

**The Amherst-Regional**  
**Public Schools**  
**English Language**  
**Education and Title 1**  
**Newsletter**

**Vol. 2 No. 1      December 2009**



"These are the times that try men's souls." Thomas Paine

**In these challenging times,  
this newsletter is  
dedicated to building  
communication bridges  
between all our community**

*members to benefit all our*  
*children*



“Education is all a matter of *building bridges*”. Ralph Ellison

“What I have sung to you is not me  
But is has come from where I come from.  
And who I have sung to is not you,  
But someone I hope is within you.  
We will go, you and I, late or soon,

But the singing was here, like a rope~

Like a bridge~

And we were the ends of it.

Singing is all there it.

Sing to me! “

Earl V. Stevick from his book on learning languages: *A Way and Ways*

**Humankind has not woven the web of life.  
We are but one thread within it.  
Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.  
All things are bound together.  
All things connect.**

**Chief Seattle, 1854**



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## From the Editor

When does the river of learning and teaching flow with vigor and exuberance? When nothing stops it from flowing... Humans are naturally interested in learning. Yet there are many “rocks” that stop the river from flowing: hunger, stress, alienation, lack of motivation, just to mention a few.

Our community is now encountering a sharp turn in the flow of our educational system. It is a challenging time for our dedicated to education community with enormous budget cuts looming over us, tough economic times we are all facing (some of us or our family members’ having already lost or in danger of losing jobs) and the frequent diet of violence, brainwashing, and materialism fed to us daily by the national media.

All our school employees, as many other public servants, try to undo many societal evils – deeply ingrained economic injustice, racism, alienation, and fear being at the root of many of them.

As one of the SEI (Sheltered English Immersion) trainers for the district, I have been privileged to get to know many teachers’ ideas on building classroom community and on differentiating instruction. During these state mandated trainings, my training partner, Torie Weed, and I are constantly inspired and humbled by both elementary and secondary teachers’ creativity, high level of expertise, depth, intergirty, and dedication. They are truly amazing! As parents and co-workers, we are so lucky to have them for our kids’ teachers. Still, all our jobs, as parents and school employees, are so challenging these days!

This newsletter is dedicated to a continual process of building strong bridges of understanding between all our community

members to serve all our students and families with wisdom and integrity.

By Renata S. Pienkawa

**SECONDARY ELE NEWS DECEMBER 2009**  
**7-12 ELE PARENT NIGHT**

The 7-12 English Language Learners Parent Night at the High School library on November 10th was a success! Parents/Guardians had an opportunity to share and express their ideas and concerns regarding the budget situation for next year with MS/ HS Principal, Mark Jackson and HS Assistant Principal Annie Leonard. It was a great opportunity to hear the voices of parents that often times do not have the chance to participate in this type of dialogue due to language barriers. Translators representing Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Japanese and Portuguese languages along with parents serving as interpreters for one another facilitated the communication and the sharing of information. We thank Mr. Jackson and Ms. Leonard for initiating this dialogue.

Also, we thank everyone that contributed to the success of this evening: parents/guardians, students (provided babysitting), translators and a special thanks to HS Guidance counselor, Alessandra Mucci-Ramos. In addition, we thank the HS custodians, HS librarians, and the MS/HS secretaries for their support.

A January meeting is been planned. Stay tuned for follow up meetings in 2010!

## **AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

The MS ELE Homework Club meets every Tuesday from 2:30 – 3:00 alternating between rooms C12-A and C17-A. We thank the parents for the yummy snacks. Their contribution is greatly appreciated. Teachers are available every day after school from 2:30 to 3:00 in their classrooms and the library is open until 3:30. Late buses come at 4:00 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

High School students stay after school with teachers and also take advantage of volunteer tutors from Amherst College who are in the library on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays until the late bus at 4:00. The Library is open every day until 4:00 except on Friday when it closes at 3:30.

