

EDUCATION EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER

Message from the Dean

It is an understatement to say that the academic year we are just finishing was difficult. At so many levels, it has been a year of personal tragedy, economic dislocation, distress, and challenge for so many. And yet, 14 months into this pandemic, we still have an indeterminate path, and timeline, back to some kind of new normal. Through it all, the fact that we are still fulfilling our role as a Faculty of Education is testament to the strength and resilience of both the institution and all of its people.

Despite the difficulties of the past year, there have been many positive developments. The pandemic accelerated the need for instructors across both campuses to collaborate in their planning and teaching. The student voice is being heard much more than in the past, providing a valuable perspective on how we can improve teaching and learning. In particular, a big thank you to the Education Student Teachers' Association and the Cohort Leaders in Orillia. Both these developments are foundational to the coming reviews of our programs. The Department of Aboriginal Education's strategic plan is gaining traction as it seeks to reorient our Indigenous Education programs towards the needs of communities and the development of Aki- (Earth-) based programming. Generous donors such as Dr. Bud Dilling have supported our students through the provision of the Dilling Technology Bursary. As a faculty we have begun to reform our governance structures, committed to following through on the Contract Faculty Report, and initiated a Staff Workplace Assessment which aims to improve the faculty as a workplace. Finally, there is a growing sense of belonging to one faculty across two locations, somewhat ironic in an age of physical distancing and Zoom fatigue.

The year also highlighted longstanding issues that will shape the work of the faculty over the coming years. Structural inequities, across both the wider society and the faculty, were brought into the light, demanding action to address oppression in its many insidious forms. The climate emergency finally seems to have been recognized for the threat that it is, after being substantially ignored for too long. Financial pressures continue to be problematic, particularly in the provision of adequate human and physical resources in Orillia. In response, the faculty has



begun a series of conversations about the values we ascribe to that promote sustainability and human dignity such as equity, diversity, inclusion, reconciliation, and empowerment. More importantly, we need to undertake the hard work of turning those words into actions that promote the thriving of both the faculty and all with whom we come into contact. This work will take years, and we will make mistakes along the way, but the benefits clearly outweigh the costs.

Finally, there are many people to thank for the past year. To our graduating students, we wish you well for your future careers, and please stay in touch as Alumni. To all our students, thank you for your generosity of spirit and resilience throughout an extraordinary year. To our staff, without whom nothing would function as it should, and on whose administrative expertise we are so completely dependent. To our contract lecturers, who have carried such a heavy load under trying circumstances with such professionalism and selflessness. For the full-time faculty, for buttressing and strengthening the academic life of the faculty at a crucial time. And finally, to the Chairs and Directors who have provided such compassionate and clear leadership over the past year. Thank you all, and please stay safe over the coming months.

Dr. Wayne Melville, Dean, Faculty of Education

Teaching Placements in the Era of COVID-19

Zooming from home. In-person teaching with PPE. Hybrid and hyflex teaching models.

Over the past year, teaching placements in the Bachelor of Education Professional Program shifted dramatically as new educational models were established to comply with COVID-19 regulations.

The transition to these new models was nothing short of a momentous task, for Teacher Candidates, Associate Teachers, Faculty Advisors, Placement Officers, and administrative staff alike. In addition to rapidly learning new technologies and acquiring new skill sets to work in virtual settings, it also meant contending with ongoing stressors associated with carrying out teaching placements during a global pandemic, as guidelines, legislation, and school openings and closures continually shifted.

Dr. Laurie Leslie (Professional Experiences Coordinator, Thunder Bay campus) explains that learning, adapting, and being flexible and resilient in the face of challenges has been key to successful teaching placements in the past year.

“Our Faculty Advisors, in Thunder Bay and Orillia, did a tremendous job this year, putting in much-needed time ahead of,

and during, the placements to build relationships with Associate Teachers. From there, they worked to provide virtual informal in-service learning and guidance to Associate Teachers, facilitating the remote supervision of Teacher Candidates, often in challenging circumstances.

