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"Anything we can do together to help build a sense of community will encourage the kids to have hope for a better future." –Charles Underwood

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Tent Tutoring

LSU Students at Renaissance Village

Nine months after two devastating hurricanes hit the Gulf Coast, things are still not back to normal. But life is especially different in Baker's FEMA relocation trailer community, known as Renaissance Village.

More than 520 fluorescent white trailers polka dot the 62-acre backdrop. Wood shavings replace the floors of the two tents assembled for children and adults to meet, play, or talk. A chain link fence stands for the wall. Picnic tables substitute for desks. And, a tent serves as the classroom.

The tents are only temporary, standing in for several mobile trailer classrooms. But, it is early May in southeast Louisiana and temperatures can reach the upper 80s. That doesn't stop LSU students from investing their evenings to tutor the children who now reside in Renaissance Village.

The students are part of a hurricane relief outreach effort known as The Delta Express Program, a joint venture between the LSU College of Education, the University of California Berkeley's UC Links project, Tulane University, and several other groups that are signing on to participate.

The Delta Express Program addresses both educational and social needs of underserved children displaced by the hurricanes by offering formal and informal learning activities that the children themselves consider "fun."

"Basically, we make it fun and let the kids be creative," said Jolanta "Jola" Smolen, a graduate student from Poland in the LSU College of Education who is interested in international education. As Smolen handed out arts and crafts supplies for the children's project, she said "The kids are making Mother's Day cards today, using digital cameras, editing their photos and making them look cool with Photoshop."

The Delta Express Program has been active since April after a series of meetings with parents to discover what they thought their children needed and didn't need. Currently working with 12 to 15 students nightly, the program is growing in popularity. But, it's a hard crowd. Various "good do-ers" have been in and out of Renaissance Village, making some residents, and especially the children, skeptical of the shelf life

of new programs.

“Every day we get new kids and new parents that stop by and want to know what we are doing and how they can sign-up. I think they are starting to realize that we are here to stay,” added Smolen.

After its opening in October, Renaissance Village became a temporary home for about 2,000 hurricane evacuees. And, while no one is completely sure about the ever-changing number, most agree that a third of the residents are younger than 18.

With so many young residents with so many needs, the village caught the eye of philanthropist-comedienne Rosie O'Donnell. Through funds raised by the For All Kids Foundation, O'Donnell donated three mobile classrooms to Renaissance Village for the estimated 500 school-age kids that live there.

They arrived in early December, but FEMA is still in the process of setting up the classrooms. Computer banks were also donated by a local physician and the Virtue Foundation, but as yet there are no electrical hookups for the computers. Once everything is assembled and connected, many learning programs like Head Start and Early Head Start along with after-school programs like The Delta Express Program will benefit from the less temporary, air conditioned space.

“The school trailers should be open soon—once we get a room and out of the tent we can do more organized learning; we can do lessons; we will have computers and can do projects the kids can come back to the next day,” said Sherri Taylor, the on-site coordinator for the project with 19 years of experience in special education and English as a Second Language. Taylor will graduate from the College of Education in the summer of 2006 with a M.Ed. focused on educational technology.



Taylor added how she is anxious to do activities with the students that focus on literacy building, “We want to work with them on writing stories and using computers to do it. They can read each other’s stories and help each other. It would be really important for these kids to have a place where they can save their files every day and come back to it.”

But, the LSU and UC Berkeley groups didn’t want to wait until the trailers were assembled and ready to start working. College of Education Professor Jerry Willis said, “We started having meetings about this project last October. We must have had twenty different meetings talking about what we were going to do while waiting for the trailers to be set-up. Finally, we just decided we didn’t need any more meetings or a trailer, we just needed to start helping these children.”

“Basically, Jerry and I felt like we needed to get this off the ground. We can’t talk about serving larger numbers of kids in Louisiana if we can’t break through the bureaucracy and help the ones right here,” said Charles Underwood, executive director of the UC Links program.

In operation since 1986, UC Links is a network of educational programs throughout the University of California System that connect community and university partners to provide computer-based and other learning activities for school children in low-income communities throughout California. Underwood and Willis collaborated to adapt educational activities and resources from the UC Links models to the situation in Louisiana.

But, the situation in Louisiana was unlike anything Underwood had ever seen in North America, he said after touring the area, “I have been in very low income communities all over California and the nation and I have never seen a camp like this in the United States before.”

Underwood added that it was not easy to set-up the Delta Express Program in Renaissance Village. “The difficulty in putting this work together is greater than I have seen before because we usually have something to build on, even in very low-income communities ...But in this community, we have not had any type of infrastructure to build on.”

Underwood added that it was not easy to set-up the Delta Express Program in Renaissance Village. “The difficulty in putting this work together is greater than I have seen before because we usually have something to build on, even in very low-income communities ...But in this community, we have not had any type of infrastructure to build on.”

Renaissance Village had no computers, no electrical outlets, no electricity, no air conditioning, and, no building or rooms available for use on a regular basis for educational activities. Weary from waiting and hoping, the group came together. “We pooled our resources, got a handful of people together, did some training sessions, and got the program off the ground,” said Underwood.

The students that come to the tent are devoted said Taylor, “One little girl has a two-hour bus ride from school. The minute she jumps off the steps of the bus, she heads straight to the tent.”



And, while some children are in the tent doing a project, getting help with homework, or reading, others are riding their bikes or playing games outside. At best, this only accounts for about 50 children, bringing up the question, where are the rest of the estimated 500 residents under the age of 18?

Many of the children in the park have been through tremendous social and emotional stress—losing relatives, struggling to survive in the aftermath of Katrina, and then moving several times from one temporary shelter to another. “We don’t push the kids to participate; we’re here, we’re consistent, and we accept and encourage the children,” said Willis. “Kids may be afraid, depressed, angry, upset, and more. We help them work through that and involve them in learning without lots of pressure.”

“Computers are a real magnet for kids these days,” Underwood said. “These kids know that other kids have computers and that other communities have these kinds of resources....it can be a source of real engagement for the kids, especially kids that are struggling in school.”

Taylor said they are trying to reach out to as many school age children as they can, “It is exciting to see that we are affecting lives. I can only imagine the impact we would have if a technology rich environment were available for us to engage more with the students.”

Smolen added that while the tent is hot and not the ideal situation that it is in a great location to recruit, as she pointed to the basketball court nearby.

The sound of thumping basketballs echoed throughout the tent like a heartbeat. A few families passed by on an evening stroll, leading dogs on leashes. And, for a moment it looked like any neighborhood.

But, there is no need for a neighborhood watch group here. Instead, FEMA employs a private security firm with guards to monitor this community. Some even pop in and out of the tent, sitting down and talking with the children about their Mother’s Day cards or helping the teachers move heavy ice chests.

Smolen added that the ice chests were a necessity in the heat and were a first attraction for some of the kids, “But, mind you, we had some parents that were very adamant about us not handing out sugary sodas and candy...very adamant.” Instead, they offer iced down water, juices, and healthy snacks. “A hot commodity in this heat,” said Jola as a guard kindly hauled off an empty cooler.

