

SPED Talk



A Newsletter for the Alumni and Friends of the UW-Eau Claire Department of Special Education

Fall 2007

From Beginning to Experienced ... in Alaska

By Jana Heitkamp ('01)

We can all remember graduating from college and getting that first teaching job. You go through so many emotions—nervousness, excitement. You think thoughts like, “Am I ready for this? What if teaching isn’t for me? I feel prepared but will I really know what I am doing?”

In January 2002, I accepted my first job as a special education resource teacher. Not only was it my first teaching job, but also I would be moving thousands of miles away, from family and friends, to Anchorage, Alaska. I was hired over the telephone and had no idea what to expect—economics, school environment, and type of neighborhood the school was located in. Nearly six years later, I am teaching at the same school and continue to have a daily view of the majestic mountains and occasional sighting of moose on the playground. The winters are a bit dark but you adjust and learn ways to get through it.

I graduated from UW-Eau Claire with a degree in learning disabilities. Quickly, I found out that I would have to learn about other disabilities, as well. I have worked with students diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Orthopedic Impairments, Down Syndrome, Autism, Early Childhood Developmental Delays,



and Learning Disabilities. Frequent research and a lot of collaboration with other special education staff, including related service personnel, have helped me better understand these exceptionalities.

Teaching in the field of special education has a lot of rewards. I love working with the smaller groups of children and seeing their progress on a more frequent basis. Also, working with my students for more than one year allows me to really get to know their learning styles and build that rapport with parents. In addition, I thrive on the challenge of differentiating my lessons based on students’ individual needs.

I have my frustrations as well, though. There are times when I find it difficult to meet all of my students’ needs because I struggle to

find that balance between the paperwork and the teacher. Paperwork—ah, the paperwork. Collaborating with the general education teacher is a huge (but important) task. It can certainly be tough to work with so many different teachers and adjust to each of their individual teaching styles. One of the biggest lessons I have learned is this: I can’t do it all. It’s difficult to manage the paperwork, plan lessons, set up meetings, facilitate meetings, test students, collaborate with teachers, modify classroom work, etc. I have high expectations for myself and I do the best job I can with the support and staff I work with. If I don’t get something done one day, it’s okay. Our school has a phenomenal team and that is so important, not only for my well being but for the benefit of students.

As a staff member, I feel my role extends beyond a special education teacher. I have been a board member on a local literacy council for four years. I also organize and run the student DJ program, co-advisor for the student council, set up a birthday club for our school staff, and help organize food drives, book swaps, spirit days, and movie nights.

I intend to continue my teaching career in the field of special education. The rewards definitely outweigh the frustrations and, in the long run, the kids make it all worthwhile.

2006-07 Graduates

We thought it might be interesting for you to know where some of our recent graduates have gotten jobs. Here are the ones we know about.

NAME	JOB LOCATION	NAME	JOB LOCATION
Alberg, Rachel	Hudson Middle School-LD	Knutson, Sarah	Elm Creek Elementary, Maple Grove, MN-CD
Bemis, Jenna	Portage County Elementary-Multicat	Kriesel, Jennifer	Seneca Middle School
Benedict, Kristin	Sparta High School-LD	Laufenberg, Trina	Greeley, CO-SID
Bingenheimer, Nathan	New Heights School, Stillwater, MN-LD	Morehouse, Nicole	Janesville Craig High School-LD
Brinkmann, Jesse	Manitowoc-CD	Needham, Meghan	Farmington, MN-CD
Diebold, Sarah	Mindora High School-LD	Rude, Marjean	Osseo Fairchild High School
Foley, Mackenzie	Iowa-CD	Schmidt, Jodi	Faribault, MN
Helleen, Jennifer	Chippewa Falls High School-EBD	Schultz, Amanda	Altoona High School-CD
Hill, Anna	Shodair Children Hospital, Helena, MT-EBD	Simpson, Mae	Barron Elementary- CD
Huth, Shalene	Elmwood Junior High-LD	Smith, Laura	West Side Elementary, Mauston-ECSE
Huyck, Sarah	Carmelite Home for Boys, Wauwatosa-EBD	Swanson, Rebecca	Osceola Intermediate-EBD
Jaeger, Nicole	Lincoln High School, Manitowoc-CD	Tetzlaff, Lisa	Milwaukee area
Johnson, Julia	Edgerton Elementary-EBD	Trad, Evan	Erie Elementary Charter School, Chicago, IL
Kennin, Holly	Neenah High School-CDB		

