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Master of Education Newsletter

Spring 2013
Volume 2, Number 2

Faculty of Education
St. Francis Xavier University

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Have you registered for Summer Session?

Summer Calendar:

https://sites.stfx.ca/continuingeducation/sites/sites.stfx.ca/continuingeducation/files/SS%20%202013_6.pdf

Summer Registration is still
open to all eligible MEd
students.

Check out our Summer Institutes July 2-5!!!

- *Building Safe and Caring Learning Environments: Using Tribes in the Classroom (July 2-5)*
- *21st Century Learning through Apple Technology (July 4-5)*

Spring 2013 Convocation:

<http://www.stfx.ca/about/convocation/>

StFX Email Accounts

All University related
information is sent to your
StFX email; please keep your
email active at all times.

Multi-Modal Classes – what are they and why are they important?

A recent enhancement to our Master of Education program has been the upgrades to our new multi-modal teaching space in Room 123, Xavier Hall. You may have noticed that some courses have an asterisk next to the course information; i.e. *EDUC 573. This means that this course is a multi-modal course. This normally means that in Xavier Hall (Room 123) there is an instructor and a few students gathered around a large screen monitor. The students in this face-to-face classroom setting are often full-time Masters students who are spending the year on campus, combined with part-time graduate students who live in the nearby Antigonish area. Coming in online are other Masters students from all across the province and the country. So, in a class of 20 students, there may be 15 online students and 5 students face-to-face in Room 123. In some cases the instructor is online (like Margaret Olson in Victoria, BC or Wally MacAskill in Halifax, NS), most of the class is online and there is a group of students meeting together forming a small PLC in Room 123. If you look closely, you can see the table full of snacks in the background!

The multi-modal platform allows an opportunity for our full-time residential students to have a chance to work in a face-to-face environment with other full-time students. Because the number of full-time students is small we would not normally be able to offer face-to-face courses to such a small group. However, by bringing in students from the virtual world we increase the class numbers and the geographic diversity in the room allowing for a rich learning experience. Enhancing the learning with video helps bring the online students into the face-to-face classroom.

The initial feedback from students has been very positive. Students in the face-to-face environment enjoy this experience and online students have commented positively about the experience. There is a learning curve for instructors who move from teaching from the online to the multi-modal approach but with the support of our Instructional and Technology Support staff (Farnoush, Anthony and James) AND enhanced hardware and software the transition has been smooth. Multi-modal.... Just another way we are trying to be responsive to you as learners!

Enjoy the returning spring... Joanne

Have you applied for Fall 2013 Convocation?
Convocation Ceremony December 7th



Important Information

- **EDUC 520F.40 (CRN 14099) - Current Research in Curriculum: Social Studies** has been added to the on-campus offerings for summer session.
- All students intending to graduate at Fall 2013 convocation must apply to do so. The application to graduate is located in your personalized mesAMIS account. Please note that a student cannot be considered a candidate for graduation unless an application has been submitted.
- Students requiring re-imbusement for their courses can obtain official receipts from our student accounts office by emailing slmacdon@stfx.ca or dnemeth@stfx.ca; course start and end dates and proof of completion of courses can be verified by requesting your official transcript through our registrar's office. The transcript comes authenticated with the official university seal and the signature of our registrar. The link to our transcript request form is: http://www.sites.stfx.ca/registrars_office/sites/sites.stfx.ca/registrars_office/files/Transcript%20request%20form.pdf.
- Students who drop a course within 2 weeks of the start date of the course are subject to an automatic charge of \$100.00 to their student account.
- Registration for summer remains opened to all eligible students. If you have not done so we ask that you register as soon as possible. Course offerings are contingent on enrollment numbers and courses may be cancelled (including core courses) if there is insufficient enrollment. Following is the link to our course offerings: https://sites.stfx.ca/continuingeducation/sites/sites.stfx.ca/continuingeducation/files/SS%20%202013_7.pdf
- Students are able to register for as many EDUC 569s (Selected Topics) as their elective requirements allow provided the course title of each is different.
- Need assistance selecting your courses? Please contact the Program Office for assistance at med@stfx.ca or 1.877.867.3906.
- **Prevent WebFX Account Lock Outs, Enroll In The Webfx Password Manager:** Setting up the WebFX password manager provides users with the ability to reset their own passwords in the event of an account access issue. For security reasons WebFX account passwords expire every 90 days. The WebFX password manager service allows users to reset their own WebFX password by answering three personal questions, selected by you during in the enrolment process. If you have not enrolled yet you can do so by using your most recent challenge answer and selecting new user setup at <http://mypassword.stfx.ca>. Initial challenge answers are emailed to un-enrolled users on the 15th of every month. Students who have enrolled since January 2012 can find their challenge answers listed under the "My Accounts" tab in mesAMIS. Complete instructions for setting up the WebFX password manager can be found online at: <http://sites.stfx.ca/tsg/sites/sites.stfx.ca/tsg/files/SelfServeSetup.pdf%20>.

SUMMER INSTITUTES 2013

- **Building Safe and Caring Learning Environments: Using Tribes in the Classroom**
July 2 – 5, StFX university
Tuition: \$575 (includes HST and nutrition breaks)
- **21st Century Learning through Apple Technology**
July 4 & 5
There is no tuition fee for this institute – sponsored by APPLE Canada

For further information/registration call: 1-877-867-3906 or e-mail: continuinged@stfx.ca

Recently Completed Theses

One of the recommendations from the Inter-University Forum on Teacher Education held in Truro in June 2012 was that research done in Masters of Education programs in the province be made more accessible and available to educators, school boards and other researchers. At StFX we will be working to make this happen over the next few months as a way of putting a stronger spot light on the tremendous research that is going on in our graduate program! Here are four theses that were completed this term...Congratulations to Garry, Tshewang, Karma and Erhan on impressive scholarship!

