Improving Teacher Preparation

UVEI Participates in New Hampshire Teacher Candidate Assessment Pilot

For 46 years, UVEI has been an innovator in teacher preparation. Our approach has been grounded in the idea that teachers learn best by being immersed in the actual work of teaching, and that aspiring teachers should be assessed based on their ability to teach. As we have advanced these ideas over the years, it has, at times, felt that UVEI has been a voice crying out in the wilderness.

Over the last two years, however, UVEI has been a leader in an innovative, collaborative effort to advance this approach at the policy level. Working together with the New Hampshire Institutions of Higher Education Network, which includes representatives from every teacher preparation program in the state, UVEI has been at the forefront of creating what can be likened to a “bar exam” for teachers. When fully implemented, this assessment, called the New Hampshire Teacher Common Assessment of Performance (NH TCAP), will be required for all new teachers in the state.

The TCAP is not just another standardized test. It requires teachers to demonstrate that they can do the foundational work of teaching: understanding their students’ needs, designing lessons, teaching, and assessing their students’ progress. This kind of “performance based” assessment has long been a hallmark of UVEI’s programs. The results of the TCAP are used not only to determine if a teacher is ready to get a license, but also to help programs evaluate themselves and determine the areas in which they need to improve.

Given our history as a performance-based program, UVEI has been an enthusiastic partner and leader in this work, influencing policy and affecting teacher quality across the state.

Deliberate Practice

Reflections on a Teacher Learning Community

by R. Page Tompkins, EdD

This fall, the Upper Valley Graduate School of Education has brought together a new cohort of UVEI alumni, current UVEI interns, and other experienced educators, all of whom are pursuing a Master of Arts in Teaching. (That brings the total number of masters candidates to 24, our largest group ever!) Through our collaborative work, a theme has emerged which we call deliberate practice. Just like expert professionals in other fields, expert teachers become expert by, over many years, looking carefully at what they are doing and consciously working to improve. At UVGSE, we do this by bringing back evidence of our teaching (in the form of data about students and student performance, videos of teaching, lesson plans, and more) and examining it closely with colleagues, reflecting on strengths and identifying next steps for further improvement.

These conversations are extraordinary! Teachers ask one another probing questions, digging for underlying meaning. Teachers examine the questions they ask students, reflecting on what kinds of thinking those questions elicit. And most importantly, in my view, teachers prioritize the growth of their colleagues equally to their own improvement, leading to a real sense of a learning community.

As I reflect on these Thursday evening sessions, I never fail to marvel at how endlessly interesting and complex are the “problems of practice” that emerge from the everyday work of teachers. Even more, I’m inspired by the genuine care for individual students, coupled with attention to craft, that animates the work of UVGSE teachers. I hope and believe that this work helps teachers improve, and in doing so contributes to UVEI’s mission to contribute to schools. I also hope that each of these teachers pursues the pathway of the master: continuous practice. Selfishly, though, I am grateful that part of my job is spending time listening to teachers as they go about their work.

Page Tompkins is UVEI’s Executive Director and a member of the Program Faculty. You can follow him on Twitter @pagetompkins
veryday, as I work with teachers and leaders in their schools and here at UVEI, I am struck by how complex, rich, challenging and inspiring is the work of educators.

Recently, I spent the morning hearing from intern teachers about the “cool things in schools” that they were experiencing (see “Cool Things in Schools” article from Kristen Downey). As always, I laughed together with the interns; was moved by some of the stories; and was surprised and delighted by the incredible insights, compassion and determination of these emerging teachers. Later the same day, I sat down with a UVEI graduate who has returned to earn her masters degree in teaching with us. Together, we puzzled through how she might engage colleagues at her school in looking closely at one another’s teaching. I was struck by the degree to which she wanted to make the learning experiences she was having at UVEI a reality in her school (see “Deliberate Practice” article about the Master of Arts in Teaching program). The afternoon was spent preparing for a meeting with leaders from all of the teacher preparation programs in New Hampshire. Together, we are working on a performance based “bar exam” for teachers that, we anticipate, will improve teaching and teacher programs across the state (see “Improving Teacher Preparation” on page one). I was pleasantly interrupted by Nan Parsons, the Associate Director for School Leadership (see “Applying Twenty Years of Leadership to the Next Generation”), who wanted to revisit a question about what school leaders need to know and be able to do related to building and improving school cultures. And that was just a regular Tuesday.

Applying Twenty Years of Leadership to the Next Generation
by Nan Parsons

I have been in education or an educator most of my life. The excitement I felt on my first day of first grade – in my new smocked dress and black patent leather shoes, my metal Barbie lunchbox, and a crooked pixie haircut – followed me into my first classroom at Washington Street School in Penacook, New Hampshire, where I began my career as a multi-age grade two/three teacher of 28 inquisitive students.

