Dear EDLE Alumni, Students, Faculty, and Friends,

Back in my school administrator days, my summers were filled with planning and some precious vacation time. The moments away from the frenetic pace of school leadership were cherished. I remember camping trips with small children, hot weekends spent at the pool, and gardening time that allowed me to reflect on the kind of leader I aspired to be. I hope that all who read this have had time to relax this summer and are feeling refreshed as the excitement of starting a new school year approaches. All of the faculty and staff in the Education Leadership Program wish you the very best as you begin the 2010-2011 school year.

Sincerely,

S. David Brazer, Associate Professor and Program Coordinator

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**DR. COURTNEY FLETCHER**

The Education Leadership Program would like to recognize and remember Dr. Courtney Fletcher, a beloved faculty member who passed away suddenly on June 14, 2010.

Courtney joined the Education Leadership Program in 1999 as an adjunct instructor, upon his retirement in 2005 from District of Columbia Public Schools he became an Associate Professor. Courtney taught a number of EDLE courses and advised students who were working toward their master's degrees in Education Leadership. He was instrumental in assisting the Education Leadership Program establish regional cohorts in the District of Columbia and the Washington Metropolitan area. He also volunteered his time to teach the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) preparation course for EDLE students who were preparing to take their School Leaders Licensure Assessment.

Courtney spent over thirty-three years as a K-12 educator with the District of Columbia Public Schools. Thirty of those years were at Francis Junior High School where he spent twenty-two years as principal and assistant principal. During his tenure, he served as a mentor and “trouble shooting principal” for his school district. He also served in the capacity of a demonstration principal for the U.S. Department of Education and George Washington University. He was a Washington Post Leadership Fellow and was named “Teacher of the Year” for three consecutive years. As a dedicated educator he enjoyed sharing his expertise. He served as a keynote speaker and presenter in an array of forums, ranging from national conferences to local professional development sessions. Courtney was a true inspiration to those he encountered in his professional and personal life. Courtney will be missed by all his students and colleagues. He will always be remembered as a “gentle giant” who never missed an opportunity to share his wisdom, knowledge, and kindness.

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**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- SLLA Review Session Friday September 10th
- Fall classes begin week of August 30th for Campus students and week of September 7th for Cohort students.
- Spring 2011 Admissions Application deadline November 1st
- Save the date: March 24, 2011, the 12th Annual EDLE Conference
EDLE STUDENT OF THE YEAR 2010

Freyja Bergthorson was selected by the Education Leadership Faculty as the 2010 Education Leadership Student of the year. Freyja is currently the SALT (chair) and teaches 8th grade English at Farmwell Station Middle School in Ashburn, VA. She earned a bachelor’s degree in History and English from the University of British Columbia in 1988. She has been teaching since 1999, the same year she graduated from Virginia Tech with a master’s in curriculum and instruction after being a stay-at-home mom for ten years. She wanted to become a teacher because, as a mom, she learned how much she enjoyed working with children and wanted a career where she could make a difference in the lives of children. She became interested in the GMU EDLE program after attending four short classes offered under the name Northern Virginia Leadership Initiative. She was impressed with the quality of instruction offered by GMU, and wanted to learn more about school leadership. When Loudoun County Public Schools offered a fellowship, she applied and was able to complete the EDLE program through the Loudoun Leadership Fellows initiative. As a GMU student she enjoyed all of her classes, was able to attend several conferences, and enjoyed the support of an amazing cohort of colleagues from whom she learned much. Freyja stated, “What I learned from the program has greatly improved my leadership in my position as SALT and Lead Mentor. I plan to continue in my present position, and look forward to exploring other leadership positions as they become available.”

DOCTORAL STUDENT PROFILE

Mike Fitzgerald

I am getting close to the end of my PhD coursework at George Mason University and have focused a great deal of my coursework and projects on researching teacher induction. I plan on conducting a qualitative study focused on the roles that principals play in teacher induction for my dissertation. My background in induction was very helpful in completing an internship with the Fairfax County Office of Program Evaluation (OPE). I helped with an evaluation of the Great Beginnings Program and I was able to provide the OPE with a review of the literature. My review helped identify common research measures used to assess the quality and the impact of teacher induction programs. I felt very good about the experience. Upon completion of the internship I was able to leave the door open and volunteered to provide additional help in the process in the near future.

