Dear EDLE Alumni, Students, Faculty, and Friends,

The departures of Adrian Fenty and Michelle Rhee from the political and educational scene in Washington, D.C. is yet another reminder of the intersection between education and politics. Keeping our heads and pursuing education reform are extremely challenging when the organizational environment changes as a result of influences from the local, state, and federal governments. This is why improvement at the school-site level is so important. If we wait for things to “calm down” or for others to figure out our direction, we could wait many years and children would be no better off.

The EDLE Program emphasizes a focus on instructional challenges at the school-site level because most of our graduates who move into administration do so in schools and because we believe that this is where most of the powerful instructional changes occur. We advocate that our students understand and embrace the vision and mission of their school divisions and work under those broad umbrellas to improve the achievement of students in their care. This kind of work in classrooms and schools benefits students no matter what happens at the school board and superintendent levels.

Politics will always be a factor in U.S. public education, and that is a good thing. We would not be able to have democratically governed schools without politics. Buffering schools and classrooms against the more capricious influences of politics is the work of successful school leaders. Playing that role creates the elbow room teachers need to advance their own effectiveness in helping children to learn. We aspire to prepare leaders who keep their heads as political winds change and understand how to connect to resources while protecting all that works well.

--S. David Brazer

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.
Since 2007, the Education Leadership Program has received a Teaching Excellence and Achievement (TEA) grant from the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. The grant is a partnership with the Center for International Education. The TEA grant provides secondary-school teachers from Europe, Central and South Asia, South East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Near East, and the Western Hemisphere with unique opportunities to develop pedagogical skills and content knowledge and increase their understanding of the United States. TEA Fellows travel to the U.S. to participate in a six-week professional development program at one of three selected host universities. Dr. Sherry Steeley from George Washington University and I have developed the academic program that includes coursework and intensive training in teaching methodologies, lesson planning, teaching strategies for their home environment, and teacher leadership, as well as the use of computers for Internet, word processing, and teaching in general. The six-week program also includes an internship at a secondary school to engage the Fellows actively with U.S. teachers and students. Trips to U.S. cultural sites and academic support are also important components of the program.

We collaborate with Fairfax County Public Schools to recruit partner teachers from Jeb Stuart High School, Oakton High School, Robinson Secondary School, Holmes Middle School and Poe Middle School for the internship aspect of the program. Fellows working as interns engage with U.S. teachers and students and have access to an active classroom setting where they put into practice the knowledge and skills gained during their coursework. Most important, they build lasting relationships with their partner teachers and internship schools.

“My middle school ESOL students and I have enjoyed four years of involvement with international teachers through the TEA grant. My students have had the experience of learning about Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, and Armenia. Each teacher has brought an open mind and heart to the classroom and they have been very affectionate to my students. They have left a special place in my students’ hearts as well. We all learn from each other and share our similarities while acknowledging our differences. My classroom is a richer, more global environment as a result of our involvement with TEA. This year I have the amazing privilege of going overseas in the reciprocal program. I feel honored to participate in a program that has given so much to my students and me over the years.”

Julie Galle, ESOL Teacher, Poe Middle School

In September 2010, 20 Fellows who teach English as a Foreign Language and Social Studies, representing 10 different countries, arrived at George Mason University, their home for the six-week program. They came from Argentina, Armenia, Bulgaria, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Poland, Russia and Turkmenistan. The Fellows were immersed in the academic program that included seminars on Reflective Practice for Change, Education Leadership, ESL Research, Methods and Assessment, Social Studies Teaching Methods and Curriculum Development, and English Language and Culture. In addition, the Fellows benefited from GMU’s Division of Instructional and Technology Support Services (DoIT) weekly classes on technology applications tailored to their needs. This year we added seminars on Instructional Technology led by Dr. Priscilla Norton and Dr. Dawn Hathaway from Mason’s Instruc-

(Continued on page 3)
One of the greatest challenges is saying good-bye at the completion of the program.

“She learned so much methodology, new teaching strategies and technological skills. The GMU community was most hospitable and kind. I will never forget it.”