Fast forward and I am walking proudly into my first principalship at Canaan Elementary School, and then into my second principalship at Lebanon High School. It has been an amazing journey.

Today, I feel the same excitement about being an educator that I felt decades ago. Through hard work and reflective practice, continued quality professional development, and outstanding mentors, I have had a rewarding career as a public school educator. Mentors saw in me what I was not able to see in myself and they supported, pushed and prodded me as a teacher leader, then as a principal and now as an instructor of school leaders.

Throughout my time as a principal, I maintained a close association with UVEI, serving on panels, mentoring teachers, and as a speaker at graduation. Whether in the classroom or the principal’s office, I saw UVEI as a program with a focus on developing educators ready to lead schools in significant ways. So when the opportunity to join the staff and faculty came last spring, I chose to become part of this innovative and collaborative organization that, I believe, is a leader in education.

I am honored to now be training the new face of leadership, to share my experience as a leader and to celebrate the learning of this new generation of school leaders.

With this year’s principal intern cohort, I see great promise, deep reflection, and passion to meet the needs of today’s learners. Being part of the education of these new leaders has only increased my hope for the future of public education.

Nan Parsons is UVEI’s Associate Director for School Leadership and a member of the Program Faculty

From the Executive Director

With best regards,

R. Page Tompkins
UVEI welcomes you to submit news about your career-related achievements (placements, promotions, awards and fellowships, special commendations). Send by email to: bmarshall@uvei.edu. Please note that your copy may be edited due to space limitations.

**Alumni Notes**

**Teachers**

**Class of '03**

Kristen Downey has joined our faculty and staff (see Faculty and Administration Notes below).

David Dukeshire completed six years on the UVEI Board of Directors. (Thank you, David, for your service and contribution to UVEI!) Since earning teacher certification, he completed an MEd in Curriculum and Assessment. He teaches English and Social Studies, focusing on AP World History and the Humanities at Lebanon High School.

**Class of '06**

Cristina Veresan was selected as one of the highly-qualified teachers from across the country to attend the one-week all-expense paid Mickelson ExxonMobil Teachers Academy (MEMTA) professional development program this summer. MEMTA equips teachers with lessons designed to encourage children to develop a lifelong love of STEM. Carol is a third/fourth grade teacher at the Surry Village Charter School in Surry, NH.

**Class of '07**

Patricia Harris is in her seventh year of teaching. She taught for three years at the Bridgewater Village School and is now at the Albert Bridge School teaching 3-6 ELA.

Marie McCormick has joined our staff (see Faculty and Administration Notes below).

**Class of '08**

Deirdre Detjens presented at the National Science Teachers’ Association in Boston in April 2014. She also visited her mentor teacher, Trudy Fadden (Class of ’87), who is still giving her helpful teaching advice.

**Class of '11**

With his third graders at Barre Town Middle and Elementary School, Kyle Dubois built a chicken coop housing 12 hens. Meant to serve as a lesson in sustaining an ecosystem, the hens’ eggs are used in the food served in the dining room while their feed is supplemented with food scraps from the school’s kitchen. Kyle welcomes you to contact him for more info.

Christina Nadeau is a part-time art teacher at the Ray School in Hanover. During the summer she teaches children’s classes in the clay and mixed-media studios at the League of NH Craftsmen.

Carol Schroeder was selected as one of the highly-qualified teachers from across the country to attend the one-week all-expense paid Mickelson ExxonMobil Teachers Academy (MEMTA) professional development program this summer. MEMTA equips teachers with lessons designed to encourage children to develop a lifelong love of STEM. Carol is a third/fourth grade teacher at the Surry Village Charter School in Surry, NH.

**Class of ’12**

After two years teaching a combined first and second grade class at Stockbridge Central School, JoAnn MacMaster is teaching first grade at Woodstock Elementary School.

**Class of ’13**

In June, Tim Alvarenga left the Bernice A. Ray School to pursue an opportunity working with the Peace Corps Rural Education Development program. He teaches English and assists with other subjects in a small village in Zambia. Tim wishes everyone twalamonana.

**Class of ’14**

Dan Griffith is teaching middle school math at Blue Mountain Union High School in Wells River, VT.

Karen Wilson is teaching fourth grade at Samuel Morey Elementary School in Fairlee, VT.

**Editor’s Note:** In addition, 80 percent of the Teacher Class of 2014 have secured positions at: Barre Town Elementary School, Belmont High School, Christa McAuliffe School, East Valley Academy, Exeter High School, Franklin NE Supervisory Union, The Gunnery School, Hartford Middle School, Hartford High School, Haverhill Cooperative Middle School, Marion Cross School, Milton Middle School, Montessori Children’s School, The Newton School, Ottauquechee Elementary School, Oxbow High School, Plainfield Elementary School, Reading Elementary School, Richmond Middle School, Rivendell SD, Springfield High School, Thetford Academy, Whitcomb High School, Windsor Junior/Senior High School, Windsor State Street School.