“Huge thanks to the incredible Associate Teachers who were particularly patient and accommodating this year, dealing with the Faculty, mentoring Teacher Candidates, and setting up for virtual meetings with Faculty Advisors, while also teaching their own learners and meeting the myriad demands imposed by COVID-19. Out of necessity, our current group of Teacher Candidates has learned to be extremely resilient and adaptable, often flipping between online and face-to-face teaching and learning formats, admirably managing their unique requirements, skill sets, and challenges. We have learned a great deal that will inform our future practices well beyond this pandemic.”

We spoke with three Teacher Candidates about their placements in Fall 2020, to learn of their experiences, the successes they had, and the insights gleaned from teaching during this time.

Angel-Lyn Amell

(Year 1 Teacher Candidate, Primary/Junior Program, Orillia campus)

In-Person/Face-to-Face Teaching Placement

“I completed a face-to-face placement in a Grade 7/8 class, where I taught a lot of hands-on science and math coding during my placement.

One of the most challenging parts of completing a face-to-face placement during the pandemic was the fact that students couldn't do any group work. For example, when we were learning about cells, we wanted to create our own blood cell models. If I were completing this activity outside of a pandemic, I would have had the students work in small groups to create one physical model, however, due to the pandemic restrictions, each student created their own blood cell model (this solution required a lot more red-dyed Cheerios). Their desks were also aligned in a single file lineup, which complicated the ability to do some of the hands-on activities.

I also became aware of how hard it can be to read people when they are wearing PPE. I had to keep in mind that I was a new person in the classroom and the students didn't know me yet, so wearing a mask that was hiding my facial expressions was challenging for them, and vice-versa. This experience made me reflect on how important body language can be, especially when you can't see someone's full face.

My Associate Teacher highlighted that one of the most important skills that I was learning during my placement was how to be flexible. Having a positive attitude and embracing flexibility was a challenge for me, but it helped me grow as a teacher.”

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Jounaid Lyaghfour

(Year 2 Teacher Candidate, Intermediate/Senior, Thunder Bay campus)

Hybrid Placement with In-Person and Online Teaching

"My placement was in Brampton, teaching a Grade 9 Applied French class and a Grade 12 French class. It followed a hybrid format, where teachers taught from their classrooms. In the mornings, a small cohort of students would attend in person, and in the afternoons everyone joined online.

I found it challenging to design interactive classes with the online format. I relied on having a daily question to get students through the attendance, and to keep them engaged with our daily lessons, we incorporated virtual games and competitions. I used Jamboard and other digital platforms, and shared music in French from different parts of the world, along with some cultural trivia.

A memorable part of the placement was a small poetry unit with the Grade 12 class. We began a unit on citizenship and discussed recent events, then watched a documentary on anti-Black racism. The students then wrote poems inspired by various social justice issues. Their poems were powerful. They bravely performed them on a day of celebration of their art and voices.



In my final weeks of the placement, I was proud to feel confident in my hybrid teaching. I was able to run multiple assessments with the students, while giving them multiple options for feedback. I am grateful for the support of my Associate Teacher and my Fall Faculty Advisor, Mary Beth Cavar."



Simon Watson

(Year 1 Teacher Candidate, Primary/Junior, Thunder Bay campus)

Online/Virtual Teaching Placement

"I completed my placement with a Grade 6 class in a virtual setting from home. I had the opportunity to teach numerous subjects to them, including mathematics, science, language arts, physical education, and even music.

Teaching online was completely new to me; my previous teaching experiences were in person so teaching exclusively in an online environment made for a new challenge. I had to adapt strategies and teaching methods on the go, as I saw what worked and what didn't. All in all, it challenged me to be a critical thinker and to always be on the ball! Whether teaching online or in person, an equal focus is needed on understanding how students learn and what engages them, and then your teaching style needs to adapt to suit them.