I want to thank Dr. Recardo Sockwell and Dr. Chantal Follett for the opportunity to work with OPE and for their support and encouragement.

GRADUATION

In 2009 – 2010, the Education Leadership Program graduated 107 candidates with a Master’s in Educational Leadership, with an additional 20 who received licensure only. Graduates came from cohorts ranging as far away as Culpeper and as near to the campus as Fairfax, in addition to students who progressed at their own pace through the traditional on-campus program. Congratulations to Freyja Bergthorson from the Loudoun Leadership Fellows 2 cohort. Freyja was chosen by the EDLE faculty as the outstanding graduate for 2010.
SPOTLIGHT ON EDLE 690

EDLE 690 Using Research to Lead School Improvement

The Power of School Improvement Projects

David Brazer

Perhaps the single greatest challenge of the Education Leadership Program’s licensure/master’s program is the creation and implementation of the School Improvement Project Proposal. This major project from EDLE 690 requires students to identify an instructional problem in their schools, use published research to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the problem and its root causes, and create a plan to address the problem by mitigating or eliminating the root causes. Students carry these plans into their internships for implementation. We tell them that they learn leadership by changing how their schools engage in teaching and learning, and they do it without any traditional authority.

As daunting as this seems, our students are often well-received in their schools as they strive to implement their school improvement projects. This summer, I had the great pleasure to teach EDLE 690 to the Loudoun 6 cohort. One of the students, Eric Fritz, e-mailed the following in an e-mail message that arrived just after I completed my grading:

I e-mailed [the principal] my School Improvement Project Proposal and PowerPoint. Shortly after, he e-mailed the whole team with my attachments and asked for feedback. He wrote that he was considering funding the entire project! I wanted to share this exciting news (after grades were released) and thank you for having us work on this worthwhile project!

GENERAL NEWS

During the Spring semester, the EDLE Program conducted a survey of recent graduates as part of our National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) six-year review. Seventy graduates from 2005 – 2009 completed the online survey. Organized by our visiting scholar, Yasemin Dalgic, the survey results reveal a high level of satisfaction among graduates. More than 75% finished the program within two years. Over 86% of graduates received licensure and two thirds applied for an administrative position. Of those who reported applying for an administrative position, more than half have been hired. The EDLE Program continues to provide outstanding novice leaders to school divisions in Northern Virginia.

SCHOOL LEADERS LICENSURE ASSESSMENT

The next administration of the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) will be Saturday, September 18, 2010. All EDLE students are required to take and pass the SLLA. We recommend that students take the examination as late in the program as possible so that they will be well prepared.

Jim Upperman and David Brazer are offering an SLLA preparation session on Friday, September 10 from 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. The session will be held on the main GMU Fairfax campus. For more information or to register go to the EDLE Blackboard site via MyMason to obtain a registration form. (Click on the Conference & SLLA button.)

The cost is $25.00. Students must be registered in advance to attend the session. Many students have found past preparation sessions to be very helpful. We believe they are instrumental in maintaining our SLLA pass rate of over 95%.

Future SLLA administration dates are January 15, 2011 and June 11, 2011.

“I believe the EDLE Program...prepared me for the challenges of being a school leader. I am currently serving in my fourth year as an assistant principal.”

EDLE Student

When principals respond this way, they send a clear message to our students that their hard work is valued and that they are taken seriously. Eric’s e-mail conveys the thrill that derives from this kind of feedback and the opportunity to lead.
A series of three conversations highlighted this summer’s activities for the Northern Virginia School Leadership Center. With the help of our Design Team and Advisory Team, we focused on the topic of school improvement planning. June’s conversation, at the Old Town Hall in Fairfax, asked, “What were your school improvement accomplishments this past year?” In July, the conversation was hosted by Amy Etheridge-Conti, Principal of Battlefield High School in Prince William County. This session was all about challenges that persist in our schools and current plans to meet them. The August conversation at Potomac Falls High School in Loudoun County, professional home of Principal Janice Koslowski, addressed implementation of the good ideas that will help to improve student achievement.