Like a camp or picnic, the tutoring center has an air of fun to it because it is so different from a classroom. It also gives new meaning to the term “field work,” proving to be a truly unique learning experience for the soon-to-be teachers.

Emily Johnson, a tutor originally from New Orleans, works at the tent two days a week. She is majoring in elementary education with a concentration in astronomy and oceanography. While cutting shapes out of construction paper and handing them to a student, she said she enjoys working with the children because they are “so sweet” and “just good kids.”

"It is a lot different out here from what people assume," said Johnson recalling friends' worries about her safety while at the village. "It is just so different than what you hear. And, the kids love having us here."

After hearing Johnson's comments, Carol Bell, a librarian at LSU who has worked with The Delta Express Program since the beginning, joined the conversation, saying "People need to know how sweet these kids are" and mentioned that fear may be what prevents more from going to the village to help in similar relief efforts.

Like Bell and Johnson, the tutors are dedicated to this project and have built an incredible bond with the students. As a New Orleans native, Johnson views her efforts with The Delta Express Program as her way of "helping get the city back, to rebuild in some way."

As a little girl hovers above her shoulders peeking at her project, Amanda Maddox said her reasoning was a little different, "I am helping but I am also getting experience on better ways of teaching, too. I want to give back to the community that I live in now, even if I am not from here." Originally from Atlanta, Maddox is a math major with a concentration in secondary education.

There are also tutors who are not in the College of Education. For instance, Kyra Brown is getting a general studies degree with minors in sociology, psychology, and corrections. LSU Libraries is also active in the village and The Delta Express Project. The students participating in the program all receive specialized training from LSU and its partner, the University of California at Berkeley, which has operated a similar program in the Oakland schools for more than ten years. There is also a great deal of parental and community involvement in the group as well.



Victor Stewart, a community member, who is also a displaced teacher, said he comes by the tent because he likes to see all the children learning and talking with the teachers. After working for the city of New Orleans for 32 years, Stewart retired and then a friend recruited him into teaching. He taught horticulture classes as a volunteer while getting certified through G.W. Carver High School, located two blocks from the industrial canal in New Orleans.

Stewart received his teaching certification three days before Katrina hit. "He is here every night and helps us any way he can," added Smolen. "Even if people are there temporarily they need some sense of community," said Underwood, "Anything we can do together to help build a sense of community will encourage the kids to have hope for a better future."

The College of Education is dedicated to fostering this hope to bring about a true renaissance for the children of the village, helping them rise above catastrophe and achieve the better futures of which they dream.

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"This is only a small sample of the exciting and meaningful activities in which our faculty, students, and staff have been engaged."

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Painting by Kate McLean, University Lab School Student

A College-wide Response to the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

In addition to continuing efforts in the CHILL project, it is important to briefly highlight the College's overall involvement with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita recovery efforts. Many of our faculty, staff, and students welcomed displaced family, friends, fellow educators, and even complete strangers into their homes. The College enrolled 125 evacuees as visiting students, created a program to accommodate the alternative certification students from the University of New Orleans, and acknowledged several visiting students who received their diplomas from several New Orleans institutions at the College's commencement ceremony.

While many College of Education members volunteered immediately after the storm at the Pete Maravich Assembly Center, the LSU Help Line, or the School of Veterinary Medicine's animal shelter, others spent weeks and even months offering both their expertise and their time at shelters and for relief efforts throughout the state.

Counseling professors Laura Hensley Choate, Gary Gintner, and David Spruill developed and conducted workshops offering tips for coping with the aftermath of the storms including stress response, examples of common reactions, risk and resiliency factors, and loss issues for health care professionals, parents, school counselors, teachers, governmental officials, and the LSU community.

The College of Education also actively collected and distributed supplies for hurricane assistance. In collaboration with the National Science Teachers Association, Fawn Ukpolo and other College faculty, staff, and students collected and distributed supplies to the City of Baker School System which experienced an incredible influx of many new students into the area after the FEMA relocation trailer site known as Renaissance Village was established in the city of Baker. Through her connections with executive directors from across the country in the

Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance and the American Heart Association, Kathy Hill collected and distributed donations and supplies to help replenish class materials for physical education teachers, an estimated \$300 value worth of equipment per teacher.

Through a project funded by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, staff members from the College of Education worked with The International Rescue Committee (IRC) in developing and field testing a shelter survey assessment tool and conducted interviews at area shelters. This preliminary work aided in formation of the Child Friendly Spaces program that addresses the psychosocial needs of children through educational and fitness activities. The IRC also provided training to student volunteers in hopes of implementing the program in area shelters.

Students volunteered over the fall semester break for the Holiday Camp program at Renaissance Village organized by the Association of Hole in the Wall Camps and traveled to New Orleans with another non-profit aide organization known as Hart 4 Humanity to clean up parks and playgrounds. An elementary education junior deserves special mention for her relief efforts. Erin King served at the Istrouma Baptist Church, Green Chapel, and Shilo Baptist Church shelters in addition to volunteering at the River Center Shelter and the FEMA relocation trailer site known as Renaissance Village in Baker. King was moved by her experiences at these shelters; she postponed her studies at LSU for a semester in order to focus her time on working with the displaced children. King wants to dedicate her career to improving the living conditions and learning opportunities for children displaced by natural and man-made disasters within the United States and internationally.

The College of Education continues to explore ways to respond and to better understand the many challenges facing the state. This is only a small sample of the exciting and meaningful activities in which our faculty, students, and staff have been engaged. Some of these efforts are highlighted in more detail in the departmental sections throughout this publication. Due to the ever increasing number of ongoing activities, however, it is inevitable that many projects will go unmentioned—although not unappreciated.

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"The children would take the little people figurines and immediately put them in the dollhouse attic to get them away from the water." - Ana Morales Boone

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Understanding Educational Responses in Natural Disasters

With the one year anniversary of Katrina and Rita recently past, LSU researchers have shed light as to how educators dealt with the chaos and questions in classroom communities following two of the country's most devastating natural disasters.

The National Science Foundation and the Board of Regents' Louisiana Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (LA EPSCoR) funded nearly \$100,000 for the project conducted by College of Education Associate Professor Teresa Buchanan, School of Human Ecology Professor Diane Burts, and School of Social Work Associate Professor Timothy Page. The researchers collected information about both teachers' responses to and students' knowledge of the 2005 hurricanes.

To understand the educator side of the storm response, the group surveyed teachers' and schools' activities following the storms. In all, 344 teachers in Louisiana, 93 in Tennessee, 77 from South Carolina, and 78 from Georgia completed surveys that described what school response, planned teacher-directed activities and spontaneous student-led activities took place in the weeks immediately following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

They reported that school-wide responses differed according to location. As expected, Louisiana schools did significantly more school-wide activities than schools in any other state. A few common examples of these school-wide activities involved collecting or providing educational materials such as classroom supplies or toys for evacuee children and providing materials for evacuee families like clothing or dishes.

One of the most surprising findings of the study was that there were no significant differences in teacher-planned classroom activities based on location. The LSU research team found that teachers reported doing approximately

the same amount of planned activities in their classrooms no matter where in the country they were located—state, school district, or hurricane-prone area.

