Dear EDLE Alumni, Students, Faculty, and Friends,

On April 26, Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Jack Dale and College of Education and Human Development Dean Mark Ginsberg convened one in a series of meetings to foster partnerships between the school division and the college. Representatives from many of the college’s programs and several members of the superintendent’s leadership team participated. Facilitated by Dr. Terri Breeden, Assistant Superintendent for Professional Learning and Accountability, the group engaged in lively discussion about ways in which the college and the school division can work together for the benefit of pre-K – 12 students.

We in the Education Leadership Program are enthusiastic about partnering with local school divisions to strengthen school and district leadership. Our main interest is in nurturing instructional leadership that will help solve some of our thorniest and most persistent problems in teaching and learning. We believe that our experience, research knowledge, and teaching capabilities applied to professional development co-created with school district partners is a potent recipe for improving student achievement and school success. We look forward to working with FCPS and the other fine school divisions in our region to sharpen the skills and knowledge of dedicated leaders who aspire to make a difference in the lives of children.

On behalf of the EDLE faculty and staff, I wish for you a restful and reflective couple of months. I hope that you will find time to renew your energy, creativity, and ingenuity as we all relax a bit prior to the start of another school year. Happy summer!

The conference showcased the leadership talents of 67 principals, assistant principals, guidance counselors and teacher leaders. Principals shared stories of successful collaboration practices that had used research-based practices to make a difference in student achievement. The format mirrored that of the previous year, when innovation was the central theme. Students clearly enjoyed the evening, not only for the opportunities to hear “leadership at work” in authentic settings, but also for the chance to network with those same leaders.
EDLE MEETS WITH SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES

The Education Leadership Program prides itself on service to the region’s school divisions. To make sure that our efforts are headed in the right direction, we periodically meet with school division leaders to hear from them how we might improve the program. A previous meeting led to our re-design of the required research course and several related new directions.

After being snowed out in late January, we met on March 17 with the following representatives: Terri Breeden, Assistant Superintendent, Fairfax; Lynda Hickey, Director of Instruction, Winchester; Mark Johnston, Assistant Superintendent, Arlington; Mary Kealy, Assistant Superintendent, Loudoun; Alison Nourse, Superintendent, Prince William; Ali- son Nourse-Miller, Associate Superintendent, Prince William; and Stacey Timmons, Director of Human Resources, Culpeper.

After some brief presentations to update the group, we spent the rest of our time together identifying key areas for the EDLE Program to address in the future. Highlights:

Leadership Development
- Develop individual stamina, resilience, and coping strategies so that candidates are better able to meet the challenges in high needs schools and/or high needs populations of students.
- Teach candidates how to sustain achievement and success over the long run.
- Understand change as a process, rather than as an event, that is unique to a specific school.
- Teach candidates the nature of both management and leadership work and the work ethic required for administration.

Changing Needs for Prospective Administrators
- Candidates need a deeper understanding of K – 12 students’ instructional needs.
- Future leaders need to understand what constitutes good teaching, how to nurture it, and how to evaluate it.

Internship
- Develop coaching and collaboration skills.
- Interns need opportunities to expand the breadth of their understanding of instruction and go deeper into challenging instructional areas (e.g., math, science, reading).
- Be involved in work with special populations.

Research Partnerships among EDLE, Doctoral Students, and School Divisions
- Build on win-win nature of relationships between school systems and the university.
- If school division administration could be involved in the dissertation process (such as serving on dissertation committees), this would help to support dissertation research in the school divisions.
- Emphasize how schools and the divisions benefit from research.
- Reach out to school divisions to find out current hot topics/issues in schools that would be appropriate for doctoral research.
- Doctoral students could assist school divisions with quantitative and qualitative data analysis as part of a doctoral internship.

Some of the work embedded in this list is already in progress, but there is a great deal of room for expansion. We sincerely thank the district representatives for spending a couple of hours with us on March 17 and we look forward to reporting out our progress in the not-too-distant future. We deeply value our relationships with all of the school divisions we serve as we strive to maintain a path of continuous improvement.