## **NEW FACES**

Kirsten Helmer is a student teacher at the Middle School this semester. She came to the US from Germany and understands what it means to be bilingual. Ms. Helman helps out in the German classes taught by Mr. Goetz.

Margo Russell is teaching part-time at the High School. Ms. Russell grew up in Portland, Oregon and came to New England to go to college. A world traveler, Ms. Russell has taught English in Japan and in Oklahoma and she hopes to visit every country in the world before she is 90. She is a Leo and is part-owner of a large hairy cat. Her hobbies include

running and reading. She is delighted to be working at the High School with such inquisitive and motivated students.

By Joan Snowdon, ARHS Dept. Head

## Interview with Dr. Guevara, Director of ELE and Intervention

Q: Let's start with one of the most pressing questions. Why re-districting?

A: Based on equity and because Mark's Meadow is closing. It is an opportunity to achieve a better balance between the schools. Whichever school the kids go to should offer the same opportunities and the same level of support.

Q: Yet many teachers feel that, for example, the language clusters in each school were working because of the unique infrastructure each school developed to support the children and families. So why change something that is working?

A: They were varying degrees of mixed reviews as to the effectiveness of the clusters. In addition, each cluster worked differently with no sufficient academic data to support them. The support given

to the families worked well, but we need to focus on high academic achievement as well.

Q: Isn't making the child and family welcome the first step towards positive academic environment?

A: Yes – but there is no reason why nurturance cannot be duplicated in the other schools. Outreach support needs to be practiced in each school. Each school needs to be in a position to welcome and support all the families: ELL, Special Needs, and all others.

Q: Many people feel that all our schools provide excellent education in their unique and carefully developed way.

A: Yes, but the type of education a child gets in Amherst depends too much on which school he or she attends. We have now an opportunity to achieve a level of equity in the children's learning experiences and thus develop positive changes towards success for all. All kids deserve excellent education and support

Q: What are the biggest educational challenges our school system is facing at this time?

A: Providing differentiated education at all levels of instruction during these tough economic times.

Q: What are some opportunities at this time?

A: Highlighting and incorporating the many packets of excellence that exist in all the schools and making them a part of each of the elementary schools. In other words, it is about learning from each other.

Q: What are some of the hats you wear as an administrator in Amherst?

A: We all have many jobs these days. My responsibilities include: Attendance issues, 504's , ELE, Title I, Title III, Translation, Wellbeing, Guidance, MCAS, OCR ( Complaints, Compliance), Professional Development for Title I, ELE, etc., Social Justice, Student Achievement, Student Records, Residency, Redistricting support, Parent/Guardian organizations, Free/Reduced lunch status, Home Education, Enrichment, MCKinney Vento, and Outreach.

Q: Wow! That is quite amazing! What do you need from your team to support you?

A: I don't need to personally be supported. Professionally I feel supported when people take the time to reflect what's best for children given the decisions that had been made beyond our control as well as when they are being the best teachers they can be and when they feel empowered to ask questions and propose new ideas. I feel supported when teachers show commitment to our common goals and mission to support all the kids and families the best we can.

Q: What are some of your perceptions concerning the kids', parents' and teachers' needs at this time?

A: All the parents want their kids to succeed in life, for their kids to be successful in spite of the external circumstances.

The kids need to be treated as if they were the teachers' own children, loved and nurtured, but also academically challenged and provided support needed to be successful.

Our teachers are professionals. I can't really speak for them. When faced with huge challenges, as our schools are going through now, I remember that as a teacher I needed time to network with colleagues

going through similar experiences, to plan together how to support the kids and each other.

Q: What is your biggest passion?

A: Education is general; education is the only thing that nobody can take from you. Also my passion is advocacy for children and families who had not had the same opportunities or the security of a home or family, who did not have the freedom of not being persecuted.

Q: Thank you very much for the conversation.

A: You are very welcome.

