

Great Teachers
and Leaders
are the Heart of
Great Schools

Annual Newsletter

The Power of Art in Schools

IN OUR WORK with art educators, we see the deep engagement and joy that students experience in their classrooms. They foster an open and inclusive environment, help students take risks and persist, and focus on the process of art making. Here, we give voice to local art educators on the power of art education.

First, for these educators, the art room is a space students are drawn to at all times of day. As **Sarah Glass**, art teacher at Hanover High School and UVEI mentor, points out, “We’ve got kids eating lunch in there, we’ve got kids coming in doing projects for social studies in there, we’ve got kids coming to just hang out and be near creative people. And I think I just love that open door feel to our space.”

Nate Shartar-Howe (TIP ’06, MEd ’25), who teaches art at Abbot-Downing School in Concord, NH, has “almost two dozen kids coming in at recess at times, and that’s their place to be for that half hour. I just let it be an open studio, and they love

it. It’s neat that they want to come and just create.”

Second, fostering student agency through meaningful choice is a high priority for these art educators. For example, **Jon Warren**, (TIP ’16, MEd’ 20), art teacher at Lebanon High School, had students write a personal story and transform it into abstract art, which drew many students out through “just the investment of, I’m getting to tell my story.” Every Wednesday, Sarah gives her ceramics students a prompt, and students have to find an image that relates to that prompt. “It’s much more engaging for me because it’s like a mini challenge each week. I’m trying to figure out how to tie in something that they have found, not something that I’ve pre-planned. And there’s a sense of discovery when they do it.”

Finally, art educators help students develop their art identities by experiencing a variety of media, techniques, forms, and styles. All three educators know of many



Jon Warren helps a student at the pottery wheel during class at Lebanon High School.

students who have struggled with one form of art but thrived with another.

With widespread school budget crises and increased emphasis on academic achievement and assessments, arts education, in some communities, is under threat. In these times, we need to recognize and invest in its positive value: engaging in challenging, expressive, and joyful work that builds skills, confidence, and community.

— **Chris Ward**, Teaching Program Faculty

FACES OF THE TEACHING PROGRAM

A Picture of Student Engagement

ALEX ST. MARTIN (TIP’26, MEd ’27) came to UVEI with plenty of experience working one-on-one with kids as a paraeducator. Now, teaching 5th grade at Indian River School in Canaan, NH, while he pursues licensure through UVEI, he works with all students in the classroom and sees their individual and collective growth. “There may be something that a month ago they couldn’t get to, and now they can tackle that. Seeing that progress is great.” Each visit to Alex’s classroom shows joy and engagement: students are excited about learning and eager to share. As one example, students designed and then created a tabletop game about morphology: root words, suffixes, and prefixes. They used a graphic organizer to think through the goal of the game, how to win, what a turn looked like, and what materials would be necessary to construct it. Through the process, they consulted the notebooks where they had gathered their learning about the meanings of several affixes. As he engages students in activities like his, he’s facilitating a thirst for learning. “I’m going to work every single day and what I’m doing every day matters to these 10 lives. I feel that impact.”



Teaching Program

- Create classrooms where all students learn and thrive.
- Advance and deepen skills in lesson and unit design, assessment, application of content, and more.
- Pursue pathways to teacher licensure and MEd degrees in teaching.

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Focusing on Joy in Uncertain Times

AT OUR FALL FORUM (UVEI's annual gathering of alumni, graduates, candidates, and community partners that highlights local innovations happening in schools), we gathered around the theme of teaching and leading in uncertain times. What we got in response were stories of joy, engagement, participation, and deep learning. It was a powerful reminder to us that, as educators, we always have something actionable that we can do to help improve the world around us: Create meaningful and powerful opportunities for learning and connection among students and each other. Motivated by what we heard, surfacing and deepening instances of joy and engagement became our unofficial theme for the year!

This newsletter is filled with stories of those opportunities, from a principal alum's student-centered tour through Burlington High School to the way a teacher candidate is helping students understand phonics. These are just a few of the many stories that inspire us and remind us why supporting teachers and leaders in making schools places where everybody thrives is some of the most important work we can do right now.

We are proud of our contributions (see the impact report below) and invite you to help!



Sincerely,

R PAGE TOMPKINS, PRESIDENT

UVEI IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

UVEI works to make schools places where everybody thrives. That means working with educators, schools, districts, and communities across New Hampshire and Vermont.

Last year, this was possible in part thanks to more than \$80,000 in donations supporting scholarships and fellowships.

Your support ripples out, affecting educators, schools, and kids for years to come.



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210

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96%

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"I wanted to be a teacher because it's rewarding and makes a difference in the lives of students, and I find it inspiring to help them learn and grow into empathetic and critically-minded young people. As a new teacher, money was almost impossibly tight, and the scholarship I got at UVEI made all the difference."