Where Are They Now? Education Leadership Program Graduates

With the cooperation of school divisions in our region, we have been compiling data about the placement of our graduates. The table below presents the proportion of program graduates since 2001 who are now holding administrative positions in the school divisions named. Compilation of this data is ongoing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Division</th>
<th>% of Div. Admin.</th>
<th>% of Div. School Site Admin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria City</td>
<td>15% (15)</td>
<td>27% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlington County</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>18% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culpeper County</td>
<td>40% (16)</td>
<td>42% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax County</td>
<td>14% (124)</td>
<td>16% (112)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SPOTLIGHT ON EDLE 612 EDUCATION LAW

Dr. Susan Bon

As a society we have become increasingly litigious, thus it is not surprising that schools and school leaders are often challenged in the courts over a variety of education-related issues. Given this legal landscape in schools, EDLE students are especially interested in learning as much as possible about the wide array of legal protections, rights, and responsibilities that must be considered as they address emerging disputes and make crucial decisions in schools. In order to meet these challenging demands, students examine the legal foundations of education in the United States, explore the state and federal statutes, and review numerous judicial decisions focused on education-related issues.

School lawsuits are frequently focused on resolving disputes over students’ educational rights and teachers’ employment concerns. These disputes generally require a careful balancing of interests because the legal issues in education are complex and typically involve competing rights and responsibilities. To understand these intricacies and become familiar with the rights of students, parents, community members, teachers and school employees, EDLE students read and discuss state and federal laws, court cases, and emerging policies that impact education.

The students use their knowledge from various sources to identify key legal principles, to brainstorm proactive and preventive strategies, and to develop important guidelines that will enhance their ability to make sound decisions when faced with legal challenges in schools. Throughout the course, students regularly refer to legal concerns that are based on their personal experiences and also inquire about the high profile legal issues in education that frequently appear in the popular media headlines. Whether the legal issue is related to student discipline policies or educator misconduct, there is intense interest, sometimes emotional debate, and genuine concern about how to properly address these challenging issues.

The discussions in EDLE 612 are not only focused on statutes and court decisions but are also guided by the principles of justice, equality, equity, duty, freedom, rights, and responsibilities. These principles underscore the well-established beliefs that educators are bound not only by legal imperatives, but also by their ethical responsibilities to ensure that all children have access to an education and the opportunity to learn. Consequently, as a part of this course, educators are encouraged to reflect both on their legal responsibilities and ethical obligations to protect the rights and educational opportunities of all students. In order to promote awareness of ethical principles and responsibilities, educators develop their own professional codes of conduct and then use their codes to analyze case studies encountered in their professional education roles. This newly introduced activity in EDLE 612 provides an important opportunity for educators and prospective leaders to examine their personal and professional values. Finally, this activity promotes honest discussion about how ethical codes guide decisions and interactions with students, parents, colleagues and community members in the educational environment.

SPRING 2011 EDLE 634 REGIONAL NORTH 9 COHORT

NCLB: Quo Vadis?
Four Pensees from Spring 2011 EDLE 634 Regional North 9 Cohort

Andrew Blount, James Laster, Tony Washington & Alan Sturrock

“The flaws of a utility are the seeds of its obsolescence…”
John Fowles, The Aristos

Pensee #1: A ‘Savior’
Some say that George W. Bush committed ‘an act of leadership’ in proposing the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in the early twenty first century. Indeed, it was politically very popular receiving over 89% of the votes from both the Senate and the House (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Proponents of NCLB believed that minority and disadvantaged students might finally have a fair chance to succeed in public education as more funding was allocated to serve schools of economically disadvantaged students. Opponents of NCLB were skeptical, especially after Ted Kennedy, one of the main sponsors of the bill admitted: “The tragedy is that these long overdue reforms are finally in place, but the funds are not” (Antle, 2005 p. 2). In many cases this funding ‘gap’ has forced schools and school districts to take action often without the fiscal means to support them. What had attracted many people to want to teach—a culture of knowledge transmission—was replaced with a culture that became slowly and inexorably test-bound. With NCLB in its tenth year and public schools in the grip of accountability, will

(continued on page 4)
another savior emerge to lead us to a different place, one where education is valued for its own sake?