Conversations are held periodically and our partner school divisions are notified in advance. All conversations are free and have ample food and drink. Most important, participants leave energized and renewed after sharing ideas with colleagues from across the region. Watch your e-mail for notification of future conversations in 2010-2011.

Research Briefs
The NVSLC provides research briefs free of charge to school district and site personnel who request them. Produced by current doctoral students, research briefs provide a snapshot of current thinking on a particular issue and a helpful reference list for those who wish to dig deeper. Brett Sparrgrove recently completed a brief on technology integration in schools. Below is an abstract for the brief:

Over the past several decades, the rapid proliferation of a variety of inexpensive digital devices has been extraordinary. These technology tools have enabled significant transformation in the daily lives of so many and have permanently changed how people shop, communicate, interact and learn with the world around them. Unfortunately, the use of these tools has yet to make any sustained shift in school-based teaching and learning beliefs. By just about any measure, teachers are not adept at integrating technology into their classroom practices. If the computer and computer related devices are such revolutionary learning tools, why have integration efforts been mostly unsuccessful? Four variables theorized to play a critical role in the adoption and actual integration of instructional technology by classroom teachers are: perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, computer self-efficacy and teacher learning beliefs. This research brief utilizes these variables to suggest eight recommendations school leaders should consider when attempting to create a technology-rich learning environment: define technology integration, define assessment metrics, facilitate pedagogical change, enhance technology literacy, leverage instructional technology “coaches”, continue to fund technology initiatives, review technology policies, and don’t mandate the use of technology. The final conclusion is that pedagogical innovation is ultimately what will define the effectiveness of technology integration in the modern classroom.

To read the whole brief and to see previously published research briefs, go to http://www.taskstream.com/ts/brazer/NVSLCResearchBriefs.html.

For More Information on NVSLC contact:
Dr. Scott Bauer
703-993-3775
sbauer1@gmu.edu

Above: Dr. Scott Bauer

Above: EDLE Faculty
Front row: Rob Smith, Susan Bon, Scott Bauer, Beverly Woody, Farnoosh Shahrookhi
Back row: David Brazer, Michelle Van Lare, Alan Starrock and Jim Upperman.
Dr. Susan Bon—DC Education Policy Fellowship Program

This past fall, I was accepted into the 2009-2010 cohort for the DC Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP), which is sponsored by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL). During this 10 month intensive fellowship, I interacted regularly with Fellows from public, private and non-profit sectors in the greater Washington, DC region. All of the bi-weekly sessions, regional conferences, and seminars I attended during the DC EPFP program provided me with unique experiences that challenged my thinking, fostered my growth as a leader, and enhanced my insights into education policy. All members of our dynamic Fellowship Cohort grew individually and collectively in our capacity as leaders who are committed to serving as agents for change in education policy and education leadership.

The Education Leadership Program stresses the importance of being a member of a learning community and of engaging in reflective practice. Thus, I applied to the Education Policy Fellowship Program because it offered a tremendous opportunity for me to embrace these same ideals and work on my own learning priorities. I identified three key areas in which to build my leadership capacity and skill—Advocacy, Relationships, and Knowledge. I wanted to develop advocacy skills so that I could actively pursue the rights of individuals with limited or no voice in society. I focused on honing my ability to build relationships across a wide spectrum of groups and with individuals from diverse backgrounds and organizations. Enhancing my skills and knowledge enables me to generate discussions and ideas about how to improve policies, adopt solutions, and meet the emerging challenges in schools and society. Combining advocacy and relationships with knowledge enables a leader to discover legitimate and viable solutions to the problems facing schools and society.

