

Great Teachers
and Leaders
are the Heart of
Great Schools

News

Strong Schools, Polarized Times

UVEI Convenes Educators Committed to Healthy Communities



Elijah Hawkes stands with Audrey Richardson (left), Woodstock Union High School, and Meg Hopkins, Sharon Elementary School, at the Upper Valley Innovations in Education Forum at Lake Morey Resort last August.

FOR UVEI TEACHING CANDIDATE Cecile Smith '22, her interest in the topic is tied to her hopes: “I am hoping to teach and learn from my students what it means to be part of a community. I view my work as crucial to raising our youth to be able to work together productively across differences – an ability I think our world desperately needs.”

A more veteran teacher joined the conversation because of her worries: “I have made a concerted effort to teach civil discourse, current events, and ethical dilemmas in my English classes in an effort to try to help students develop less reactionary patterns of thinking and communicating. While I’m proud of this work, it feels wildly insufficient in our current social and political environment.”

These two teachers were among fourteen educators from across the region who joined me in February to discuss the work of schools in a time of political polarization, one of several outreach and engagement events happening this year at UVEI. It was a diverse group of educators, representing different views on school culture and curriculum.

In my invitation to the event, I asked participants to read a report from 2019 published by the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, “Should America Be Concerned about Political Violence? And What Can We Do to Prevent It?” The report summarizes key takeaways from a conference that brought together a wide array of scholars, practitioners and experts. But none of the conference participants was a school-based practitioner. Indeed, “school” is mentioned on only one page of the paper. So our discussion focused on the connections we could make between the experts’ views about violence-prevention and our work as educators.

The February UVEI event was just an hour and a half, but participants made strong connections to each other and to the topic. Lyndon Institute Dean of Academics and English teacher, Terha Steen, connected the report’s conclusions to her goals as a teacher of writing: “We typically encourage students to take a position and debate, and I wonder– do we need to change our approach to teaching writing? What happens when the goal is not to be right but to solve a problem, make a good decision? As we structure classes, how can we encourage students to think about nuance and rely on language and patterns of thinking that go beyond bad and good, right and wrong?”

Solidarity among educators poised for the challenging work ahead is a basic goal of such convenings. We plan to continue connecting with educators on this topic and other issues of importance to them, our communities, and our students. Do you have a topic of importance you’d like to discuss? Let me know!

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Principal Intern Program
Class of 2022

FROM THE PRESIDENT

What Does it Mean to Be a Graduate Institute of Education?

FOR MORE THAN 50 YEARS, UVEI has been a teacher preparation program. Since our founding, experiential learning, working closely with mentors and coaches, and focusing on meaningful teaching and learning have been hallmarks of the program. Over that history, more than a thousand UVEI graduates have entered the profession.

About ten years ago UVEI began to elaborate on this work, launching a principal internship program and creating graduate degree pathways. Since then, we have expanded our graduate offerings, adding licensure areas and degree programs. Concurrent with expansion, we made a subtle and important shift from our original mission to develop great teachers to a broader focus: Supporting schools by building the capacity of the teachers and leaders who work there.

So now, as an institution, we are asking ourselves a new question: Who do we want to be as a graduate institute of education? Among our tentative answers to this question, we are seeking to be a regional hub for convening educators around issues of importance to them, engaging educators in networks of learning, and forging new approaches to partnering with schools.

In this spirit, we are dedicating this year's newsletter to highlight work that we think showcases our efforts in this direction. On page 1, Director for School Leadership Elijah Hawkes describes a recent discussion with educators about connections between what the experts say about violence-prevention and the work of schools in a time of political polarization. On page 3, Academic Dean and Coordinator of Graduate Studies Chris Ward reflects on a school partnership with White River Supervisory Union schools to develop systems and routines for using data to improve classroom instruction. And on page 4, Adam Norwood, Coordinator of the Barnes Initiative for Collaborative Learning, highlights this year's networked improvement research topic: Designing Deeper Learning Experiences with an Emphasis on Equity, Justice and Democracy.

HELP US SHAPE WHAT UVEI WILL BECOME

Do you have other ideas of how UVEI can support you, regional educators, and partner schools? We would love to hear from you! Contact me at ptompkins@uvei.edu.

Page Tompkins, EdD is President of the Upper Valley Educators Institute.

“We are seeking to be a regional hub for convening educators around issues of importance to them.”

Partnership Explores Data as Tool for Improving Instruction



In other words, teachers and leaders engaging in collaborative inquiry about data is the defining characteristic of successful data-informed instructional initiatives.