Pensee #2: No Practitioners Left Behind

As is the case with many of the mandates that are signed into law by our country’s politicians (acting on behalf of teachers), the architects of NCLB failed to take into account the views of the most important variable to this reformative puzzle—those of the teachers. As mentioned earlier, excessive levels of accountability and high-stakes testing, have splintered relationships between teachers and administrators. So much so, that, when it comes down to it, the stakeholders involved often view NCLB through different lenses. “Here’s a pretty safe rule of thumb: Start in the classroom and travel up the educational food chain. The further you travel, the more you’ll find that people like the law. Mention it to most teachers and they’ll just roll their eyes. Many principals tolerate it. Ask a local superintendent, a state superintendent or a governor and the assessment gets rosier as their suit gets more expensive “(Toppo, 2007 p.48).

With so much of the focus on data, data and more data, many practitioners believe that administrators see students as data sources, whereas many administrators believe that teachers need to be held more accountable for under-performing (and disadvantaged) students. When we barter the “truths” of children for the “ trifles” of miscellaneous data points, we have surely lost the way. Or, as one graduate student put it candidly: “We are in grave danger of killing the thing we love most...”

Pensee #3: A Metaphor

There are no celebrations when there has been an educational break through by a collaborative team of teachers. Or when a struggling student makes some remarkable gains but fails to make personal Adequate Yearly Progress [AYP]. Or even when schools celebrate problem-based learning – The DaVinci Curriculum, for example—and specific subgroups make enormous gains, but these same schools just miss making AYP.

Here’s a question to consider while pondering (or reframing) your personal views of education. Let’s say you were diagnosed with an unknown disease. There are only two hospitals that could treat you. One of the hospitals has an award-winning doctor. The other has an award winning staff. Which do you choose? The award-winning doctor may have to alienate his stuff to maintain his stature. The award-winning staff has a clear purpose and will most likely be focused on helping you overcome your illness. Now, apply this scenario to American public schools. We send a decorated leader in to provide quick fixes. When the leader has overstayed his or her welcome, h/she departs, leaving the school worse off than before. Fullan (2008) asserts that if leaders can find ways to place the focus on the systems of teams within our organization, we can become more efficient in serving our customers—the students and parents.

To a non-white student who has a learning disability, happens to live below the poverty line, and speaks English as a second language, going to school every day is like climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro with little or no climbing equipment. “Too often, and for too many, the schooling enterprise resembles “a series of splendid expeditions towards the wrong goal or no goal at all, led by people who have all the gifts of leadership except a sense of direction, and every endowment for achieving their ends except a knowledge of ends worth achieving...” (School Leaders for America Inc. 2003 p. 4).

With equal parts reforming zeal and missionary rhapsodism, education has been reduced from a complex set of interactions to this one simplistic question– “did we make AYP, or not?”

Pensee #4: Be Wishful What You Care For

Surely it is time for us as a nation to take a step back, look at ourselves in the mirror, and realize that real changes need to be made in the ways we think about teaching children. Routinely, countries like Finland, South Korea and Liechtenstein out-perform American students in most measures of achievement (Gamerman, 2008). We exchange one “dead horse” for another “dead horse” and keep riding it in the latest reform sweepstakes though we know we can only hope to come in seventeenth (or thereabouts). The previous contributors have examined how an overemphasis on testing has contributed to a fault culture in schools and schooling. Schools that fail to make consistent AYP are blamed and then punished for their shortcomings. It’s time for our school systems to reclaim ownership of the educational enterprise and make the necessary adjustments to fix a broken system.