■ Snider Nominated for National Award

Vicki Snider was selected as the 2007 University nominee for the CASE Outstanding Professor Award. Since 1981, the U.S. Professors of the Year program has rewarded outstanding professors for their dedication to teaching, commitment to students and innovative instructional methods. It is the only national program to recognize college and university professors for their teaching skills. The program is sponsored by CASE and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which hosts the final round of judging and sponsors the cash award given to U.S. national winners. CASE works with Carnegie and 26 other higher education associations to direct and promote the program.

■ Other Awards

- Stephen Dempsey received the 2006-07 Favorite Professor Award from Katherine Thomas Residence Hall.
- Rose Battalio was presented with the 2007 Accessibility Recognition award in appreciation of an individual who has been exceptionally supportive of the needs of students with disabilities and ensures that the educational environment is accessible.
- Vicki Snider recently received a Promising Practice award from the Wisconsin PK-16 Leadership Council in recognition of the LEAP Clinic (Learning Enhancement and Progression Clinic).
- Rose Battalio was presented with the O.W.L. Award (Older, Wiser Learners) from nontraditional students.

■ SCEC Scholarships to LD Students

For the past two years, the Student Council for Exceptional Children (SCEC) has given out two \$250 scholarships to local Chippewa Valley high school students with disabilities who are pursuing additional post secondary education. The philosophy behind these scholarships is to support the access of students with disabilities to post secondary training or education in the spirit of the IDEA transition mandate. What better way to show support for an individual's transition vision than to offer financial support through this scholarship program.

SCEC does fund raising activities during the year to support this program as well as all the other activities they assist with or promote. SCEC is all about making the life of persons with disabilities better, and this scholarship program is another fine example of their dedication.

■ Field Placement Changes

Over the past year, we have implemented curriculum changes to align classroom learning to field experiences. SPED 301 and CI 305 continue to be taught collaboratively. Robin UMBER (Curriculum and Instruction) and Art Brandt (Special Education) work together to provide instruction and experiences in general education developmental reading and to help students to develop professional dispositions early in their career.

SPED 404, "Prestudent Teaching Experiences with Students with Mild Disabilities," is now structured into two 3-week blocks and is taken concurrently with SPED 431, "Methods for Elementary Students with Mild Disabilities" (which is now a 4-credit class). This arrangement allows pre-student teachers to apply what they learn in SPED 431. During their special education "block," pre-student teachers assess children, design and teach a series of lessons, monitor progress, and apply behavior management skills. So far, feedback from cooperating teachers and participants has been positive.

■ Director Online Certification

The Director of Special Education and Pupil Services licensure program is now approved by the Wisconsin DPI. There are four required courses (12 credits) and they are all offered online.

Admission requirements include three years of related professional experience, a minimum 3.0 G.P.A. and one on the following qualifications:

- Admission to the UW-Eau Claire M.S.E. program
 - A master's in special education
 - A degree in school psychology
 - A master's in education administration or leadership
 - A master's degree in a licensure area recognized by the Wisconsin DPI, plus school administrator licensure.
- Courses (3 credits each)
- SPED 782 - Special Education Law (1st Summer Session)
 - SPED 786 - Leadership in Special Education (2nd Summer Session)
 - SPED 787 - Leadership in Pupil Services (Fall)
 - SPED 789 - Practicum (Fall/Spring)

All courses are offered through the UW-Eau Claire Continuing Education. For information contact Julie Aminpour at 715-836-4021 or aminpoj@uwec.edu.

■ Special Educators in Scotland



Wow what a trip! Rose Battalio and ten excited and hard-working students spent six weeks in Dalkeith, Scotland going to school, staying with Scottish host families, meeting up with the Wisconsin in Scotland students, and exploring the beautiful scenery of Scotland. These students had the pleasure of becoming more acquainted with the culture of the Scottish school system by spending two weeks working with students with a variety of needs. Each student had a unique experience; some were in regular primary schools, while others were in special residential schools that served students with more intense needs. In addition, we ended the experience with a wonderful trip into the Scottish Highlands with people from other countries such as Australia, Germany, France, and Canada. Having the other people on the trip allowed for some great conversation and impromptu history and cultural lessons. Laughter and smiles were wide spread as our guide, Ruthie, took us on a fabulous trip! The whole experience was a personal journey where all of us come back with many things to think about!