“We expected to find a flurry of classroom activity in the Gulf Coast not only about weather but about hurricane safety. Instead, the coastal states did not adjust their classroom instruction anymore than Tennessee—where people don’t worry about a direct hit from a Category 4 hurricane,” said Buchanan, the principal investigator for the project.

Buchanan was most surprised to find that Louisiana teachers didn’t seem to direct any more of their classroom activities toward helping children understand the hurricane-related events, “I think teachers were operating under the impression that it would have been harmful to the children if they had discussed the hurricanes in their classrooms. There are a lot of misunderstandings out there about what to do in a classroom following a crisis.”



In contrast to those findings, the researchers found that children varied greatly in self-initiated activities in the classroom based on their locations. Children in Louisiana initiated significantly more spontaneous activities related to hurricanes than children in other states. The most frequent activities involved children telling stories about Katrina or hurricanes, discussing Katrina or hurricane-related events in the classroom with the teacher, and discussing Katrina or other hurricane-related events among themselves.

Another significant finding of the study dealt with grade-level learning. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers who teach children ages four to five did fewer things related to hurricanes or weather than primary grade teachers who teach children ages six to eight. The researchers found that the most common classroom activities were related to reading stories about weather, lecturing about hurricanes, or teaching a unit or theme or conducting a project about weather.

Second-grade teacher Stephanie Sarver provided a clear illustration of outstanding hurricane-related classroom activities. At E.K. Key Elementary School in Sulphur, Louisiana, Sarver based her lessons off of the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum and grade-level expectations. Those guidelines include sections that address community problems and engage the students in discussions about community problems. Among other activities, Sarver adapted these units after the hurricanes by commissioning her students to create Hurricane Rita commemorative stamps for a make believe relief fund.

The students also were required to come to a collective decision about how to use the funds raised by the stamps. They decided that the stamp revenue should be used to fix all the “blue roofs,” clean up the trash, build an animal shelter, and and buy food for hungry people and animals.

“This school really rolled out the red carpet for us. We arrived to hand-made signs addressed to the LSU research team that read ‘Welcome LSU.’ They were excited to be a part of this hurricane project,” recalled Buchanan.

“We were glad they were part of the sample because we were able to see Mrs. Sarver’s terrific response to the hurricanes. We believe she demonstrated model teaching. Other teachers in the sample had equally impressive responses, but she did a particularly good job describing her teaching to the research team.”

To better understand learning outcomes associated with teaching practices, the researchers measured the children’s knowledge about hurricanes. For this sample, 15 teachers were selected in a stratified random

sample taken from the returned Louisiana teacher surveys. The researchers selected three teachers from each grade who conducted various levels of hurricane-related activities in the class. The researchers then randomly selected and interviewed children in these classrooms to assess their understanding of hurricanes.

The six district sample of interviewees consisted of 108 children, ranging in grade levels from pre-kindergarten to third grade. Most of the children came from communities directly hit by the hurricanes with a significant percentage of children in the sample who experienced evacuation, injury, relocation to temporary housing or shelters, cohabitation with evacuees, or loss of property.

Two members of the team of interviewers went to each of the 15 schools for two days conducting interviews with the children using a new modification of the narrative story-stem methodology. Story-stem methodology uses children's stories to assess attachment, an approach Page uses in his line of research. The research team adapted the methodology to assess knowledge of hurricanes. In this case, the researchers used six scenarios in which the children interacted with wooden human figures, farm animals, a city scape, cars and boats, and doll houses. The researchers filmed each interview, reviewed the footage and coded the children's responses for statistical analysis.

"These were prompts that encouraged the children to tell stories. We started the story and the child finished it while we observed their words and actions for evidence of their knowledge about hurricanes in general and Katrina and Rita in particular," said Buchanan.

The preliminary analyses of these stories indicated that the children understood the direct effects of the hurricanes. There was very strong evidence that the children knew that trees fell down or broke, that people left their homes to evacuate, that houses were damaged, and that streets and houses flooded. Most children told stories that showed they understood that hurricanes are weather systems that can be destructive, often have heavy rain and strong winds, and that there is a hurricane season. Very few stories indicated knowledge of other characteristics or causes of hurricanes.

Ana Morales Boone, a doctoral student in the College of Education, was one of the interviewers in the project. She gained first-hand insight into the students' responses to the project by traveling to seven classrooms and conducting an average of 16 interviews per school.

"The children would take the little people figurines and immediately put them in the dollhouse attic to get them away from the water," said Morales Boone.



"In one scenario, the children would position the dolls in front of the television to discuss warnings about hurricanes and what they should do," said Morales Boone, adding, "They would have pretend conversations about hurricanes. These preschoolers would use the word 'evacuation' and tell the wooden 'friend' about going to shelters."

Morales Boone said that it was touching and sometimes heartbreaking to see such young children's dramatic reactions to storms, giving her an appreciation for what children and teachers experienced during this difficult time. The interviews also gave Morales Boone another appreciation as well, that of the research process. Morales Boone collected and analyzed social science data from the test and pilot stage through the interview, review and coding process, offering a complete tour of the complex research cycle.

"I worked with LSU faculty, staff, students and researchers from other universities and disciplines. I met with community members and educators from all over the area. And, I participated in every aspect of the project," said Morales Boone.

"I was involved with the development of our survey instrument, our methodology, our interviews," she said, adding "I have a profound respect for all of the work researchers invest in these projects...not to

mention the time and intellectual commitment it takes to get an article published and present the findings.”

Morales Boone will present these findings with the LSU faculty team at the Louisiana Early Childhood Association conference and the research team also has submitted proposals to several national meetings including the American Educational Research Association and the Society for Research in Child Development.

With most of the preliminary analyses underway, the researchers will have an interesting picture to paint at these professional meetings. While the teachers were hesitant to change lessons to directly tackle the 2005 weather phenomena, the children themselves were eager to address these powerful storms. The picture that emerges could help teachers know how to respond to disasters that might occur in their own communities.

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"The results of this study have the potential to improve early childhood teachers' responses to natural disasters." —Dr. Teresa K. Buchanan

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Hurricanes Katrina & Rita-related Research

Spotlight on Dr. Teresa K. Buchanan

In collaboration with the LSU School of Human Ecology, many of our PK-3 students worked in shelters across the area by providing developmental and reading experiences for young children there. *Early Childhood Research & Practice* published Project Katrina, a paper that emerged spontaneously from the relief efforts of LSU faculty members from the School of Human Ecology Carol Aghayan, PhD, Andree Schellhaas, PhD, Angela Wayne, PhD, Diane C. Burts, PhD, and Joan Benedict, PhD along with Associate Professor Teresa K. Buchanan, PhD, from the Department of Curriculum & Instruction in the College of Education.

For this project, the researchers sent a survey to preschool, kindergarten, and primary grades teachers in public school classrooms in Louisiana, Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina. The researchers asked teachers to describe any teaching practices or learning activities they did in their classrooms in the aftermath of Katrina and Rita. The survey also measured teachers' beliefs about and practices of developmentally appropriate practices and the teachers' own adjustment following the hurricanes. Researchers are selecting a sample of teachers to examine the relationships between teacher classroom response and child outcomes. In addition to conducting classroom observations, the researchers will use an interview protocol to assess children's understanding of hurricanes and the children's evacuee status.

