annette Mayer was our expert tutor, who used a multi-media approach to teaching including original manuscripts, photographs, powerpoint presentations, and archival movies.

Nearby, the world famous Bodleian Library beckoned to be explored. In the ceiling, inscribed in Latin in an open book is the motto: “The Lord is my guide.” The library has been restored to the beauty of 1610. All the books were originally chained for security purposes.

While the students ranged in age from 21 to 80, the majority were from 50-70. People were super friendly and mingled freely at all meals. My class on Winston included a teacher from Los Angeles, a chartered accountant from London, a retired doctor from San Bernardino, a retired doctor from Atlanta, a Annapolis grad, and a couple from Atlanta. All had interesting stories to share.

The Bodleian Library, taking its name from the Latin word for house, is one of the oldest public libraries in Europe and the oldest university library in the English-speaking world. It is the library of the University of Oxford.

The Bodleian Library contains over 10 million books and a rich collection of manuscripts, maps, prints, photographs, and more. It is a popular destination for students, researchers, and history enthusiasts alike.

On May 20th, the Bodleian Library hosted an open house event, where visitors were invited to explore various exhibits and learn about the history and collections of the library. The event was free and open to the public, and it provided an excellent opportunity for people of all ages to discover the treasures housed within this iconic institution.

In addition to the open house event, the Bodleian Library offers a range of programs and services. These include library instruction sessions, research support, and a special collections exhibit. Visitors can also attend lectures, workshops, and other events hosted by the library.

Overall, the Bodleian Library is a must-visit destination for anyone interested in the rich history and culture of Oxford and the United Kingdom. Its collections are truly remarkable, and the library itself is a beautifully preserved building that stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of learning and scholarship.

The Bodleian Library is located in the central area of Oxford, just a short walk from the city center and many of the main tourist attractions. It is easily accessible by public transportation, and there is ample parking available nearby.

In summary, the Bodleian Library is an incredible resource for anyone interested in history, research, or simply appreciating the beauty and significance of this iconic institution. Whether you are a student, a scholar, or simply someone with a love for books and learning, the Bodleian Library is definitely worth a visit.
TEACHING POETRY

Kevin Stein, Poet Laureate, Illinois

Q: At what age did you start writing?
A: My own formal studies in poetry reached their peak at Indiana University in the early 80s, where I was gifted with devoted teachers and a slew of inspiring literary pals. Still, as I tell my own students, one learns more outside of the classroom than in it. My most vivid memories of sudden revelation revolve around either the sleg of my solitary labors or late-night gatherings of poet friends in coffeehouses and bars, our fresh poems unfolded from our back pockets and passed around for others’ responses.

Q: Can you share some of the inspirations for your writing?
A: Like many of my generation, I was a member of a pretty lame garage band, so my first poems were “moon/June/soon” lyrics for the band. In retrospect, however, I was primed to love of language by my parents’ dinnertime ritual of asking us kids to describe something that happened during our day. They were teaching us to write the narrative of our lives and to ponder our connection with our fellow beings. The best-told story always earned the most kudos, something every kid craves.

Q: Which writer has been the greatest inspiration to you? Who are your favorite poets?
A: Sometimes it’s merely a single word that echoes in my mind or a snippet of overheard conversation. Other times it’s what appears outside my window, say, the blood red cardinal at rest upon a branch of still-green apples. Many times it’s what I’m reading—poetry, science, history, the newspaper—or the music I’m listening to. It’s anything that snags my attention. As Malebranche says, “Attention is the natural prayer of the soul.”

Q: Which writer has been the greatest inspiration to you? Who are your favorite poets?
A: Such a question is a fair one, but it’s a little like asking a child, “Which parent do you love the most?” I’ve been influenced by numerous poets from the long dead to my contemporaries. If I read something and it takes the top of my head off, as Emily Dickinson says, then I know it’s poetry, and I want to do something like that. If pressed, I’d point to the American poet James Wright, whose work I love for its intellectual and emotional range.