■ In Memoriam— Betty Woods

Elizabeth Love Woods, age 87, died Sunday, April 16, 2006, at Brighton Gardens Assisted Living in St. Charles, Ill. She was born on October 5, 1918, in Rollo, Ill., to Bendik and Alta (Love) Benson.

Mrs. Woods began her more than 50-year teaching career in a one-room schoolhouse near Hinckley, Ill. She taught in the Rollo and Paw Paw elementary schools and in the Laboratory School and the special education department at Northern Illinois University. She retired as an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. She was active for many years in the Council for Exceptional Children and was a member of the American Legion Women's Auxiliary.

FACULTY Notes



Pictured Back: Art Brandt, Vicki Snider, Renee Chandler, Stephen Dempsey, Rose Battalio, Linda Brunner; Pictured Front: Joe Morin, J. Todd Stephens

Dr. Rose Battalio spent a very busy summer teaching in Scotland for 6 weeks with ten great students. This was the first time the program was extended to 6 weeks, which allowed for more exploration and becoming familiar with the Scottish culture. The experience ended with a marvelous trip in the Highlands including a hike to the top of Ben Nevis! The department will continue to develop placements in Scotland for summer 2009. This planning will include investigating the possibility of collaborating with Scottish universities that have teaching programs. In addition, Rose also co-taught the Advanced Behavior Methods course with Dr. Stephens for the first time.

Mr. Art Brandt had a very exciting 2006-07 year. He had the privilege to teach many classes for the department and spend a great amount of his time working out in the field with students in SPED 301, 404, and student teaching placements. The best part of his job is observing young emerging teachers taking on a greater role in the teaching process in schools in the Chippewa Valley and surrounding rural communities. The support from our area teachers has been outstanding and the preparation students receive from our special education staff is the best.

Mrs. Renee Chandler had a busy 2006-07 academic year including teaching courses for the department and completing her second year of doctoral studies at the University of Saint Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. She will be teaching full-time for the department this year and continuing her studies in Educational Leadership at St. Thomas where she continues to pursue research interests in the areas of mild disabilities and students living in poverty.

Dr. Stephen Dempsey continues to serve on the Higher Learning Commission accredi-

tation teams. He will be visiting colleges in Colorado in the fall and Arizona in the spring. The Director of Special Education and Pupil Services (DESEPS) program was approved by the Wisconsin DPI. He also continues to serve on the Rural Special Education Quarterly editorial board. Additionally, he was elected Chair of the Chippewa Area Mentor Program Board of Directors.

Dr. Joe Morin is beginning his 9th year in the department. He continues to teach SPED 401/601: Assessment of Students with Disabilities and SPED 775: Advanced Issues in Assessment. He also serves as a faculty supervisor in the Human Development Center Assessment Clinic. He maintains his scholarly interest in the instruction of mathematics for students with learning disabilities, served in inclusive settings.

Dr. Vicki Snider collaborated with graduate student April Goodwin ('06) and Blugold Scholar Matt Vande Berg to investigate the effectiveness of Corrective Reading (a Direct Instruction program) with high school students with mild disabilities. (It was effective!) She and Matt presented a poster at UW-Eau Claire Student Research Day. She and Rebecca Roehl (Schumitsch '05) will have the results of their study on teacher beliefs published in the next issue of *Psychology in the Schools*. Dr. Snider also got her annual dose of classroom reality by co-directing the LEAP Clinic with alumni Heidi Rubenzer ('06).

Dr. J. Todd Stephens continues as chairperson of the department. He has also been active in working with UW-River Falls to strengthen and expand the collaborative Early Childhood program leading to dual licensure in general and special education. Todd also had the opportunity to co-teach an advanced methods course with Rose Battalio this past summer.

ALUMNI News

Jennifer (Chianelli) Bertz ('99) and Brandon Bertz were married March 31, 2007, in Kenosha. The couple live in Kenosha.

Katie (York) Duffy ('98) and husband Patrick welcomed daughter Keira Jean on July 10, 2006. Keira's big brother, Will, 3, is excited about the family's new addition. Katie teaches part time in the Hopkins (Minn.) School District. The family lives in Golden Valley, Minn.