Dr. Buchanan noted, "Through future teacher preparation and training, the results of this study have the potential to improve early childhood teachers' responses to natural disasters. In turn, the results may help educators better understand how to help assist children to more effectively cope with natural disasters."



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College of Education Teams with University of California at Renaissance Village

University of California faculty members Charles Underwood and Scott Woodward along with seven UC graduate students traveled to Baton Rouge to coordinate efforts with the College of Education's activities at Renaissance Village through the [Delta Express Program](#).

The group took students in the program on fieldtrips to LSU and the zoo over the summer and was relieved to obtain use of a mobile classroom in place of the tent used over the last six months. Watch for updates in the next Bulletin about the program's progress and the 30 students now volunteering as part of a new class offered this semester.

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"It gives them freedom to express themselves in exciting ways—poems, stories, song lyrics, notes to friends, games, Instant or Text Messages." –Dr. Elizabeth Willis

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A Writing Time Machine

The LSU Writing Project Hosts Elementary Students at the AgCenter's Rural Life Museum

Elizabeth Willis, PhD, Director of the LSU Writing Project in the College of Education, wanted to bring history to life. She worked with teacher consultants, the LSU AgCenter's Rural Life Museum, and Melrose Elementary School administration, teachers, and students to provide an opportunity for students to develop a greater understanding of rural Louisiana and African American History. Dr. Willis used a contextual approach to learning through the study of historical fiction and African American authors, real life experiences, and the vivid environment of the Rural Life Museum to stimulate the minds of nearly 60 elementary students in a writing marathon.

The theme behind this writing marathon revolved around Deborah Hopkinson's book *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*, a story about a quilted map of the Underground Railroad. Seeing depictions of the living conditions of the characters in the book and creating a "legacy quilt," just as Clara did in the book, allowed the students to understand more deeply life during the late 19th and 20th centuries.

"The book allowed us to weave many disciplines into the writing marathon," said Dr. Willis, "We had activities dealing with the geography of the Underground Railroad and the local Baton Rouge area; we had hands-on exercises in quilting, sketching, and crafts."

The Rural Life Writing Marathon began with a literary performance of *Sweet Clara* by Dr. Willis and Mrs. Shana Wilson, a fourth grade teacher at Melrose Elementary School and teacher consultant with the LSU Writing Project. Melrose 2nd and 4th graders then broke into groups of six and toured the museum with their teachers and rural life guides, taking part in exhibits and pausing to write in their journals and share their writings with the group.

"A simple reading of the book would have exposed our students to the feelings of desperation, loneliness, disassociation, companionship, compassion, hope, fear, and triumph associated with slavery," said Mrs. Wilson. "Yet, breathing life into these feelings by giving our students the Rural Life Museum experience, was far more effective," added Dr. Willis.

Dr. Willis commented on how the writing marathon connects students' knowledge to new information through sights, feel, and sounds, "It gives them freedom to express themselves in exciting ways—poems, stories, song lyrics, notes to friends, games, Instant or Text Messages."

After five cycles through various exhibits in the museum, the students then translated their writings from the marathon into a quilt. They used special transfer paper to copy their drawings and sketches onto a patch and then stitched the patches all together

Dr. Willis declared that the whole notion behind the LSU Writing Project's writing marathons is to create demonstrations for teachers to take back to their campuses and share with their colleagues, "We want to create a cadre of teacher leaders who help other teachers."

Dr. Willis said that aside from the joy and sense of accomplishment it gives her to see children so excited about writing, reading, and learning, the workshop's success lies in the fact that it revolves around "Teachers teaching teachers."



Established in 1984, the Louisiana State University Writing Project is a collaborative university-school partnership dedicated to improving the quality of student writing in the schools. It brings successful teachers of writing together in invitational Summer Writing Institutes, and preparing them to lead workshops for other teachers. Participants join a network of teacher consultants who actively provide ongoing professional development for schools and districts. Other programs of this 300-member network include rural open institutes, administrators' writing retreats, youth writing activities, quarterly meetings, and an annual convocation.

The LSU Writing Project is one of 189 sites in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands that comprise the National Writing Project. It is centered in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction of the College of Education of Louisiana State University, from which it serves ten parishes in the southern part of the state. Elizabeth Willis, PhD, Assistant Professor of Education at LSU, serves as director of the LSU Writing Project; Co-directors are Susan Weinstein, PhD, Assistant Professor of English at LSU, and Kenneth Farizo, PhD, Curriculum Specialist in St. Charles Parish Schools. Visit <http://www.lsuwritingproject.org> for more information on events and activities.



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"These two programs really compliment each other. LSYOU makes sure they graduate high school so they can get to a university, community college, or trade school." –Suzan Gaston

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College of Education Making an Impact on Urban Youth

Spotlight on LSYOU & GEAR UP Baton Rouge

Keeping students in school and making sure they graduate is a problem facing educators across the country. While researchers disagree on the number of high school dropouts what they do agree on is that this problem is not going away on its own.

Instead of focusing only on reversing high school dropout rates, the College of Education is focusing on increasing high school graduation rates and enrollment in colleges, universities, and trade/technical schools. The College has been doing this since the 1980s with two programs known as LSYOU and GEAR UP Baton Rouge. Both connect with students as early as middle school.

While LSYOU and GEAR UP Baton Rouge are two different programs, they work in tandem, "These two programs really compliment each other," said Suzan Gaston, 11-year director of the LSYOU program. "LSYOU makes sure they graduate high school so they can get to a university, community college, or trade school."

By addressing the unique cultural and socio-economic barriers facing urban youth, the College's LSYOU and GEAR UP Baton Rouge programs have kept the College in touch with its community while leading the nation in success as compared to similar federal/state programs.

LSYOU



The name “LSYOU” stands for Louisiana State Youth Opportunities Unlimited, a program defined by providing high school students with the skills and knowledge they will need to be successful in high school and beyond. LSYOU is also a community outreach program, used as a service-learning site where LSU faculty, staff, and students can learn effective teaching techniques while making an impact on the lives of urban youth.

The LSYOU program consists of two major segments, the summer component and the school-year component. The summer component is a 24 hours per day, seven days per week, six-week summer residential program for middle school/junior high students at high risk for dropping out of school. Criteria for acceptance includes: income level, school grades, previous failures, poor test scores, family, and personal problems.

This summer residential component is conducted on the LSU campus and consists of academics, campus job placement, counseling, and recreational activities offered in an environment that emphasizes family, security, and a sense of belonging. The program encourages parents, grandparents, relatives, and friends to get involved in the program.

Roslyn Matthews is the mother of three-year LSYOU student Nia Williams. Matthews said that she thought it was a good idea to surround her daughter with people who cared about their futures, “I thought that if Nia saw these people doing things with their lives that when the time came, she might not sneak out that window. She might not break rules and be rebellious. She might want to be different and focus on her future.”

Matthews wanted her daughter Nia in a structured environment but also one that would be fun and encourage her to go to college, “They get rewarded for doing well. They take them on fun field trips and they get to live in dorms like college students. This program has exposed her to life situations that she may not have been able to do so young.”