Q: What are some of the challenges you’ve faced?
A: Naturally, one thinks first of the external barriers—attraction editors’ attention, building an audience, learning the ropes. But in reality the biggest hurdles lie inside oneself. By this I mean overcoming one’s innate sloth and tendency to frustration. I mean learning to see one’s nagging self-doubt as the engine that drives one’s finding newer and better ways of expression. I mean overcoming and loving the self simultaneously.

Q: What is your advice to young writers today?
A: I’d suggest the three Rs: Read, Revise, and Risk. Read everything and everybody: poetry, science, history, philosophy, and the newspapers. Most importantly, read both those you love and those who challenge your own dearest assumptions. Revise Be one not easily satisfied. Find a community of fellow writers and seek out their opinions. Risk. You’ll grow as an artist only when you risk your emotional and intellectual life. Risk surprising yourself, or you’ll never surprise your reader. To read additional interviews about Poet Laureates, visit www.educationupdate.com and search for “poet laureates”.

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National Museum Of Health & Medicine: Death of Pres. James Garfield

One-hundred and twenty-five years ago this summer, our nation’s 20th president, James A. Garfield, was assassinated in Washington, D.C.

To commemorate this anniversary, and for the first time in more than a decade, the National Museum of Health and Medicine is displaying “The Death of President James A. Garfield: An exhibition to commemorate the 125th anniversary of his assassination,” which features the vertebrae where President Garfield was shot and reproductions of photographs and artwork related to him and his injury.

These items are among several specimens, artifacts, artwork, and photographs in the museum’s collections that relate to the assassination and to the assassin, Charles Guiteau, although the focus of the exhibition is on the medical care and suffering of the President.

On July 2, 1881, just 100 days after his inauguration, Garfield entered the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, D.C., to board a train bound for Williamstown, Mass., when Charles Guiteau fired two shots at the President. One bullet grazed the President’s right arm. The second bullet entered Garfield’s lower right back. Although mortally wounded, Garfield would linger for 80 days before succumbing to complications from the wound. Despite the best efforts of a team of notable physicians, President Garfield died on Sept. 19, 1881.

In respect of the 80 days that President Garfield suffered, the life of this exhibit will also be 80 days. It will close Sept. 19, 2006, exactly 125 years to the day of President Garfield’s death.

The centerpiece of the exhibit is the 12th thoracic and 1st and 2nd lumbar vertebrae of President Garfield. The bullet entered Garfield’s lower right back. Although mortally wounded, Garfield would linger for 80 days before succumbing to complications from the wound. Despite the best efforts of a team of notable physicians, President Garfield died on Sept. 19, 1881.

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The centerpiece of the exhibit is the 12th thoracic and 1st and 2nd lumbar vertebrae of the president, which includes a red probe showing the path of the bullet. Also on display are reproductions of a drawing of Garfield’s wound and deathbed, photos of Dr. Daniel S. Lamb and Dr. Joseph J. Woodward, two doctors from the Army Medical Museum who took charge of the examination of the president, and a drawing by Alexander Graham Bell of his metal detector invention that was used unsuccessfully to locate the bullet in President Garfield’s body.

Although our collections are rich in anatomical specimens, historical objects, and archival materials that document the complete story of President Garfield’s assassination and the trial and eventual execution of his assassin, Charles Guiteau, we chose to focus this exhibition on Garfield and his story of medical care and suffering. In keeping with this goal, the vertebrae of Garfield are the centerpiece of the exhibition,” said Lenore Barbian, Ph.D., the museum’s curator of anatomical collections.

The National Museum of Health and Medicine was established in 1862 when U.S. Army Brig. Gen. William Alexander Hammond, the U.S. Army Surgeon General, issued orders that directed all Union Army medical officers “to collect, and to forward to the office of the Surgeon General all specimens of morbid anatomy, surgical or medical, which may be regarded as valuable; together with projectiles and foreign bodies removed, and such other matters as may prove of interest in the study of military medicine or surgery.”