— RAY COUTURE, ENGLISH TEACHER, HARTFORD MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL



Elijah Hawkes and Heather Win at Burlington High School.

PHOTO: RACHELLE, BHS STUDENT

FACES OF THE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Learning on the Job

BRITTANY GALVIN, PIP '26 and first-year principal of Danbury Elementary School in NH, is not one to sit quietly on the sidelines when there is work to be done. On the contrary, when Brittany heard about the second principal vacancy at her school in the last four years, she decided to apply for the job to help bring a sense of stability and focus to her students, colleagues, and the surrounding community.

"I don't feel like I was fully ready to leave the classroom quite yet, but I felt like I had to step up for my school." Working as a new principal while she pursues her license through UVEI, Brittany is drawing on her experience as a teacher and has focused her school improvement project on teacher learning.



"I aim to improve the transfer of new learning from professional development opportunities into teachers' routine identities and everyday practices."

— **BRITTANY GALVIN**, PRINCIPAL
DANBURY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Building Trust, Leading Change

By **Elijah Hawkes**, *Director of School Leadership*

THE IMPACT that healthy relationships have on school climate and student achievement was an important aspect of the action research project completed by Heather Win (PIP/MEd '24), now in her second year as assistant principal of Burlington High School (BHS). On a recent alumni visit I paid to Heather at BHS, I quickly saw how Heather continues to prioritize the development of trusting relationships with students and staff alike.

Early in my visit, we stopped by the Seahorse Cafe, where students with disabilities learn workplace skills and help run the business. Heather was greeted with fondness by the students and adults, including a parent of a student who was working behind the counter. This student barista guided my gaze to the delicious-looking donuts on the counter and the coffee menu. Heather treated me to an espresso.

As we continued to tour the building,

I was introduced to someone new at every turn. We met a member of the student services team, who herself had been a student at BHS, someone with deeper roots than many educators in that community. She told me that Heather was wonderful at her job. As Heather's former faculty coach, this praise - and the warm exchanges with a dozen other faculty we met - didn't surprise me. Heather is a leader who always understood why relational trust is such an important element of our leadership framework.

Ultimately, Heather aims to build collective efficacy through these types of relationships. When people collaborate to define shared challenges and collaboratively seek solutions, it grows the potential for lasting improvement. The trust she is building allows for this type of work, and I look forward to hearing where it leads Heather and her colleagues in the future!



Leadership Program

- Engage in a collaborative approach to vision and action.
- Advance and deepen skills in facilitating meetings, instructional coaching, curriculum leadership, and more.
- Pursue pathways to principal and curriculum director licensure; MEd degrees in teacher or school leadership.

LETRS® Boosts Literacy

By Kristen Hubbell and Monica Nachemja-Bunton, Literacy Program Faculty

READING OUTCOMES across the country demand urgent attention. Only about one-third of fourth- and eighth-graders read at or above proficient levels, according to the Nation's Report Card—a reality mirrored in New Hampshire and Vermont. Literacy is deeply tied to student success in school and beyond, affecting graduation, employment, health, and community participation. Decades of research offer hope: with strong, structured literacy instruction, up to 95 percent of children can learn to read successfully.

Given what's at stake, our region needs educators at all levels whose knowledge and practice is grounded in reading research, aligned with sustainable systems change, and connected to meaningful instruction. UVEI has responded with our Language and Literacy with LETRS® approach, which

combines a national professional development suite (LETRS®) with collaborative inquiry, coaching, and reflection.

Candidates for this training include classroom teachers, interventionists, special educators, paraeducators, and instructional leaders. Educators unpack high-leverage, evidence-based strategies, use data to guide decisions, apply new learning in their own settings, monitor impact, reflect and share, and continually bridge knowledge and practice to ground their work in their classrooms.



"UVEI has helped me apply the concepts presented during LETRS® training by creating a supportive cohort of educators from around the state."

— KAREN TROMBLEY, FIRST GRADE TEACHER, NORWICH, VT

FACES OF THE LITERACY PROGRAM

Leading the Way With Literacy

As a 4th grade teacher, Wanda Vaughn, Literacy '25 & MEd '26, struggled to meet the needs of students reading well below grade level. She took action. "From the very first month at UVEI, I began changing my instructional practices to incorporate stronger, research-aligned strategies and materials."

Once our literacy program candidates learn how to best support their students, they don't stop there; they ask how they can bring that knowledge and practice to their coworkers and school leadership

team. For Wanda, as a classroom teacher, this involved leading conversations with colleagues about literacy instruction, sharing best practices and resources, and engaging in data dives to improve student outcomes. This work cultivates the kinds of collective deeper learning opportunities for adults which allow them to thrive as educators.

In her work with UVEI, Wanda has focused on her work with students and with other educators. She has changed the way she analyzes materials, her teaching practices, and the language she uses. "My first year focused on teaching literacy, my second year on becoming a literacy leader, and now, finishing my masters degree, I am engaged in an Action Research project aimed at addressing a school-based literacy problem."