Teaching online was completely new to me; my previous teaching experiences were in person so teaching exclusively in an online environment made for a new challenge.

Having the opportunity to teach online helped me to resourcefully utilize different tools and programs to connect with students. It made me see how learning can be accomplished in an online environment, and how a teacher can make it fun and engaging. It surprised me that the connections I made with students seemed equal to those made in a face-to-face classroom. Overall, the placement taught me how to prepare myself as a teacher not only in an online environment, but as a teacher, period."

Simon and his Associate Teacher allowed the Faculty of Education to record an online teaching unit on Astronomy, and use it to inform other Teacher Candidates. This exemplary unit can be viewed [here](#).

Faculty of Education Alumni Profiles *What Are They Doing Now?*



Dr. Karine Duhamel

Curator for Indigenous Content, Canadian Museum for Human Rights; Senior Advisor, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations

Graduated from the Bachelor of Education program, 2005 (Thunder Bay campus)

“An Education degree can be a launching off point—it certainly was for me! My degree in Education led to me pursuing graduate work in history—I completed my PhD in 2013. I’ve also had the opportunity to use my degree to take on various

roles in curriculum development, curation, research, teaching, program administration and senior leadership. I think that when you have an education degree and combine it with your experience in any other domain, it’s really a powerful tool!

I am Anishinaabe-Métis and currently based in Winnipeg. I am presently working as the Curator for Indigenous Rights at the **Canadian Museum for Human Rights** (located on ancestral lands, a Treaty 1 territory and in the homeland of the Métis Nation in Winnipeg). In this position I work collaboratively with Indigenous communities to develop and share the messages and stories that matter most to them, including stories around Indigenous histories, contemporary human rights challenges, and decolonizing museums. Working at the Museum allows me to do different kinds of work—every day is a new experience. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we

have also expanded many of the Museum’s digital projects and exhibitions, including virtual field trips, curriculum-based K-12 school programming, and online stories about important issues and events.

At the same time, I am also working as Senior Advisor for the development of the National Action Plan to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, based on the work I did with the National Inquiry on the subject from 2018 to 2019. As Director of Research for the National Inquiry for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, in consultation with communities of family members and survivors, I drafted the Inquiry’s Final Report, based on the experiences of violence shared by those who went through them. I also helped produce ***Their Voices Will Guide Us: Student and Youth Engagement Guide***: an educational guide to facilitate critical thinking, purposeful reflection, and dialogue around the perceptions and lived realities of Indigenous women and girls. My training in Education allowed me to translate difficult concepts and information to student and youth audiences.

The work I did with the Inquiry and now, with the government to build a National Action Plan, as well as my work at the Museum, are all about teaching. This work is close to my heart—it’s rooted in a passion for educating people to build a better world. While I have used my education degree in teaching, what I love the most, and appreciate about my work now, is working with institutions and working across sectors to teach leaders in the public sector, to decolonize spaces and to challenge institutions to do better. Only when Canadians acknowledge this historical burden and ongoing violations of Indigenous peoples and rights can they begin to think about what is required today, to provide new pathways for tomorrow.”

Katelynn Bowes

Grade 4/5 Teacher, Eagle View Elementary School, Port Hardy, Vancouver Island

Graduated from the Bachelor of Education program, 2015 (Orillia campus)

“I spent years considering what degree and specialty to focus on, so the Interdisciplinary Studies program at Orillia was a wonderful gateway for me to continue with subjects I was passionate about, while exploring courses in education. When I decided that becoming an educator was my path, I had a clear vision of what that looked like for me and where I would find myself. I felt the urge to go northwest and imagined working remotely within a community I could learn from. Learning to understand the truth of our history in Canada, and where I fit into the sharing of that knowledge, was important to me.