Gulalek Rejepova TEA Fellow from Turkmenistan

For more information on the 2010 TEA Fellows view their online profiles at: http://irextea.pbworks.com/w/page/30462876/Authors
EDLE 618 Supervision and Evaluation of Instruction

“Collecting data during classroom observations”

Jim Upperman

As the main feature of an assessment required of all students in EDLE 618, campus student Tim Brown worked through the five-step clinical supervision process with a teacher in his school. Leadership and learning were clearly evident through the collaborating teacher’s reaction: “I wish you [Tim] could come back every few weeks.” Tim noted that the methods and style that he used encouraged his colleague to “take ownership of issues, data, and resolutions,” representing a milestone in this teacher’s career. Although not every opportunity to apply what is learned guarantees such a dramatic result, many of the EDLE 618 students who apply the clinical supervision approach have a similar reaction from the teachers with whom they work. The benefits to both the aspiring leader and the colleague teacher are significant and worthwhile!

One of the most important challenges for today’s school leaders relates to their time spent working with classroom teachers to improve instructional practice. In EDLE 618, students have the opportunity to learn about and practice a variety of observation models, methods, and supervisory styles. Before a student such as Tim moves into an actual classroom, we engage in class discussion about a variety of walkthrough models, students learn several methods of quantitative and qualitative data collection, and we utilize one or more methods while observing teachers at work. Videos of elementary, middle, and high school classrooms are often used for practice, as students collect data independently and then engage with each other to debrief what they observed and defend their methods of data collection.

It is common and expected that students question the application of various methodologies for data collection. As a result of their learning, a number of students report that they are using tools that are already helping them with their current responsibilities as teachers and counselors. “I enjoy learning the different styles and using them in my current position...am able to relate things we’ve learned to situations I encounter,” states one of the many outstanding Prince William cohort students who are enrolled in the course this fall.

In recent surveys of students who have completed the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), approximately 75% reported that the EDLE 618 Supervision and Evaluation of Instruction course was a valuable or important course in preparing them for the SLLA. While the stated outcomes of this course emphasize professional development, clinical supervision, and adult learning theory, an argument could be made that the many hours spent on addressing the authentic challenge of understanding, assessing, and improving instruction are critically important in preparing aspiring leaders for both the SLLA and their future work as school leaders.

A New Book on the Achievement Gap

Dr. Rob Smith

Gaining on the Gap: Changing Hearts, Minds and Practice in the Arlington Public Schools will be published in the next six to nine months by Rowman & Littlefield in conjunction with the American Association of School Administrators. Five colleagues and I are the authors. We are three men and three women; three people of color and three White; and one superintendent, one assistant superintendent who spearheaded our work on cultural competence, one parent and professor of law who also assisted with the work on cultural competence, two members of the Minority Achievement Office responsible for leading much of the staff development related to cultural competence, and one retired teacher also involved in cultural competence professional development. The book represents a narrative about and reflections on the work of narrowing achievement gaps conducted over more than a decade during the time I served as Superintendent of the Arlington Public Schools.

After describing the context, a bit of history and demographics of the community and its schools in the first chapter, I move in the second chapter to describing the organizational (continued page 5)
conditions necessary for closing achievement gaps. In the same chapter, I attempt to describe the major variables on which to focus, a conceptual map for creation of initiatives, and a selection of results, both positive and negative. In a third chapter, I discuss some of the challenges—educational, social and political—we faced in pursuing the goal of closing achievement gaps and how we moved the work forward. While describing some positive results, such as gains since 1998 in the passing rates on the Virginia Standards of Learning assessments of 79% (passing rates rising from 47% to 84%) for Latino students and more than 100% for Black students (passing rates rising from 37% to 77%) compared to more modest increases for White students, we also describe less encouraging results. For example, while the achievement gap as measured by the SOL tests has decreased by two-thirds for Latino students and 58% for Black students, the distance between them and White students is still unacceptably large. Similarly, while Latino and Black increases in advanced course enrollments and performance have risen at rates considerably exceeding White rates, the actual gap in proportionate enrollment has actually increased. We also note a significant stalling or plateau in progress in the last few years.