With this in mind, UVEI and the White River Valley Supervisory Union (WRVSU) in Vermont have engaged in a partnership to support WRVSU schools in developing systems for using data to improve classroom instruction. Superintendent Jamie Kinnarney and Chief Academic Officer Anda Adams have stressed the importance of teachers building collective efficacy to identify and

address learning needs that arise from a collaborative analysis of data. In structuring the partnership, we paired this vision with a practical set of tools and routines in the form of the Data Wise process, which guides teachers in deeply analyzing different sources of student learning data, identifying a school-wide problem of practice, and taking action to address the problem.

Academic Dean and lead faculty in the partnership, Chris Ward, notes three key aspects of the partnership that have contributed to its success. First is each school's commitment to distributed leadership. To this point, each principal

in WRVSU identified a few teachers to be the school leaders of this data inquiry, in both facilitating the process with their colleagues and developing a shared vision with their principal about their school's inquiry. Second, each school has made a commitment to collective efficacy and action. This has fostered conversations about themes that show up in data across grade levels and the sharing of ideas to improve instruction. Third, each school has made the process their own, which is the only way to make it last.

According to Kinnarney, "Our partnership with UVEI has been well received across WRVSU. The focus is to increase teacher agency through continuous professional development that invests in our teachers and not just programs. This is just one step toward an educational organization that uses data to inform universal instruction, curriculum refinement, and monitor progress of all students' academic and social/emotional growth."

Chris Ward adds, "The partnership has shown the impact of introducing a clear inquiry process into a strong network of distributed leadership."

Chris Ward is the Academic Dean and Coordinator of Graduate Studies.

SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN AWASH with student performance and learning data. These data are used in several ways, from ranking schools and evaluating teachers in some locations, to more formative purposes such as monitoring student learning and informing instructional improvement. In order to be successful at using data to improve instruction, Kathryn Boudett, director of the Data Wise project at Harvard, states that "Using data effectively does not mean getting good at crunching numbers. It means getting good at working together to gain insights from student-assessment results and to use the insights to improve instruction."

LIU JOINS LITERACY EDUCATORS PROGRAM STAFF

KRISTEN LIU will soon complete her first year as the Literacy Educators Program Coordinator. In July of 2021 she assumed primary responsibility for coordinating the pedagogical training of experienced teachers who are interested in advancing their knowledge and skills as literacy teachers and specialized literacy professionals.

"I am grateful to have built meaningful relationships this year with educators as they develop into master literacy teachers and literacy specialists," said Liu.

The Literacy Educators Program is designed to help educators improve their literacy instruction, assessment, and leadership; these are critical skills for all teachers, and especially teachers of

elementary-age students. Liu explains the urgency: "Several studies are confirming what classroom teachers have been observing for months: the pandemic has negatively impacted our young readers and teachers need literacy expertise more than ever before."

After graduating cum laude from Dartmouth College, Kristen earned her Master of Science in Education from Hunter College School of Education. Her concentration was in Early Childhood Development and Learning: Diverse Children and Families.

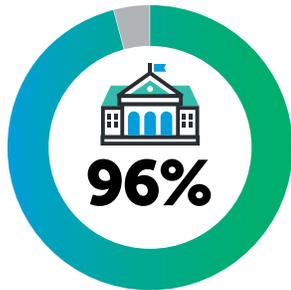
Upon graduation, she received the Elena D. Gall Award for Academic Excellence in Special Education.



"The pandemic has negatively impacted our young readers, and teachers need literacy expertise more than ever before."

Running the NUMBERS

What do our participants say?



EMPLOYER SATISFACTION RATE



END OF PROGRAM SATISFACTION RATE



ALUMNI SATISFACTION RATE



THE BARNES INITIATIVE IN ITS FOURTH YEAR

Deep Diving Into Student Learning Experiences

ON A PRISTINE FALL DAY at the peak of foliage, a diverse group of nine educators from eight different schools between Vermont and New Hampshire came together to develop their collective understanding of this year's Barnes Initiative for Collaborative Learning research topic, Designing Deeper Learning Experiences for Students with an Emphasis on Equity, Justice and Democracy. Not only did the group of co-researchers and site leaders walk away with a better understanding of the research topic, they also began to forge their collegial connections with one another and entered into UVEI's network of collaborative learning.

The Barnes Initiative annually brings together educators from across New Hampshire and Vermont to understand and design solutions to common problems of practice. With generous support from the Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation and UVEI's Board of Directors, and named for lifetime educator and UVEI founder Barbara Barnes, the initiative is now in its fourth year.