**Principals**

**Class of ’09**

After serving for six years as Assistant Principal at Londonderry High School, Paul Dutton is now the Principal at Londonderry North Elementary School.

**Class of ’11**

This is Sally Hayes’ second year as the Principal at Brewster-Pierce Memorial School in Huntington, VT.

**Class of ’12**

Deanna Poulin is the new assistant principal at Golden Brook School in Windham, NH.

**Editor’s Note:** All Principal Class of 2014 graduates are working in leadership positions at: Barre City Elementary and Middle School, Concord High School, The Concord School, Grovetown Middle/ High School, Hartford High School, Thetford Elementary School, The Warren School.
Board of Directors

At the Annual Meeting of the UVEI Board of Directors, the following officers were elected: Chair: Jackie Richter-Menge; Vice-Chair: Anne Silberfarb; Treasurer: John Ziegler; Secretary: Helen Schotanus.

In Memoriam: With affection and gratitude, we remember our talented, thoughtful and inspiring Board member, David P. Evancich, who passed away on January 13, 2014. We miss Dave and honor the contribution he made to the well-being of UVEI during the time he served on our Board of Directors.

In July, Nan Parsons joined UVEI as Associate Director for School Leadership and Program Faculty. Nan has held the position of principal for fourteen years at both Lebanon High School and Canaan Elementary School. Prior to that, she was a multi-age teacher and a private tutor. She and her family live in Grantham, NH.

Faculty and Administration

Kristen Downey joined UVEI as Associate Director for Secondary Education and Program Faculty. A 2003 graduate of UVEI, Kristen most recently taught English at the Frances C. Richmond School in Hanover, where she was instrumental in initiating and executing several school-wide projects, mentoring teacher interns, and serving as the Kendal at Hanover-Richmond School liaison. She and her family live in Thetford Center, VT.

Marie McCormick joined the UVEI staff in May as our Program Associate. Marie, a 2007 graduate of UVEI, returned to the Upper Valley from Seattle in 2012. In Seattle, Marie taught high school math at Ballard High School. Before joining the UVEI staff, she kept busy as a math tutor and a stay-at-home new mom. Marie and her family live in Lebanon, NH.

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Cool Things in Schools
by Kristen Downey

It was 8:45 on a quintessential New England fall morning, and I looked around our seminar room at the faces of our twenty newly-inducted teacher interns. Some were sipping coffee, others were tapping on their laptops, while many others were visiting and catching up with colleagues they hadn’t seen in a week. It was only late September, but their faces and body language were not as sunny as the weather outside.

Aimee (my elementary education counterpart) and I could tell that already, some of the expected anxiety and uncertainty had started to bubble up. After all, our interns had been thrust into an unfamiliar school, a new classroom, and many had started teaching lessons even though they were still figuring out just exactly what it means to be a teacher. We were sure we’d be having a few empathetic conversations later on that day.

To ease people into the seminar day and bridge the distance between their placements and the UVEI classroom, we have a weekly routine Aimee implemented last year called “Cool Things in Schools.” It’s our Tuesday morning ritual which encourages interns to share cool things they notice in their placement schools. Cool Things in Schools helps us all to ease into the day and reminds us that there is great joy in teaching.

A young elementary intern named Amanda raised her hand. “I have a cool thing in school,” she said with a shy smile. “This is kind of a small thing, but one of my students called me ‘mom’.” We chuckle because, really, what could be cooler than a child mistaking you for a maternal figure, forgetting that you’re an anxious intern, an outsider, a stranger dropped into this child’s classroom, sometimes feeling like a mouse dropped into a maze?

Cool Things in Schools helps interns focus on what is important: that there are great things happening in education every day! Sure, interns may feel uncertain about classroom management, about how they’ll demonstrate competence by June, about Praxis Core scores. When they share what’s cool about their schools and classrooms, it helps make finding our way a little easier; it helps us forget our apprehension for a moment, as Amanda experienced with her student.

As another intern recounted an apple selling project at her school and another described an amazing natural play structure which incorporates a real boat into the climbing apparatus, I felt the room begin to relax, the tension dissipate, and we settled in for the day.

Kristen Downey is UVEI’s Associate Director for Secondary Education and a member of the Program Faculty. You can follow her on Twitter @UVEIDowney
YOUR DONATION SUPPORTS GREAT TEACHERS AND GREAT SCHOOLS AND CHANGES KIDS’ LIVES

Many of you have received our Annual Fund letter. If you have already sent your donation, we thank you. Your contribution allows us to meet the challenges we have set for ourselves in the coming year.

For those who have not yet responded (or do not usually receive a letter), you can play a part in helping us enhance UVEI’s mission. Please consider supporting our commitment to enriching the lives of children through the work we do in preparing teachers and school leaders.

Yes, I/we wish to support UVEI’s Annual Fund with a gift of:

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