*We are welcoming Title I to this Newsletter.*

*Below is a short introduction to this important program.*

*We will have more information in the subsequent newsletters.*

## Introduction to Title I

Title I is a federal program which gives money to schools to provide extra help in basic academics such as reading or math. Schools can use this money to hire specially trained teachers to help students in these areas.

Title I teachers usually work with students in two ways. One way is working with small groups of students on academic skills, often either math or reading. Title 1 does not work with small groups when the classroom teacher is teaching math or reading, so the work with students is extra and helps build their skills. The other way Title 1 teachers work with students is working in the classroom while the teacher is teaching. They help students with their class work, help them pay attention, and figure out how to help the students learn best. Sometimes they also add explanations or examples to the teachers' information.

We are in full swing planning educational meetings for parents and children in support of families. We are planning meetings on nutrition and well-being, literacy, technology and others.

Throughout this year, we are planning to bring more information on Title I in this newsletter.

By Ted Souls

***We had 6 classrooms full of ELL elementary school children attend the ELE Summer Academy. Below you will enjoy a couple of accounts:***

### **ELE Summer Academy 2009**

My kindergartners and few first graders had the opportunity to learn and interact with each other in a relaxed

and stimulating environment. During the three weeks that we worked together the main focus of my lessons were to develop literacy skills through a variety of activities like read alouds, science projects, art projects and writing journals. Everyday the students also had the opportunity to explore and select within a variety of hands-on activities like puzzles center, cutting and drawing center, listening center, book center and Lego center.

By Carolina Rothkegel

P.S. See the picture below...

They are proudly showing their drawing and writing projects about "farms".



## ELE Summer Academy 2009 -- 1<sup>st</sup> grade

The Summer ELL Academy for in-coming 1<sup>st</sup> graders (Beginners/Intermediate levels) was totally immersed in a Farm Unit. The children became totally focused in reading, writing, and conversing about farming, farm animals and plants. Every day was designed with different child centered activities involving the topic. There were science journals reflecting the observations made as grass grew, including daily measurements; read-a-loud books of fiction and non-fiction; guided reading lessons; a book listening center, and daily conversations about what was being learned.

Part of the daily explorations and use of language were the arts and crafts and cooking experiences. Each week included cooking or preparing a group snack, like bread dough name letters, fruit salad, and "mud cups", along with talking about where the ingredients came from. Did they come from a plant or an animal?

While a number of art activities were done using various mediums, one that created the wonderful discussions was a water color drawing of their own farm, followed by writing about it. After having learned the vocabulary of the unit, all the children were not only able to draw beautiful farms, which were framed to go home, but were totally engaged with one another in the process of sharing and writing about it at their ELL level by Lucia Spiro

## SEI Training Dates for 2009-2010:

### Categories 1 and 3 Second Language Acquisition and Assessment 3 days~

- Participant who have completed Categories 2 and 4 in past years and new teachers from 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 (new teachers to be identified).
- January 22, 2010; January 29, 2010; May 28, 2010
- Category 2 Sheltered Content Instruction (SIOP) Elementary- 4 Days- Fall 2009
- October 23, 2009; November 6, 2009; November 13, 2009; December 4, 2009
- Category 2 Sheltered Content Instruction (SIOP) Secondary- 4 Days- Fall 2009
- October 2, 2009; October 9, 2009; November 30, 2009 (Monday); December 11, 2009

- Category 4 Reading, Writing and ELLs  
Elementary 3 days - Spring 2010
- March 12, 2010; April 16, 2010; May 7, 2010
- Category 4 Reading, Writing and ELLs  
Secondary 3 days - Spring 2010
- February 12, 2010; April 9, 2010; May 14, 2010
- Make up dates for snow day cancellations:  
June 4, 2010; June 11, 2010

THANK YOU FOR VISITING THE PAGES  
OF OUR ELE AND TITLE I NEWSLETTER!  
WISHING YOU VERY HAPPY HOLIDAYS  
AND PEACE IN 2010

*Many thanks to Tygü and Nina Koch for their help  
with putting this Newsletetr online. E-mail Renata  
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