We propose the following changes: (a) the first step should be to have open dialogue between the decision-makers and the ones who will be carrying out those very decisions—teachers; (b) the second step should be the creation of a shared partnership between administrators and teachers; (c) the third step should be the gradual devolution of authority for the education of students back to the classroom; (d) the fourth step
should be to measure school achievement, one student at a time. Rather than pit school against school in what can only be described as league tables of shame, why not focus on the real progress of each student? Finally, we need to set our school systems free from their slavish adherence to the long-reaching shadows of an outdated factory model, particularly those shadows that serve to constrict—batching students, one size fits all schedules, meaningless structures, obsolete “traditions”, to name a few. By creating an educational system that educates the whole student and focuses on the journey and not the destination, then, hopefully, the nation’s school systems can start to mend the broken relationships within our schools and communities. The coming NCLB reauthorization should be interesting. Very interesting.

*Modeled after the Pensees of Blaise Pascal

Bibliography:

Graduation

Congratulations to all of the EDLE candidates who have completed their master’s degree and/or licensure requirements this year. Ninety-three EDLE graduates were listed in the program for the May 21 Graduate School of Education Convocation, held in the Patriot Center. We are very proud of what our candidates have accomplished in their time with us, particularly in their internships and through their school improvement projects. More than 200 candidates at any given time are engaged in specific efforts they have designed to improve the performance of a particular group of pre-K – 12 students. Thus, by the time they graduate, our candidates have practiced instructional leadership and learned the opportunities available to them as they enter a new phase in their careers in education. We wish them all the best as they take the reins of leadership in school divisions across Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia.
EDLE 2011 STUDENT OF THE YEAR

Nikia Hovey is a member of the Prince William 15 cohort. She was the EDLE faculty’s unanimous choice for outstanding graduate this year. Nikia was recognized for her unusual degree of conscientiousness and excellence in her preparation of all course materials, including extraordinarily insightful internship journals. Beyond completing her own work, however, Nikia provided great service to her cohort and all of its instructors by making certain that we had good space to work in with all of the equipment that we needed. Nikia is a fine example of leadership as she works toward the next phase of her career in education.

After graduating from Potomac Senior High School in Prince William County, Nikia received her bachelor’s degree in English from the University of Virginia. She has taught English in Prince William County Schools (Potomac and Gar-Field High Schools) for the past eleven years. In addition to her classroom teaching, Nikia has served as a Teacher on Administrative Assignment, the Coordinator for Online Instruction, and head coach for Gar-Field High School’s award-winning varsity cheer teams. While Nikia has thoroughly enjoyed her experiences in Prince William, as both a student and educator, she will move on to a new set of experiences as a teacher in Fairfax County this coming school year. She is excited to use the knowledge, skills, and dispositions learned in the EDLE program to further develop her instructional and leadership capacities in a new school system. Nikia also plans to obtain a position in administration in the near future.

Nikia recognizes that she could not have made it through the process of obtaining a Master’s degree in Education Leadership if it were not for the support, guidance, and encouragement of the entire EDLE staff (especially the “B.U.B’s”—Bauer, Uppermann, and Brazer), the support of her friends in the cohort, and most importantly, her family. Nikia would also like to thank Dr. Susan Elliot for providing sound academic and professional advice. Finally, she would especially like to recognize the late Dr. Brenda L. Aiken (former Gar-Field principal and administrator in Fairfax County), the educator who truly inspires her to continue her journey in education. Grateful to the “village” that has raised, supported, and inspired her, Nikia is eager to give back.

EDLE PROGRAM INFORMATION

The EDLE Program will be starting the following new cohorts:

- **Summer 2011**
  - Southwest
- **Fall 2011**
  - AFA (Arlington & Alexandria targeted)
  - Prince William
- **Spring 2012**
  - Loudoun

For more information on the EDLE Program please contact:
Dr. Farnoosh Shahrokhi
Outreach Coordinator
703-993-2009 / fshahrok@gmu.edu

For more information on the Ph.D. Program contact:
Dr. David Brazer
EDLE Program Coordinator
703-993-3634 / sbrazer@gmu.edu

For all other program information contact:
EDLE Program Office
4085 University Drive
Commerce II Bld., Suite 200A
Fairfax, VA 22153
Phone: 703-993-3633
Fax: 703-993-3643
http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/edleadership/

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.