The museum’s more than 24 million specimens and artifacts are registered by the U.S. Department of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark and it is the only museum collection in Washington, D.C. with this status because of its “exceptional value in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States.” For information call (202) 782 2200 or visit www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum. Admission and parking are free.
HONORARY DEGREES: Who’s Chosen & Why

Compiled by Liza Young

With echoes of graduation only one month ago, Education Update recently gathered information from several colleges regarding how recipients of honorary degrees are chosen, including a history of past honorees.

Marymount Manhattan College
Distinguished in three areas: scholarship, business, and the arts. We get nominations from faculty, staff, students, and board members. We then look at the individuals to ensure that they are a good complement to the College’s mission and that they are relevant to the graduates in some way, that their message would likely be beneficial to them. Below is a list of some famous past honorees.


College of New Rochelle
At The College of New Rochelle, nominations are made and reviewed by the College’s Board of Trustees. The Board selects candidates who best exemplify the values consistent with CNR’s mission, i.e. Catholic, liberal arts, women’s higher education, diversity, service and professional achievement.

Previous recipients of an honorary degree from CNR have included:

- College Presidents: Dr. Norman C. Francis (Xavier University), Dr. Johnetta Cole (Spelman), Theodore Hesburgh (Notre Dame); Religious Leaders: John Cardinal O’Connor, Edward Cardinal Egan, Desmond Tutu; Civic & Media Leaders: Representative John Lewis (D-Georgia), Former Ambassador Corinne (Lindy) Boggs; Philanthropists: Frederick P. Rose; Scholars: Cornel West, John Hope Franklin; Service: Sister Patricia Cruise S.C., Sister Mary Rose McGeady S.C. (both from Covenant House).

Queens College, CUNY
Each year around January, the Chair of the Sub-Committee on Honorary Degrees, which is part of the Queens College (QC) Committee on Honors and Awards of the Academic Senate, sends out a campus-wide invitation for nominations for Honorary Degrees. The Sub-Committee considers the nominations they have received. Those that are approved are forwarded directly to the Academic Senate for voting. Once the Senate confirms the nominations, they are then submitted to the Queens College President. Following his approval, the list of candidates are forwarded to the Chancellor of the City University of New York, Matthew Goldstein (CUNY), of which QC is a part, no later than March 10. After the Chancellor has reviewed the candidates, he then presents them to the CUNY Board of Trustees for their examination and approval during their next executive session.

Criteria: Honorary Degrees serve to recognize the achievements of people who have made significant contributions to the progress of the college, its principles or academic or professional disciplines, or who have brought honor to the college through their work.

Among some of the most well-known honorees have been: Aaron Copland: American composer; Jonas Salk: Medical doctor who developed the polio vaccine; Marvin Hamlisch: Film and musical composer; Jerry Seinfeld: TV actor/comedian/writer. This year’s Honoree, Lieutenant-General Romeo A. D’Allaire commanded a U.N. Mission to Rwanda from 1993-94 and tried to stop the genocide that claimed 800,000 lives in 100 days.

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By EMILY SHERWOOD, Ph.D.

As a young person, Dr. Jane Fernandes, who was born with limited hearing and became profoundly deaf soon afterwards, attended mainstream schools and spoke English. It was not until the age of 23 that she even learned sign language. Yet just as (in her words) “all roads lead to Rome,” Fernandes felt a magnetic pull to the Washington, D.C.-based Gallaudet University, the internationally pre-eminent liberal arts and career development institution for deaf and hard of hearing students, which she joined in 1995 as vice president of its Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center.

“Gallaudet is the cauldron where all issues affecting deaf people are developed and thought through, where controversies are talked through,” explains Dr. Fernandes when interviewed with her interpreter by phone. And so, after a six year stint as Gallaudet’s Provost, Fernandes enthusiastically accepted the Board’s offer in May to become its ninth president, the first deaf woman to preside over the university and the second deaf president in its 142 year history.