Overall, this experience provided me with an incredible opportunity to network and build meaningful connections with individuals from a wide array of groups, including the American Association of School Administrators (AASA); United States Education Department; Washington, DC charter school board; American Institutes for Research (AIR); and individuals, such as school administrators, state and federal policy leaders, and renowned scholars. As Fellows, we were encouraged to build strong bonds with each other so that we could ultimately leverage these powerful relationships in ways that might eventually lead to positive changes in education policy. Thus, throughout the Fellowship we engaged in dialogue, critically examined pressing issues in education, and explored emerging ideas in the policy and leadership fields. This Fellowship program was a unique opportunity that involved sharing rich and diverse perspectives and experiences while engaging in practical and thought-provoking discussions about American public education policy and leadership. I take from this experience not only an expanded knowledge and skill set, but also cherished connections with truly caring and committed professionals who work in the broad arenas of education leadership and policy.

TEA GRANT

Since 2007, Dr. Farnoosh Shahrokhi, the Outreach and Administrative Coordinator of the Education Leadership Program, has been the Co-PI and the Co-Director of the Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program (TEA); funded by the Department of State’s Education and Cultural Affairs Bureau. TEA provides secondary school teachers from Europe, Central and South Asia, South East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Near East and the Western Hemisphere with unique opportunities to develop expertise in their subject areas, enhance their teaching skills, and increase their knowledge about the United States. Each year, 20 to 24 international teachers travel to GMU to participate in a six-week professional development program which includes an internship at one of FCPS’s secondary schools. Participants also benefit from trips to U.S. cultural sites and visits to the homes of Dr. Shahrokhi and Dr. Steeley. This year, GMU will host teachers from 8 different countries from September 24 through November 4, 2010.
Dr. Michelle Van Lare joins the Education Leadership Program faculty in a new role we have created. During the 2010 – 2011 academic year, she will be employed half time at the rank of assistant professor as both a researcher and a teacher.

Michelle graduated in Spring 2010 with a Ph.D. in Education Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Washington. Her dissertation is titled, “Constructing Teacher Collaboration: The Use of Engineered Teacher Communities for Instructional Change.” This topic is certainly timely given the proliferation of professional learning communities as vehicles for change and improvement.

COHORT NEWS

New cohorts are starting this fall in Frederick, and Prince William counties. We are currently recruiting for Regional North (centered in Fairfax), and Loudoun cohorts to start in Spring 2011. A Southwest cohort is being planned for Summer 2011. If you know of aspiring school leaders who might like to join one of these cohorts, please have them contact:

Dr. Farnoosh Shahrokhi
fshahrok@gmu.edu

Recruitment for a doctoral cohort will begin in Fall 2010, anticipating application for the doctoral program by February 1, 2011. Anyone with a master’s degree interested in pursuing upper echelon school district leadership and/or research should consider the College of Education and Human Development’s doctoral program with a specialization in Education Leadership. For more information, contact:

Dr. David Brazer
sbrazer@gmu.edu

New Education Leadership M.Ed. Cohort Information Sessions:

Fall 2010
Frederick Cohort
Date: Monday August 30, 2010
Time: 4:30–5:30 p.m.
Location: Frederick County School Admin. Bld.

Spring 2011
Loudoun Cohort
Dates: Monday September 13, 2010 & Wednesday September 15, 2010
Time: 4:30–5:30 p.m.
Location: Loudoun County Public School Administration Bld., Rm 100c

Regional North Cohort
Date: Monday September 20, 2010 & Monday October 4, 2010
Time: 7:00–9:00 p.m.
Location: Leis Center Multipurpose Room 5

Summer 2011
Stafford Cohort
Date: Monday October 18, 2010
Time: 4:30–5:30 p.m.
Location: Stafford County School Board Office
For more information on the session call 703-993-3633.

Above: Dr. Michelle Van Lare

EDLE Vision

The Education Leadership Program is dedicated to improving the quality of pre-K – 12 education through teaching, research, and service. Candidates and practicing administrators engage in course work devoted to experiential learning, professional growth opportunities, and doctoral research that informs practice. We educate exceptional leaders who act with integrity as they work to improve schools.