Literacy Program



- Engage in assets-based practices, grounded in research and aligned with your work in schools.
- Advance and deepen skills in structured literacy instruction and literacy leadership.
- Pursue a 2-year pathway to NH or VT licensure as a literacy specialist; MEd degree can be pursued concurrently.

Professional Education



- Pursue learning that's practical, collaborative and transformational.
- Dive into aspects of teaching, leadership, and structured literacy; personalized experiences are also available.
- Earn graduate credit and apply it to a future UVEI degree or licensure program.

Alumni News

Lauren Amrhein, PIP/MEd '18, was recently appointed to the role of interim curriculum director at SAU 70 (Hanover, NH/Norwich, VT), after having served 8 years as the principal of the Ray School in Hanover, NH.

Julie Conrad, PIP '19, is finishing her seventh year as a principal and her fourth year at Main Street Middle School in Montpelier, VT. She has started extending her professional reach as a mentor for new administrators through the VPA mentorship program. She is also serving on the VPA's Professional Learning & Support Committee, which helps to organize the professional learning for administrators in Vermont.



Hayden Coon, PIP '18, shown above, was recognized last spring as the NH Music Educators Association Administrator of the Year for the State of NH. Hayden is the principal of Woodsville High School.



Peter Ginsbury, TIP '10, is in his 11th year at the Jackson Hole Community School in Jackson, WY. Peter teaches 9th and 12th grade History and runs the school's

fall backpacking orientation program.

Gavin Koehler, TIP '23, started a new job this year as a math teacher at Harwood Union Middle & High School in VT. He focuses on meeting students where they are and says, "I've learned how capable students are when given the right framework." Gavin is also working towards his MEd Teaching through UVEI!

John (JJ) Vasko, TIP '12, spent several years teaching math and starting a school in Uganda, but most recently taught in Cyprus. There he enjoyed networking with motivated teachers and engaging in Math Olympiad enrichment, which deepened his passion for innovative, student-centered education and broadened his exposure to diverse learning philosophies. Now, he writes, "I did realize how much I miss where I was in Uganda so I am delighted to be heading back to East Africa to join a small school community where I look forward to continuing meaningful mathematics teaching, including some competition math and implementing Building Thinking Classrooms."

Congrats to Recent Grads

Congratulations to the alumni who have earned MEd degrees through UVEI this year.

- Nathan Shartar-Howe, TIP '06
- Wendy Hallock, TIP '07
- Lara Starr, TIP '13
- Chelsea Mends-Cole, TIP '22
- Jamie Olson, Literacy '24
- Shauna Lee, PIP '24
- Sara Rose, PIP '24
- Chris Giorgio, PIP '25
- Mat Jacobs, PIP '25
- Zack Jones, PIP '25
- Devyn Workman, PIP '25



Carmen Wilmot, TIP '22, is a science teacher at Claremont Middle School in NH. She reflects on her ongoing commitment to

curiosity with some words of wisdom. "Take time to dream about possibilities. Even if it takes a while to get there, the process keeps you learning." Carmen recently returned to UVEI to pursue her MEd degree in Teaching!

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Mentoring New Leaders

Kelli Dean, PIP '12/C&A '17, is the principal of Richford Elementary School in Vermont. She places a high priority on a positive climate, collaboration, and distributed leadership, things that UVEI faculty noted when they visited Richford a few years ago. Her training at UVEI has given her tools that helped her do this work, and now, she is giving back by serving as a mentor to Robert Gervais, PIP '26, a technology specialist in her district. Kelli joined us for a mentor night in the fall, where mentors gather to discuss strategies and work through dilemmas. She noted that, as a mentor, she sees an opportunity to reflect on her practice and is inspired to try new techniques. Mentor nights are held 3-4 times a year for mentors in our licensure programs, and we welcome other interested educators to join us.



To learn more about mentor nights, contact mnachemja-bunton@uvei.edu.

Here in the Upper Valley, three UVEI alums have been appointed to leadership roles at the Hartford School District in VT. Superintendent **Caty Sutton**, PIP/C&A '17, Assistant Superintendent **Aron Tomlinson**, PIP '23, and Director of Curriculum **Sarah Hisman**, TIP '12, create a trifecta of leadership at this district, where countless UVEI alumni hold leadership and teaching roles at the schools.

A bit farther afield, **Dane Van Nosedeln**, PIP '24, began a new role this year as the principal of Johnson Elementary School in VT. UVEI is also well represented among his staff, with **Karen Dyer**, TIP '23/MEd '24, **Andrew Iwaskiewicz**, TIP '25, and **Carrie Moore**, TIP '22, teaching at the school.



Upper Valley
Educators Institute

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Annual Newsletter Enclosed!



Upper Valley
Educators Institute



Partnering with school communities to engage,
inspire, and challenge educators.