Williams is a senior at Woodlawn High School where she has worked in sports medicine, doing things like wrapping ankles, giving first aid, and helping athletes during practices. She plans on enrolling at Southeastern University to major in physical therapy with a minor in business. Williams added that she hopes to one day open her own clinic after college.

Matthews added, “We are so blessed to be part of this program, of what it has grown to today. Everything is so well-thought out all the way to the end.” Matthews was inspired by her daughter and is determined to re-enroll in college.

In addition to experiences like these obtained in the summer component of LSYOU, the second segment is known as the school-year component, an intense intervention into all aspects of the student’s life. This intervention is followed by an individualized support system that follows the student until graduation. This support system involves exit test preparation, mentoring, personal and family counseling, weekend retreats on the LSU campus, and tutoring.



Amy Scales tutors LSYOU students in math twice a week. She first started tutoring as part of a service-learning class lead by College of Education Assistant Professor Terrie Poehl. “I immediately fell in love with the program,” Scales said. “I wish I had found out about it sooner.”

Like Scales, many students at LSU are exposed to service work through tutoring, classes, or degree requirements such as observation hours. LSYOU students benefit from the service component, getting dedicated LSU students to help them with homework, test preparation, or specific subjects related to ACT or SAT tests. Scales said she became attached to the atmosphere and students and asked if she could work there as a tutor.

“Of course we hired Amy...she is a perfect example of how this program affects you,” said Gaston. “Amy’s brief encounter with these kids in one college class changed her; she became involved and is still tutoring today just because she enjoys helping them learn.”

Scales talked about two students she works with regularly, Starkeisha and Princess. “They are my dynamic duo,” said Scales. “I pick out Starkeisha’s strengths and then I find out what Princess is good at, and I let them explain to each other how to work the problems, in their own words.”

Scales said that she and other math tutors collaborate on these types of teaching methods, adding that veteran teachers from schools in the community also tutor there and give newcomers great ideas to use when they are in front of the classroom.



“I learn a lot from the kids. But, I learn from other tutors and from the teachers there, too,” added Scales. “This is good for me, for when I’m a teacher next year.”

Scales is set to graduate December 2006 with a bachelor’s degree in secondary education with a concentration in mathematics. “I love seeing them so motivated—watching them set their goals on going to college,” said Scales while grinning.

Gaston added that “LSYOU stays with the students even after they get to college.”

For example, Southern University freshman Chris Johnson still comes to Hatcher Hall sometimes twice a week. Amy Scales has tutored him in college-level math courses.

Johnson now wants to return the favor and is applying for a position as a peer counselor for the LSYOU summer program, “I am trying to do all I can to help this program stay alive.” Johnson first started LSYOU in 2002. He credits advisors Luereaner Mack and Maurice Craddock (known as “Mrs. Mack” and “Mr. Reese”) for helping him get into college.

And, while LSYOU wants to get students interested in going college, the program stresses that there are a variety of post-secondary options. “A university may not be for everyone,” said Gaston. “We want them to go to college. And, yes, I am always trying to recruit them to LSU...but, we also want them to know that there are other options. They can get a skill and get a good job even if college is not in their sights.”

These other options include community colleges, trade schools, or other post-secondary education such as the military or law enforcement academies. Jeremy Granier graduated from the LSYOU Class of 1987. After spending 10 years in the Navy as a combat medic, Sergeant Granier is now a supervisor with the Lafourche Parish Sheriff’s Office Water Patrol Division.

“I came full circle. I think I would have been on the other side of the law had it not been for that intervention” said Granier.

“If we had problems, they took us on the side and helped us through it. They really cared about us,” Granier said recalling the impact counselors had on his life, such as Todd Cowen, M.D. “Dr. Cowen took care of an injury for me once. He definitely had something to do with the fact that I became a combat medic in the Navy.”

Granier said that the skills he learned in LSYOU such as discipline and drive along with his medical experience from the military came in handy during search and rescue and missing persons missions he conducted with fellow law enforcement officers in Louisiana’s coastal waterways, especially during the 2005 hurricane season.

GEAR UP Baton Rouge

GEAR UP accelerates the academic achievement of urban middle and secondary school students so that increasing numbers of these young people will graduate from high school to matriculate and succeed in postsecondary education and careers. The program is also geared towards lessening the need for remediation. Recognizing the unacceptable relationships between under-prepared urban middle and high school students and their low college-going rates, former President Clinton and the Congress, through the Higher Education Amendments of 1998, created GEAR UP.

Since 2000, the College of Education has been GEAR UP Baton Rouge's lead partner. LSU and GEAR UP Baton Rouge work in broad partnership with the U.S. Department of Education to ensure program participants successfully matriculate to postsecondary institutions and careers. GEAR UP Baton Rouge also partners with the East Baton Rouge School System, ExxonMobil, and The Young Leaders' Academy to provide mentors, tutors, social work interns, college orientations, campus visit seminars, summer field experiences, incentive awards, leadership classes, and professional faculty and staff development services.

Illustrating the positive impact of GEAR UP's staff, Eryka Jackson, a graduating senior, recalled how one counselor, Mrs. Carter, impacted her life in seventh grade.

"Mrs. Carter helped me and would talk with me. She was more than a counselor; she was like a friend; she made us want to be in school." Jackson loves poetry and art and hopes to pursue a degree in graphic design at either LSU or Southeastern University.



Julius Greenhouse, another graduating senior, said, "Mrs. Pat Smith [GEAR UP coordinator] showed how she cared about my future – she took time with me and she showed me that college was the way to go." Greenhouse, competing for a national GEAR UP scholarship, plans to attend either Southern University or LSU and hopes to pursue a degree in secondary education because of the impact teachers have made on him. "I know how I get along with my teachers and how they make it fun to come to school, and I want to do that."

Pat Smith, coordinator for GEAR UP Baton Rouge, said the program catches students like Jackson and Greenhouse at a critical time in their lives and instills confidence in the things they like to do, while reinforcing the importance of achievement. Smith said she believes GEAR UP transforms student potential into reality and active upward mobility.

GEAR UP Baton Rouge approaches its strategy through a series of academic and support services. Parent workshops are held throughout the year to link family with academics and to promote teamwork between parents and students. Nearly 60 percent of GEAR UP parents have participated in these workshops that focus on high school graduation requirements, national and state tests, college entrance requirements, and financial planning.

These activities promote a lasting impact on students participating in GEAR UP Baton Rouge. Of the first cohort, 70 percent remain enrolled in high school, with more than 50 percent graduating from high school in May 2006. Approximately 80 percent of GEAR UP students have conveyed aspirations to pursue a four-year college degree or postsecondary careers.

The GEAR UP Baton Rouge staff continually expands its data collection base on all program services pertaining to student achievement and overall assessment outcomes. GEAR UP Baton Rouge actively participates in a wide-range of professional activities, actively links with other GEAR UP sites, and presents at national and regional conferences.



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"Hosting international visitors is an excellent way to open avenues for collaborative research and to expand our own experiences with different cultures." –Dean M. Jayne Fleener

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Chinese Educators Visit the College of Education

Tuesday, November 1, 2005, the LSU College of Education hosted 13 visitors from China for a luncheon presentation and tours of three Louisiana public schools. The visit was brought about by interest in the work of Bill Doll, PhD, on curriculum and how some of his research can be implemented into the Chinese educational system. Dr. Doll, professor in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at LSU, published three books on curriculum theory that have been translated into Chinese.