In our assessment of attenuated progress we conclude that we must systematically confront issues of race, White privilege, and cultural competence if we expect to make continued progress in narrowing the gap. The remaining six chapters treat our experiences in and reflections on working toward establishing a culturally competent school system, written by those who led and conducted much of the training.

We make no claims of having removed the power of variables such as race, income, and dominant language in predicting student achievement, but we believe our reflections on our experiences in decreasing the potency of those variables may be of assistance to colleagues around the country committed to the same ends.

EDLE ALUMNI PROFILE

Cristy Thorpe, Principal
Hunter Ritchie Elementary
Fauquier County

My path to the principal ship started in 2005. My principal at the time encouraged me to enroll in the EDLE program to become an administrator. Little did I know how that would change the career path and timetable I had set for myself. I enrolled in the coursework and completed my licensure and degree in Education Leadership in December 2007.

In spring of 2008 I accepted a position as Assistant Principal in an elementary school in the county where I had been teaching. A year and a half later, the principal at the school decided to retire mid-year, January 2010. I was then asked to step in as interim principal until a new principal could be chosen. After interviewing a variety of candidates, the superintendent requested that I consider applying for the position. This decision was very difficult to make. I had been an administrator for barely two years and had three children under the age of 6. Nevertheless, I felt that this was the time to rise to the occasion and be there for our staff. I also had the strong desire to challenge myself professionally. With the support of my family, I applied and had the honor of accepting the position. It has been a surprising and rewarding journey to leading my school as principal.

Things I’ve learned and helpful hints I would give to others:

- Pay attention to your law, finance, and HR classes because they will come in handy later.
- Never underestimate your potential and the positive impact you can make.
- Read, read, read all the educational material you can get your hands on.
- Continue your education and quest for knowledge even after you complete your degree because there is always something new to learn.
- Build meaningful relationships. They pay off by making your job easier and benefitting those with whom you work.
- Enjoy your work! It’s demanding, difficult, and sometimes frustrating, but very rewarding.
Honoring Bonnie Pfoutz, Assistant Professor

Dr. Bonnie Pfoutz retired from the Education Leadership Program at the end of the Spring semester 2010 after 13 years of service to the program and the College of Education and Human Development. Bonnie began working with us as an adjunct in 1997 while she served as a supervisor for staff development in the Arlington Public Schools. Upon retiring from Arlington in 2003 after 30 years of service, Bonnie joined our faculty half time and served in that position until this year.

Bonnie has enjoyed many special relationships with her students. Teaching a variety of courses, including Organizational Theory and Leadership Development, Supervision and Evaluation of Instruction, and Leading Schools and Communities, Bonnie always took great interest in the careers and concerns of her students. She nurtured many through the program as they encountered personal and professional challenges, never giving up on students who were willing to work with her.

Outside of the classroom, Bonnie has been deeply involved in our curriculum redesign and improvement over the past ten years. She has worked on teams to design several courses and always played the role of critical friend as others presented their ideas. She also led many of the planning teams for the EDLE conference over the years. Her assistance in all of these areas is greatly missed.

Exemplary of Bonnie’s dedication to the program, she continues to work with interns, adamant that they finish their work under her guidance. Her sense of responsibility and dedication to student success shine through as she ties up the last few loose ends to her teaching in the EDLE Program.

We miss Bonnie’s visits to our main office. Her infectious laughter, energy, and enthusiasm were always welcome, as were the stories of family, especially adorable grandchildren. Pleased that she wants to remain connected with the rest of us, we hope that Bonnie will visit often, possibly with grandchildren in tow. We wish her all the best as she continues many years of service to the community.

EDLE MED Cohorts

New cohorts are starting this spring in Loudoun and Region North (centered in Fairfax) as well as a campus Special Education (SELE) Program. We are currently recruiting for a Southwest cohort to start in Summer 2011 as well as Prince William, Alexandria-Fairfax-Arlington and Advanced Studies in Teaching and Learning cohorts to start in Fall 2011. If you know of aspiring school leaders who might like to join one of these cohorts, please have them contact Dr. Farnoosh Shahrokhi.

Doctoral Cohorts

Recruitment for a doctoral cohort has begun, anticipating application to the doctoral program by September 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. S. David Brazer.