Supported by the conviction that schools must engage in continuous learning in order to effectively meet the evolving needs of all students, the Barnes Initiative embraces the elements of design thinking by utilizing an action-research model. For members of this year's Barnes cohort, this means identifying a common problem of practice across all sites; design, prototype and refine a solution; apply this solution and collect data; and report findings and implications in a co-authored paper as well as public presentation of the results in August.

Adam Norwood, the Coordinator of

the Barnes Initiative, said "To say that we are genuinely excited about this year's topic and diverse team of researchers is an understatement." He added, "As we move forward with this year's research process, the design and implementation will take shape and lead us to our end goal of providing practical and relevant tools for schools to use in the process of continuous improvement." We invite you to stay tuned and follow the progress of this year's cohort.

This year's Barnes co-researchers and master's candidates are Cheyann Ellis, 5th grade teacher at Penacook Elementary, NH; Anik Avard,

"To say that we are genuinely excited about this year's topic and diverse team of researchers is an understatement."

4th grade teacher at Lin-Wood Public School, NH; Amy Burlock, special education & case manager at Milan Village School, NH; and Jessica Sperling, high school science teacher at White River Valley High School, VT.

This year's site leaders are Becky Neuroth, library media specialist at Lyme School, NH; Erin Sweeny, English teacher at Profile High School, NH; Jill Nichols, high school science teacher at Lyndon Institute, VT; Linda Ferland, math teacher at Vilas Middle School, NH; and Alexis Sebilian, writing teacher at Vilas Middle School, NH.

Adam Norwood is the Coordinator of the Barnes Initiative for Collaborative Learning.

Alumni News

Benn VanOudenallen, TIP '04, a high school social studies teacher at Mount Notre Dame High School in Cincinnati, is the recipient of the 2021 Jane Ortner Education Award from the Recording Academy GRAMMY museum. "The award honors K-12 academic teachers who use music in the classroom as a powerful educational tool."



BENN VANOUDEALLEN

Joseph Donarum, PIP '16, is the principal of Enosburg Falls High School and serves on the Professional Learning and Support Committee with the VPA (Vermont Principals Association). In this capacity, Joseph represents the voices of LGBTQIA+ school leaders. Joseph will retire this June but plans to remain active in the VPA.

Mark Kennedy, TIP '05, retired in 2020 from the Vermont Family Network as a Family Resource Coordinator in the Early Intervention Program. Since then Mark has been enjoying shared activities with his aging parents; volunteering more in depth with his local UCC congregation; "tending the home fires" while his wife, Cathy, works as a teaching pediatrician; and advocating with elected leaders around humanitarian and environmental needs.

Jennifer Opalinski, PIP '16, is the Director of the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center in Newport, NH. "I oversee ten programs for high school students, including welding, natural resources, automotive technology and others," Jen writes. "I love my new role."

Ben Boyington, TIP '03, has accepted the position of Flexible Pathways Coordinator at White River Valley High School. Ben is excited to begin this new role that will unite his work in pedagogy, curriculum, and programming with his efforts to foster student agency.

Geoff Taylor, TIP '14 & MAT '16, US History teacher at Exeter High School, received a Champion Award from the Council for Youth with Chronic Conditions. Geoff was nominated by his American Studies student, Bayleigh, who participated remotely during the 2020-2021 academic year due to chronic



GEOFF TAYLOR

medical conditions. "All I really did was lean into everything UVEI taught me about the importance of relationships."

PHOTO: COUNCIL FOR YOUTH WITH CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Mihaela LaRoche, TIP '15, branched out from her Elementary Ed (K-8) endorsement, and is teaching middle school and world languages at McKelvie Intermediate School in Bedford, New Hampshire.

"I'm excited and feel as prepared as possible for my first principal role as I take on the principalship at Otter Valley Union High School. In large part my preparation was shaped by my training with the folks at UVEI. The program's focus on iterative instructional improvement and the importance of professional community in schools has had a major impact on me. I also appreciate the ongoing relationship I've had with program staff as I problem-solve emergent issues in my work."



Michael Ruppel, PIP '18, the assistant principal at Springfield H.S., has been named the newest principal of Otter Valley H.S.



ALUMNI PROFILE | MARCELA CARROLL

Hands-On Education in a One-Room Schoolhouse

Marcela Carroll is in her third year teaching at the one-room school on Isle au Haut, an island off the coast of Maine. The community has between 30 and 40 full-time residents, and she teaches just four students, including her own child, Holland, who's in the third grade. Use the QR code to read about Marcella and her amazing journey.





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