Speaking in a clear, nuanced voice and peppered with humor, Fernandes outlines the challenges facing modern education of the deaf. “In 1864 when Gallaudet was founded, deaf students were not assimilated into society. They were mostly white men,” she explains. Now, there is more racial diversity, which impacts the curriculum and hiring of faculty. “We want all students to see themselves reflected in the faculty and to feel welcome,” Fernandes says simply. Moreover, more than 80 percent of deaf and hearing impaired students currently attend public schools. “They don’t have a strong sense of a deaf community. We want them to learn about the richness of the deaf community,” she adds. And there are now technological advances such as the cochlear implant that are helping individuals with hearing impairments to process sound better and have a greater opportunity for success. “Students are coming to us better prepared than ever,” concludes Fernandes. “That challenges the University to provide a better and better education for these people.” And how does she intend to lead Gallaudet into the twenty first century? Fernandes’ goals are crystal clear. “All deaf people should have the chance to learn all languages and forms of communication that they will need when they grow up.” Consequently, the Gallaudet model teaches both American Sign Language (ASL) and English in a bilingual approach. “Sign language was historically seen as something for deaf people who couldn’t speak clearly...The truth is, sign language is on par with other languages of the world,” explains Fernandes. And she’ll continue to emphasize interdisciplinary education, with faculty from different departments teaching the same subject from different perspectives. For example, a popular course on the trial of O.J. Simpson examines that event from the various perspectives of law, public figure status, history, athletics, and race. “This teaches students to respect people who have different views from themselves. We need to respect differences. We must allow deaf people to be who they are. That’s really what’s taught in an interdisciplinary curriculum,” she concludes. Fernandes is particularly excited about a joint venture between two departments that don’t traditionally work together: the Hearing, Speech and Language Sciences Department, that works on cochlear implants, and the ASL Department, that provides education in sign language, deaf culture and deaf history. “It is important for the future that these two schools be brought together,” underscores Fernandes.

But first things first. In response to protests among some students and faculty after her appointment was announced last May, Fernandes realizes that she will have to spend significant time communicating with all key stakeholder groups. She’s planned a series of coffees and small group meetings come fall, and she will be setting up a blue ribbon panel to examine the controversy over her appointment. “Let their [students and faculty’s] voices be known,” she says resolutely.

And—oh yes—there’s a book that’s almost on the way to the publisher, a study of deaf people in history who’ve made important public addresses, titled Signs of Eloquence: A Study of Deaf American Public Address. One of the most evocative portraits in the book is that of Laurent Clerc, the first deaf teacher in the U.S., who traveled throughout the country in the early 1800’s and persuaded Americans through sign language that deaf people could talk. Another figure highlighted in the book is George Veditz, erstwhile President of the National Association of the Deaf, who made an impassioned speech in 1913 on the need for deaf people to preserve sign language. Does Fernandes see an irony in the fact that the battle over the efficacy of sign language in deaf education has been raging for nearly a century? “As long as there are deaf people on earth, there will be sign language,” she answers firmly. “And yet there are all different kinds of beliefs. That’s why diversity is our issue.”

In the end, Fernandes hopes to see a time “when we’re not so focused on which language or technology is best, but rather we look at how those tools that can most benefit students are given to them.” Fernandes is optimistic, too, that the gap between deaf and hearing students is closing. “I see teaching strategies backed up by research being increasingly successful. We are doing better than ever at our job. It’s really a very good time to be deaf,” she concludes philosophically.

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REACHING THE WORLD FROM A PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOM

By LIZA YOUNG

Becoming a global citizen is vital to the education of students, yet challenging to achieve in an environment so heavily focused on testing in math and reading. A remedy to this situation is provided through the innovative efforts of Reach the World, a non-profit organization created by Heather Halstead and Marc Gustafson in 1998, focused on bringing round-the-world journeys of the 43-foot Makulu sailboat directly to under-funded classrooms by satellite. Students and teachers can also vicariously experience the voyages of the Makulu through the Reach the World website (www.reachtheworld.org), where students read journals of the captain and crewmembers and have their questions about the journey answered. Teachers can visit the “Floating Classroom” which provides curriculum resources related to the Makulu voyages. This year the crew sailed 12,000 miles, beginning from Cairns, Australia through to Milan, Italy, stopping in 13 countries and numerous ports. Crew members experienced the perfect union of education and sailing while on board the Makulu. Captain of the crew, Jim Bender, with 12 years experience in maritime work, is currently pursuing a master’s degree in environmental education. Amid Mignatti, a teacher from Texas who joined the crew this year found the experience to be educationally enriching for crew members and students alike. She mastered the skill of sailing as well as the ability to live on a boat for 10 months with four people whom she had never before met and was able to use her background in education to serve as a liaison between teachers and the crew out in the field. Crew members also visited schools at port sites, asking questions formulated by children in NYC public schools, closing the global gap by singing songs in English and to turn having songs sung back by children in their respective languages. Back in New York, students were engaged throughout the journey, emailing queries with respect to crew members’ favorite food, places and animals.