Mrs. Ge Mu, an undergraduate student in Arts & Sciences at LSU, was instrumental in setting up the visit. Mrs. Mu's father works for the Education Commission of Heilongjiang Province in China. Mrs. Mu translated her father's comments on Doll's work, indicating that "Professor Doll's book *A Post-modern Perspective on Curriculum* has made a deep and great influence in the field of Chinese education."

The visitors, known as the Education Research Team, were hosted by the Education Commission of Heilongjiang Province in China. Three of the 13 members are elementary school principals in Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang Province. These elementary schools, which serve more than 1,000 students each, focus on bilingual education. The other 10 visitors are officials from the Education Commission of Heilongjiang Province, including the director and vice-director of basic education.

Most of the high schools and elementary schools in Heilongjiang Province have undergone a "curriculum revolution," Mrs. Ge Mu translated for the visitors. "Their achievement has been regarded as a great success by the Education Ministry of China. LSU's education department is very famous, so, this is a great chance for us to learn more."

"Hosting international visitors is an excellent way to open avenues for collaborative research and to expand our own experiences with different cultures," said Dean M. Jayne Fleener of the College of Education, who also has two books being translated into Chinese.

The program for the Chinese visitors included several tours of area schools organized by Elizabeth Willis, PhD, through her close ties with local school administrators. The first three tours included classroom observation of Holmes elementary teachers at Broadmoor Elementary School and Sherwood Middle School of the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. Mr. Alan Jeff Berthelot, College of Education alumnus and social studies teacher who works with the Holmes students at Sherwood Middle School, described the LSU-School partnership, "We work together, giving and taking and sharing ideas in a truly collaborative way." Mr. Berthelot also stressed the strong professional-academic relationship that evolves from designing classroom inquiry projects as thesis research.



After meeting with Sherwood Middle School faculty, the Chinese Research Team enjoyed a lunch hosted by College of Education Dean M. Jayne Fleener. During the luncheon, Dr. Doll gave a presentation on the LSU Holmes Elementary Education Program called "Designing and Implementing a Post-Modern Curriculum." The day concluded with another tour of the LSU University Laboratory School and visits to area attractions.

Dr. Doll is Coordinator of the Holmes Elementary Education Program and Co-director of the Curriculum Theory Project. One of the primary goals of the College of Education Curriculum Theory Project is to research the role education plays in a democratic society with focus on internationalization of curriculum, reflective teaching and inquiry, cultural studies, and global and social responsibility.

"Professor Doll's ideas on education are not only valuable for China, but also valuable for the world education field," reflected Mrs. Mu.

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"The Coastal Roots project is transitioning from the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program to the LSU College of Education and LSU Department of Horticulture."

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Grass Roots Restoration

College of Education Assistant Professor Pamela Blanchard traveled to Grand Isle with students, teachers, and administrators from Lafayette Middle School and Southern Living magazine to help restore the damaged Louisiana coastline. Spearheaded by Grand Isle Port Commissioner Wayne Keller and LSU AgCenter extension service agent David Bourgeois, this planting was a joint effort of the LSU Coastal Roots Project, Lafayette Middle School's Adopt-An-Island Project and the Grand Isle Coastal Plant Resources Project.

A group of eight middle school students accompanied by Lafayette Middle School faculty and parents began the day by crossing over to Grand Isle to Fifi Island by boat. They met with Stephen Bender, a senior writer for Southern Living Magazine, and a Southern Living photographer. Over the course of the next couple of hours, students were photographed and interviewed while transplanting 60 red mulberry, 100 wax myrtle, and 10 black mangrove plants. The Bourgeois family, Keller and the LSU Coastal Roots project grew and supplied the 170 plants for the project.

Bourgeois has been instrumental in establishing the LSU Coastal Roots Project in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes. Through its Adopt-An-Island Project, Lafayette Middle School has been working with Keller over the last several years to plant restoration foliage in areas that have suffered erosion problems on and near Grand Isle. Lafayette Middle was the only school in the nation awarded the Environmental Hero Award by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in 2006.

The Coastal Roots program is transitioning from the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program to the LSU College of Education and LSU Department of Horticulture. Blanchard and horticulture faculty member Ed Bush hope to bring together the College's community ties and relationships with school systems to involve students and teachers in ecological stewardship efforts across the state.

Look for the article in the summer 2007 issue of Southern Living magazine.



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"This is critical to not only preserving their rich heritage, but also an opportunity to reaffirm their culture by living it." – Nicholas Ng-A-Fook

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Spotlight on Future Alumni

Nicholas Ng-A-Fook and the United Houma Nation

The work of Mr. Nicholas Ng-A-Fook serves as an excellent example of the College of Education's participation in research and outreach. Mr. Ng-A-Fook extended the classroom boundaries beyond the University and into the community to research communities who have had little or no access to higher education and to use his research as a platform to build bridges between universities and local indigenous communities.

Mr. Ng-A-Fook focused his dissertation research project in his passion for the United Houma Nation. The Houma are one of the largest indigenous communities in Louisiana, including more than 17,000 members. Suffering from Jim Crow policies of racial segregation, American Indians were also denied access to local schools. A few non-traditional educational venues were open to the students of the Houma Nation, most of which were established by religious institutions. Yet most of these schools ended at grade seven. Parents who could afford to do so then sent their children to out-of-state high schools. As a result, many Houma were prevented from attending high school until the mid-1960s.

"I wanted to research on something which was meaningful to the United Houma Nation community, and something that had not been done in depth before within the faculty of Education at Louisiana State University—something that would benefit both the community and the University," said Mr. Ng-A-Fook on his dissertation focus. After introducing himself to the United Houma Nation community, Mr. Ng-A-Fook said, "I wanted to negotiate a research project that formed a synergy between what the research community wanted and what research the Houma would like to see done about their educational history and heritage."



"In the end, the work I did on my dissertation was only a small portion of the research I collected," stated Mr. Ng-A-Fook about his four-year qualitative study of the Houma community. Mr. Ng-A-Fook collected more than 6,000 photographs and more than 100 hours of digital video recordings from Houma members and elders. His dissertation documents the daily lives inside and outside of colonial institutional systems through oral histories of the United Houma Nation.

In addition to the massive amount of cultural history he collected, Mr. Ng-A-Fook became actively involved in the Houma community. For instance, Brenda Robichaux, head of the American Indian education program in Lafourche Parish, initiated a summer education camp to offer a cultural curriculum for American Indian children who had no other formalized educational opportunity to learn of their heritage. The three-night/four-day camp promotes literacy and community. Each day students gather for breakfast and read their "Sakchay Anumpa" (Houma Indian language word for Crawfish Tails), a daily newsletter produced from students' own words and writing highlighting their daily activities, artwork, and social gatherings.