COLLABORATIVELY CREATED CLASSROOM CHECKS (CCCCs)

Garry Leyte

(Supervisor: Dr. David Young)

Abstract: This thesis explores the idea of scheduling time into the school day for teacher colleagues to engage in formal collaboration while using the Collaboratively Created Classroom Check (CCCC), a novice framework, designed by the researcher, with the goal of building teacher capacity and improving student learning and achievement.

The results of a qualitative action research investigation involving teacher participants who engaged in three separate but complete cycles or loops of the CCCC framework are analyzed and presented in this thesis. Responses from questionnaires completed by these participants as well as a survey and review of current research literature indicate an absence of an on-the-job collaborative process for teachers in many schools, and reveal a high degree of interest for the CCCC process among veteran and new teachers with support from school principals.

GRADE NINE BHUTANESE BIOLOGY TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING SITUATED IN THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Tshewang Dema

(Supervisor: Dr. Katarin MacLeod)

Abstract: This narrative inquiry explores the beliefs, perceptions and experiences of four Grade Nine Bhutanese biology teachers' use of an inquiry-based learning approach while focusing on the use of natural environment as a resource for teaching biology in Bhutan. Using elements of narrative analysis to determine the teachers' beliefs, perceptions and experiences, the study further investigated the perceived supports needed by the teachers to successfully implement inquiry-based learning approach that focused on the natural environment. The study was divided into two phases, individual interviews and classroom observations.

The findings from the study indicate that even though the Bhutanese teachers believe in using inquiry-based learning in their biology classrooms and reported having had positive experiences of using inquiry-based learning especially with their students learning. However, the teachers were not able to use inquiry-based learning in their daily practice due to large number of students in their class, vast curriculum outcomes, lack of appropriate resources, an examination-oriented system, lack of professional development in using inquiry-based learning, and lack of time for planning and executing the lessons on inquiry. Participants supported the use of natural environment as a resource for teaching biology and saw it is a good way of imparting environmental education to their students through biology.

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UPON THE PERCEIVED ROLES OF INVOLVED STAKEHOLDERS IN AN ABORIGINAL EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Erhan Kúkner

(Supervisor: Dr. Joanne Tompkins)

Abstract: This study explored how an ongoing job-embedded literacy professional development project carried out in Riverside School, an Aboriginal school, as part of a First Nations Student Success Program driven partnership between Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey and the Faculty of Education of St. Francis Xavier University made an impact upon the perceived roles of Riverside School administrators (the principal and vice principal), literacy teachers, and key Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey staff.

The findings of the study indicate that the literacy professional development project made a positive impact upon the roles of the teachers situated in Riverside School as they were engaged in custom made professional development that addressed their professional context-specific needs. During this period the teachers had the opportunity to work closely with experienced literacy mentors on a regular basis. There were no findings about the impact of the literacy professional development project upon the roles of the Riverside School administrators and key Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey staff as this group of people supported the project from their home organization role specifications.

The findings suggest that projects implemented under partnerships may impact upon the roles of individuals who take part in them as they gain new knowledge and skills to address issues they come across. However the study highlights that complex professional development projects benefit from a project framework which has shared objectives, a joint organizational governance structure and a project operational plan. This may help increase the impact and sustainability of the project if the support receiving institution is ready and able to integrate the professional development in its operations.

TEACHING THROUGH DESIGN AND DEFAULT: AN EXPLORATION OF BHUTANESE PHYSICS 12 TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Karma Tenzin

(Supervisor: Dr. Leo MacDonald)

Abstract: The purpose of this mixed methods phenomenographic study was to identify and delineate various conceptions of constraints teachers' perceived inhibited them from adopting practices consistent with their beliefs about effective teaching. The data was collected through surveys (n =10) and interviews (n =4) from teachers currently teaching Physics 12 in Bhutan. Teachers' beliefs, practices, and factors that compromised and corroborated the relationship between beliefs and practices were explored both quantitatively and qualitatively. The research was conducted in two stages. Surveys were administered in the first stage and the data was analyzed using quantitative statistical methods. Interviews were conducted in the second stage in which I explored the factors teachers' perceived created a misalignment between their beliefs and practices in greater details. The interview data and open-ended responses in the survey questionnaire were analyzed through a phenomenographic approach.

Data suggests that teaching practices are influenced by both internal personal conceptions and cognitions of teaching as well as external contextual factors. Teachers' conceptions of the students' aptitude and proficiency in subject matter, teacher motivations, and teachers' self-efficacy were related to the divergence between teachers' beliefs and practices. Contextual factors such as time, resources, the nature and scope of curricular materials, teacher accountability, teachers' workload, and assessment practices are perceived to play significant roles in determining practices. The qualitatively different conceptions of the impact of contextual factors in determining practices are discussed. Teacher characteristics such as gender and teaching experiences and the influence on curricular decisions were found to be significantly related.

Teachers' teaching practices reflected a compromise between their beliefs and the factors identified. Implications for teaching, teacher education program, curriculum design, future research and future research design are discussed.