At the close of the school year students and teachers from PS 122 and PS 175, who followed the Makulu crew throughout their journey, had the opportunity to meet face to face with the captain and crew at the prestigious Explorers Club—founded in 1904 to promote exploration of land, sea and air. The Reach the World experience is a rewarding one for students. Tatiana Noori of PS 122, Queens enthusiastically stated: “What I like about Reach the World is the places they went, the animals and food they saw.” She especially enjoyed learning about the orangutans—“people of the forest”—whose home is Kalimantan on the Island of Borneo.

The students of Michelle Crawford, 4th grade teacher of PS 122, participating in the Reach the World program for the second year, provided a creative presentation of the impact of their global experience. Fifth grade students of Natasha Spurny, PS 175, participated in the program for the first time this year, and gave powerpoint presentations illustrating the history, culture, and geography of the Makulu site visits.

Thus far, Reach the World has reached 75 classrooms in NYC. By 2008, the vision is to expand so that 250 classrooms can have daily adventures across the globe.
Goldman Sachs Students Worldwide Learn Leadership Skills At Institute For International Education

By ASHISH MALHOTRA

Recently, Education Update visited Goldman Sachs Global Leaders Program under the umbrella of the Institute for International Education (IIE) headed by Dr. Allan Goodman, President and CEO and Peggy Blumenthal, VP and COO. Students from around the globe were chosen after a rigorous selection process. Each participant in the program was nominated by their university, then went on to a selection process by IIE. Scott Moore, a rising junior at Princeton University was one of the selected few who felt that one of the best parts of the program was meeting and remaining friends with his diverse peer group. Among an illustrious array of speakers, Moore liked Craig Newmark, the founder of Craigslist, “a down to earth and humble guy, an atypical leader.”

Klaudia Stefania Benzce, of Eotvos Lorand University in Hungary, agreed with Moore and marveled at the diversity of the peer group. “I have met types of people whom I’ve never seen before. For example, I’ve never seen Mexicans or South Africans before.” Benzce was thrilled to learn about new regions such as Latin America and Africa over the course of the program.

One of the highlights of the event was the Kofi Annan Case study. The students watched a condensed film piece on United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan as a leader, which was followed with a speech by Gillian Sorensen, who worked under Annan for many years. A key point made in the video, by Annan himself, was that as a leader, he has no real power. He has no armed forces, and the decisions made within the U.N. are made by its member states. However, his job is to “try and speak for the weak and to persuade governments.” His power is the power of persuasion.

Sorensen, who worked with Annan and his predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, juxtaposed the leadership styles of the two. Ghali, was a highly educated and elite Egyptian, but according to Sorensen, he lacked basic people skills. Sorensen indicated that Ghali lacked the ability to lead, inspire or empower his team and that he alienated those within his circle. She did not deny that he had a brilliant mind, but she said it and “he was moving forward without his team. Brilliance and intellect are not enough to lead. You must convey respect to your team.”

Sorensen’s view of Annan as a leader was starkly different to that of Ghali as a leader. According to her it was clear from the very first day, when Annan delivered a powerful message to his team. “We are in this together. Without you I cannot possibly succeed.” He went on to take sweeping action within the secretariat, encouraging mid level mentoring, weekly, cabinet style meetings with his team which he allowed to speak out to the press in their various “areas of competence.” Sorensen underscored communication and interaction as the key differences between Ghali and Annan’s terms. She presented her points with anecdotes and examples that captivated the Goldman Sachs Global Leaders. From the Iraq War, she said it could be learned that the best leaders deal with adversity with the approach to “not quit, seek advice, do your work and don’t give up.”