With the cooperation of Mrs. Robichaux, Mr. Nicholas Ng-A-Fook started the Sakchay Anumpa Newsletter three summers ago and produced it until the camp director was able to find someone to collect, edit, design, and print the material. "It is an excellent way for the children at camp to gain experience reading, writing, and communicating with each other," explained Mr. Ng-A-Fook. "This is critical to not only preserving their rich heritage, but also an opportunity to reaffirm their culture by living it."

Mr. Ng-A-Fook's research and involvement with Houma will not end with the spring diploma ceremony, "The Houma told me when I first met them that if I wanted to understand them, I had to spend time and become part of the community," he recalled. After the devastation of Houma lands and homes in Southern Louisiana by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, Mr. Ng-A-Fook began a fundraising project from his current home in Canada through a group called Education for Global Peace. The group conducted bake sales and sold more than \$2,500 in silicone bracelets to benefit an educational fund for the Houma. With a goal of \$5,000, Mr. Ng-A-Fook hopes to present the donations to Houma Principal Chief Brenda Dardar Robichaux at an educational conference sponsored by the University of Ottawa in Canada this April.

Mr. Ng-A-Fook earned his B.A. in Classical Studies from Ottawa University; his graduate diploma of education from the University of Western Sydney, Australia; and his Master's of Education from York University, Canada. He will receive his PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from the LSU College of Education in May 2006. He is currently working to convert his dissertation titled "Understanding an Indigenous Curriculum in Louisiana Through Listening to Houma Oral Histories" into a book.

For more information on the United Houma Nation visit
<http://www.unitedhoumanation.org/>

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"The March gets students thinking about college; it gets them excited about their futures, and helps them focus on things that will help them graduate and go to college."
—Cherita Lee

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GEAR UP Baton Rouge and LSYOU Participate in National March to College Day

LSU welcomed more than 70 students from schools in East Baton Rouge Parish and neighboring parishes to its campus on April 25, as part of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars' March to College Day program.

The march was geared towards getting high school students to focus on graduating and going to college. LSU's very own basketball great and University Laboratory School alumnus, Glen "Big Baby" Davis talked to the kids about how education has helped him and what college can do for them.

The March to College Day program is organized through the LSU Chapter of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. Cherita Lee, one of the event organizers, said that, "The March gets students thinking about college; it gets them excited about their futures, and helps them focus on things that will help them graduate and go to college." An accounting major at LSU, Lee helped establish themes of this year's march.

Themes of the march included: goal-setting, the importance of education, and how decisions of today will affect their tomorrows. The day was filled with LSU faculty and staff speaking to the marchers on how to set reasonable goals and work successfully towards reaching these goals. Speakers also spoke with the marchers about how making good grades, helping others, taking responsibility for actions and how being a person of integrity will improve their lives and their future careers.

TIME Magazine recently dedicated eight pages in the April 17th issue to the topic of high school dropout rates. While researchers disagree about the national average of high school dropout rates, they agree that it is a national problem and one that has long-term negative consequences, not only for the economy but for the lives and well-being of individuals.

LSU has been addressing the dropout problem since the 1980s with LSYOU (Louisiana State Youth Opportunities Unlimited) and GEAR UP Baton Rouge (Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs). Both programs have established excellent records of success.

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"Fighting to preserve the French culture and language in Louisiana is also fighting to preserve the Louisiana economy." –Arnaud Sgambato

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College of Education Welcomes New Attaché Pédagogique Arnaud Sgambato

The LSU College of Education welcomes the new Attaché Pédagogique to the French Education Project for Research and Teacher Education (FEP), directed by Dr. Denise Egéa-Kuehne and housed in the College of Education Department of Curriculum & Instruction. Mr. Arnaud Sgambato, whose position is funded by the French government, serves in a consulting capacity on how to assist in the preservation and understanding of the French language and francophone cultures in Louisiana. These efforts include the recruiting and supervision of teachers who come from France through the CODOFIL program (Council for the Development of French in Louisiana) to teach French in Louisiana P-12 schools.

Mr. Sgambato joins the FEP as Director of the National Resource Center for the Teaching of French as a Second Language and French Immersion. Because of this Center, the Embassy of France in the United States has recognized LSU as one of five National Resource Centers, along with Rutgers University, the University of Southern California, the University of Wisconsin and Yale University. Each center has a specific mission; LSU focuses on teaching French as a second language and French immersion programs.

Mr. Sgambato's responsibilities include developing the National Resource Center Web site available at <http://www.frenchimmersionusa.org/>, which was originally initiated by the Consortium of Immersion and the FEP and established through a Board of Regents Distance Education Initiative Grant awarded to the FEP. Responding to the needs expressed by teachers of French in Louisiana's P-12 immersion programs, the Web site content is organized around the concept of sharing and disseminating the rich and varied pedagogical materials created by the teachers themselves. Furthermore, it offers a means of communication among all the teachers of French and provides information and recommendations to administrators interested in opening or improving the management of immersion programs in their schools. Using innovative applications, the Resource Center provides an opportunity for anyone to submit resources for review and inclusion on the Web site.

Mr. Sgambato, whose move to Louisiana was delayed by the hurricanes, arrived in October and immediately began

working with several initiatives on behalf of the French Government to offer aide to Louisiana French educators and schools affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Thus far, through the French American Cultural Exchange Foundation (FACE), the French government has provided more than \$400,000 in aid to Louisiana P-12 schools and teachers. These funds support the reopening of three schools in New Orleans and the purchase of pedagogical material for the students enrolled in Louisiana French immersion programs. In addition, 10,000 French books will also be distributed to those schools.

Mr. Sgambato indicated that the people of France, deeply moved by the tragic events caused by Katrina and Rita, wanted to reach out to the people of Louisiana with whom they have a rich and long-standing linguistic, cultural, and economic relationship. Mr. Sgambato stressed that those relationships are closely interrelated: "Fighting to preserve the French culture and language in Louisiana is also fighting to preserve the Louisiana economy," an economy which receives a much of its income from French tourists and others seeking the unique Louisiana francophone cultures and from French businesses and petrochemical industry.

Mr. Sgambato has taught in several middle and high schools in France and Honduras. His courses and workshops have included teaching French as a Second Language, learning with the Internet, and creating websites with students. In addition to added familiarity with theatre and music, Sgambato speaks fluent English, French, Italian, and Spanish and is working towards proficiency in Romanian.

Mr. Sgambato received his degrees from France: a B.A. in the Humanities from the University of Paris 3, an M.A. in French Literature from the University of Paris 7, and a second M.A. in French as a Second Language from the University of Grenoble 3. He pursued additional graduate studies in History and Semiology of Texts and Images from the University of Paris 7 and in Cultural Management from the University of Cergy-Pontoise.

The College's French Education Project (FEP) is one of the three poles which, with the Center for French and Francophone Studies and the Department of French Studies, constitute the Louisiana State University Pluridisciplinary Center. The Pluridisciplinary Center has been identified as a Center of Excellence by the French Government, articulated around those three poles of complementary activities, enabling the development of francophone activities beyond linguistic dimensions. The primary goal of the FEP is to improve the teaching of French and francophone cultures with special emphasis on Louisiana's francophone heritage through teacher education, material development, and research. The FEP conducts research projects on teacher education, schools, students, and foreign language education, in particular on French immersion programs in Louisiana.