Krista (Kyllo) Griffin ('93) has accepted a position with PETCO after working for Marriott for more than 10 years. She lives in Carlsbad, Calif., with sons Carter and Clay.

Sara (Baier) Gunderson ('03) and husband Court announce the birth of daughter Ella Elizabeth on Jan. 31, 2006. Sara teaches fifth grade at Callahan Intermediate School in Callahan, Fla. The family lives in Jacksonville, Fla.

Jody Neilson ('94) and his wife, Tina, announce the birth of daughter Claire on Feb. 8, 2006. She joins brother Nicholas, 3. The family lives in Manitowoc, where Jody is a motor pump operator and paramedic for the Manitowoc Fire Department.

Jeremy Heikkinen ('99) and his wife Rebecca announce the birth of second child Ty Carl on April 17, 2005. Jeremy teaches literature and math and coaches football and basketball at Prentice Middle School. They live in Prentice.

Shelly (Falkner) Heinkel ('00) and husband David are happy to announce the birth of son Luke Charles on Feb. 25, 2005. Shelly currently is taking a break from teaching to be home with Luke. The family lives in Brookfield.

Sarah (Truax) Morgan ('98) and **Brian Morgan ('98)** have two children, Meghan Claire (age 3) and Jackson Shea (1). They reside in Pulaski, WI and are currently teaching at the Pulaski Community Middle School where they have been teaching for the past eight years. Sarah teaches students in grades 6-8 with cognitive disabilities and autism. Brian teaches students with learning disabilities in the 7th grade and coaches girls basketball at the high school. Both Brian and Sarah have their masters degrees in school counseling from Lakeland College.

Erica (Ehlenfeldt) Olson ('97) and her husband, David, announce the birth of son

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Jacob Thomas on May 30, 2006. He joins big brother Zachary. The Olsons live in Strum.

Barb Rosenquist ('01) recently obtained an additional certification (VI) by completing the Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired Program offered through Silver Lake College. She is in her fifth year teaching special education in the Gilman School District.

Jessica (Walz) Schneider ('04) and Joe Schneider were married July 15, 2006, in Prairie du Chien. The couple live in Lodi, where Jessica is a fifth-grade teacher.

Missy (Louis) Taucher ('99) recently moved to Greeley, CO and lives there with her 16 month-old daughter and husband. Missy works one day a week for the school district in early childhood special education. The rest of the time she spends with her family. Missy can be reached at mtaucher@q.com.

Michelle (Larsen) Walter ('94) donated one of her kidneys to a co-worker from Salem Grade School on Oct. 19, 2005. Both Michelle and her co-worker are feeling well. Michelle lives in Twin Lakes and can be reached by e-mail at natenemmyj@hotmail.com.

Christina (Bauer) Weissinger, 24, Class of '03 died on June 8, 2006.

■ Foundation Scholarships

With the cost of education rising, students rely more and more on these scholarships to support their educational goals. We are very proud of the recent scholarship recipients as they have demonstrated a dedication to their education and to Special Education.

Rebecca Anderson	\$1,500
Kristen Boehm	\$350
Rebecca Dietsche	\$1,000
Kathryn Flees	\$250
Beth Fugina	\$700
Katie Gropp	\$700
Jamie Hoffman	\$1,500
Laura Johnson	\$400
Amy Kimmes	\$500
Stephanie Krebs	\$1,000
Jessica Lawinger	\$500
Elizabeth Madison	\$500
Lindsay Michalski	\$5,502
Jessica Rapienski	\$500
Sheila Runge	\$500
Emily Steward	\$600
Lisa Tetzlaff	\$1,500
Nicole Williams	\$1,000

■ Support Your Alma Mater

The Department of Special Education invites contributions to its Advancement Fund. This fund is especially critical to the department because it provides the greatest flexibility in funding projects, programs, and activities that are not in the department's regular budget and/or cannot be covered by state funds. All contributions should be directed to the Special Education Department's Advancement Fund, UW-Eau Claire Foundation, Box 4004, Eau Claire, WI 54702-4004. Your gifts are tax deductible and will be recognized as contributions to the Foundation for tax and recognition purposes. Thank you for your support.

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