“New York students and families are getting hit with one of the largest interest rate hikes on student loans ever. Families across the country are pinching pennies so they can afford to send their children to college. They are willing to sacrifice a lot for a college education, but it is getting harder and harder as costs go up and student debt goes up too,” according to Toby Chaudhuri, Campaign for America’s Future Communications Director. College students and graduates will be pushed deeper into debt as interest rates on Stafford loans—the basic student loan—rise from 5.3 percent to 7.14 percent on old loans and to 6.8 percent on new loans at the end of this week.

Parents that take out PLUS loans to help their children pay for an undergraduate education also face rising interest rates. Now, rates on PLUS loans will increase from 6.1 percent to nearly 8 percent for existing loans and to 8.5 percent on new loans, costing the average parent nationally an extra $3300 and $3953 respectively.

Campaign for America’s Future co-director Robert Borosage explained how Congress has carried out a raid on student aid through acts of commission and omission. “The failure of the current administration and Congress to make college affordable for all qualified students is a disservice to the country,” said Borosage. “The Republican leadership has allowed interest rates on student loans to rise, increased the interest rate on loans that parents take out to help pay for their children’s education and refused to allow a vote on a bill that would cut interest rates in half on new loans.”

The rising interest rates come at a bad time for American families attempting to pay for college. Tuition at the average 4-year public university increased by 40 percent since 2001, and nearly two-thirds of all 4-year college graduates now have student loans. Students and their parents are going further into debt, creating a burden that is often unsustainable. Student loan debt already causes 14 percent of young graduates to delay marriage; 30 percent to hold off on buying a car; 21 percent to postpone having children; and 38 percent to delay buying a home.

Students and families need relief from rising interest rates on student loans. Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., and Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., responded to the public’s concern earlier this year by introducing legislation that cuts student loan interest rates in half. Their legislation would have saved New York students and families $5191 in payments.8

For more information: http://ourfuture.org/issues_and_campaigns/education/loan_rates_rise.cfm.

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POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY OFFERS GRADUATE TUITION SCHOLARSHIP FOR EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS TO ENHANCE MATH AND SCIENCE TRAINING IN SCHOOLS

In his bestselling book, *The World Is Flat*, Tom Friedman writes “By any measure, our students are falling behind the rest of the world, especially in math and science.” This quote underscores the decline in U.S. education in the arenas of math and science and expresses a critical need for the system’s improvement.

It is key, therefore, that we redouble our efforts in engaging students in these subjects, and also show them the multitude of career opportunities available with advanced training in math, science, engineering, and technology. It is in this spirit that Polytechnic University provides the educational community with a special graduate scholarship designed with this urgency and the needs of educators in mind.

In recognition of the fact that New York schools need to keep their teachers and staff on the cutting edge of their fields, particularly in the arenas of Math and Science, Polytechnic University is pleased to announce the Scholarship for Teachers and Education Professionals.

This scholarship entitles teaching and educational professionals working in grammar schools, middle and junior high schools, high schools and college to a 50% tuition scholarship on graduate education at Polytechnic University. This is a tremendous opportunity for teachers and for other educational professionals who are seeking an advanced degree.

The NYS Dept. of Education now requires all science teachers with a BS in science and an MA in education to take 12 additional graduate course credits in the branch of science in which they are teaching. For example, high school Chemistry teachers who do not have a MS in Chemistry will be required to take 12 graduate credits in Chemistry.

Teachers and other educational persons at all levels are invited to take advantage of this career-building opportunity. Interested persons can apply to Polytechnic University at www.poly.edu/graduate. Once admitted, applicants will need to submit proof of employment in the form of a letter from the school district in which they work.

To learn more about this scholarship and the Power of PolyThinking visit: www.poly.edu/graduate/scholarship

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