Immersion programs are an innovative approach to learning for English-speaking students, in which all disciplines are taught in the foreign language. For instance, students not only learn about physics or history, but they do so in a French-speaking classroom environment. The teacher is usually a native of France or other French-speaking countries such as Canada or Belgium, and the students are expected to learn and communicate in French.

The foreign language immersion programs in Louisiana are unique, since many are housed in public P-12 schools with underserved English-speaking student populations—minorities and children from lower socio-economic status. Twenty-five percent of all immersion programs in the United States are located in Louisiana with 30% of the schools, 22% of the students, and 21% of the teachers of French. Louisiana immersion programs have also been recognized as some of the best in the United States. This emphasizes the need for further research and collaboration on these unique immersion programs—a need served quite well by educators and scholars in the FEP and strongly supported by the French Government through the continued commitment of a French Attaché Pédagogique to the French Education Project such as Sgambato.

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students, graduates, and staff designed “Teaching The Levees” to explore the many sensitive issues raised in Lee’s film.

“Teachers often don’t bring up topics of race in the classroom...it’s part of the evaded curriculum,” Crocco said.

“With a well-prepared teacher, you might get more debate about sensitive problems.”

In an interview with HBO, Spike Lee said, “I think when we look back on this many years from now, I’m confident that people are gonna see what happened in New Orleans as a defining moment in American history.”

While Crocco and her colleagues based the curriculum on Lee’s documentary, they too wanted the lessons to be pertinent across time and place, “We are trying to suggest this is not a problem only for New Orleans or our country,” she said. “The lessons exposed by Katrina and its aftermath have many historical parallels, from flooding, to earthquakes, to terrorist attacks, to name a few.”

“We focused on the questions: ‘Who are we as a country?’ ‘Who do we want to be?’” Crocco explained. Every lesson is structured around a big question related to some aspect of the film.

Some topics addressed in the “Teaching The Levees” project include the question of whether low-lying areas should be rebuilt; a lesson on how space, race, and poverty converge in this American tragedy; New Orleans and its sense of place and home; media coverage of the events surrounding the hurricane; and the idea of disaster preparedness and the problems related to not being prepared for such events.

To create the curriculum, several teams of researchers and advisors produced five categories of lessons, including economics, civics, history, geography, media literacy, designed for use in high schools, colleges, community, civic, and religious groups.

Each lesson was intended to encourage groups to gather information that produces “democratic dialogues,” defined by Crocco as reasoned discussion that should ultimately lead to some type of action. For example, some lessons encourage teachers and students to investigate their own community’s disaster plan or to do something that signals a sense of responsibility to others in the community.

Just in time for the second anniversary of Katrina, Teachers College Press distributed “Teaching The Levees” curriculum books free of charge to 30,000 high school and college teachers, and community organizations across the country in August 2007.

In addition to the printed materials, Columbia University’s EdLab at the Gottesman Libraries of Teachers College also created a Web site, www.teachingthelevees.org, to collect feedback from those who use the curriculum in actual classrooms and to provide a virtual space for people across the world to engage in the themes underscoring the curriculum. The Web site provides supplementary curriculum materials and multimedia resources developed in collaboration with experts in the field such as Diana Hess, who has taught about the teaching of controversial issues; Jane Bolgatz, author of *Talking Race in the Classroom*; and Gregory Thomas, Deputy Director of Planning and Response in the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

In addition to Hess, Bolgatz and Thomas, other experts joined the project advisory board to review the lessons, to provide feedback for the teams, and to ensure that the printed and online materials are relevant to the issues. The board includes Douglas Brinkley, an historian at Rice University and author of *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*; Gloria Ladson-Billings, an education professor at the University of Wisconsin, whose expertise is teaching about race; Henry Louis Gates, The Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University; Milton Chen, an expert in educational media and Executive Director of the George Lucas Educational Foundation; and several other prominent

historians, professors and experts on race, history, and the Gulf Coast Region.

"While 'Teaching The Levees' clearly originates from a sense of bewilderment and even outrage at the unaided suffering associated with Katrina, it does not preach," Crocco said. "There is enough ambiguity in the film to engage people in a dialogue that will lead to debates and different points of view. The teacher's obligation is to create a climate in which that is possible."

"And, our obligation as a flagship university," added Fleener, "is to empower Louisiana teachers with opportunities to enrich the climate not only of our classrooms but of our global community."

Brought to you by Teachers College-Columbia University, The Rockefeller Foundation, HBO Documentary Films, LSU College of Education, and The Curriculum Theory Project.

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The Campaign for
Louisiana State University

Week of the Young Child Invites Children and Families for Games, Art, Music & Fun



LSU Hosts Family Celebration

Week of the Young Child Invites Children and Families for Games, Art, Music & Fun

Sunday, April 20, 2008

2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

LSU Parade Grounds

BATON ROUGE, LA—On April 20, 2008, the Association for the Education of Young Children at LSU (AEYC@LSU) hosted a Week of the Young Child Family Celebration. Located on the LSU Parade Grounds from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., the event included art, music, and games for young children. In addition, there was opportunities for parents to learn about the impact of play on children's development. The theme of this year's event was "Play is a child's work."

The LSU Chapter of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) hosted the event as an opportunity to bring awareness to the needs of young children. Last spring nearly 200 people attended the inaugural event.

"Early learning experiences are crucial to the growth and development of young children," said Emily Roark, LSU student and treasurer of AEYC @LSU. "Week of the Young Child provides opportunities for all of us to recognize the importance of the early years, and to work together to build better futures for all children."

AEYC @LSU has more than 50 early childhood education majors at LSU working together to build public support for high-quality early childhood education programs. The early childhood education program at LSU is a collaborative unit involving faculty and educators from both the College of Agriculture and the College of Education. AEYC@LSU is an affiliate of NAEYC, the largest organization of early childhood

educators and others dedicated to improving the quality of early education programs for children birth through age eight. Founded in 1926, NAEYC has nearly 100,000 members and a national network of over 300 local, state, and regional affiliates.

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EVENT POSTER

Week of the Young Child Celebration Photos

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Kinesiology Assistant Professor Wins Award
Kinesiology Chair Joins National Committee
Kinesiology Professor Speaks in China
Kinesiology Students Volunteer at Junior Olympics
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Alumna Wins Teaching Award
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Lab School Completes Authorization Visit for International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme
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Instructor Wins Service Award

College of Education Doctoral Student Named Barbara Jackson Scholar

HESPA, Higher Education Student Organization, Formed

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College of Education Instructor Invited to Write Article on Hurricane Response

American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education Elects Kinesiology Faculty as Active Fellow

College of Education Faculty Visits WAFB

Lab School Dedicates Football Field to Jeff Boss

College of Education Faculty Member Joins Race & Wealth Panel Discussions at Vanderbilt and Fisk Universities

Visiting Chinese Professor Returns Home

Professor to Serve as Journal Book Review Editor

Kinesiology Chair Selected for Presidential Science Council

Professor Selected as Superintendent of Schools

Graduate Student Lands Diversity Role on Campus

Students Mix Sports with Math

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Group Establishing National Benchmarks

French Education Project Travels to France

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College of Education Professor Elected President of National Association

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