My professional year was immensely meaningful; I worked closely with a cohort of dedicated and passionate people. We had inspiring professors who challenged us each day to be inquisitive and think critically about education. Learning about Indigenous

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knowledge and philosophies in Aboriginal Education deeply impacted me, and ultimately fostered my desire to seek out opportunities where I could develop as an educator and connect to my inner purpose.

I am now in my fifth year of teaching on Vancouver Island. Four of those years I have been in Port Hardy, located on Kwakiutl territory, an area where the culture and history of the Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwak'wala speaking people) is predominant and respected. I feel fortunate to have had a classroom teaching position and currently work with Grade 4/5 learners. It is both exciting and exhausting! I have learned how integral it is to approach teaching by being flexible, responsive, and reflective.

Experiential learning is an essential part of my developing teaching practice. I work to meet the diverse needs of my

students by providing opportunities where we can connect to the land and local community. Exploring beaches and identifying marine life, and learning about the traditional uses of natural resources—harvesting cedar bark, clam digging and basket weaving—are engaging learning opportunities that connect students to the significance of this area while developing cross-curricular skills. Living and learning in this place nurtures a curiosity and sense of stewardship in us all; we learn how the combination of our actions sends a ripple out into our community and the world. Children ultimately learn that they can make a difference.

I am very thankful to work closely with others who share the same beliefs and values that I have. This experience so far has taught me the importance of holistic teaching, and that by acknowledging all aspects of the child I can make a positive impact.”

Taylor Murie

Math Lecturer (Lakehead University/Confederation College) and Occasional Teacher, TBCDSB

Academic and Curriculum Development Coordinator, Lakehead University (until December 2021)

Graduated from the Bachelor of Education program, 2017 and Master of Education program (specializations in Indigenous and Social Justice Education, 2019) (Thunder Bay campus)

“My Lakehead experiences, as a former student and now as an educator, Contract Lecturer, and Academic and Curriculum Development Coordinator, have shaped me into the person I am. As a student, courses like *Indigenizing Perspectives and Practices in Education*, which included an overnight adventure to learn more about Indigenous culture through the resources and activities at Fort William Historical Park (including learning about different plants and their medicinal uses, birch bark baskets, beading, and traditional foods) shifted my perspective on the education system, to an understanding of the ways Indigenous culture fits into all of the courses I teach, including science and math. As a result of my experiences at the university, my teaching philosophy is relationship-based, with a heavy emphasis on teaching with Indigenous culture and worldviews, and an ultimate goal of working towards a place of decolonization and reconciliation.

I teach across various levels: I'm a Math Contract Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, and recently completed nine hours of workshops to assist students in preparing for the Provincial Math Proficiency Test. I'm also a part-time instructor in the Mathematics Department at Confederation College, where I enjoy sharing my knowledge to make mathematics accessible and grounded in real life for college students. Finally, I'm an occasional teacher for TBCDSB, doing supply work when I can—although this is not much right now as I'm also currently filling in a parental leave position in Enrolment Services!

I have been working part-time at Enrolment Services since 2014, and love the atmosphere. In my current full-time role as Academic and Curriculum Development Coordinator, my focus is on maintaining the Academic Calendar, which outlines our program requirements, regulations, and courses.

I am also the Secretary for Northwestern Ontario Association of Mathematics Educators, and when I'm not working, I like to keep active and enjoy the outdoors through weightlifting, skiing, snowboarding, hiking, boating, and fishing. I am also spending lots of time with my Aussie puppy!”



As a result of my experiences at the university, my teaching philosophy is relationship-based... with an ultimate goal of working towards a place of decolonization and reconciliation.

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KERI-LYN DURANT, 2019-20 award recipient
Coughlin-Courtland Family Bursary

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Bud Dilling Technology Bursary

The new Bud Dilling Technology Bursary will be awarded to provide financial assistance to eligible students enrolled in the Faculty of Education, in order to offset costs associated with the technology needed to succeed in an Education program.

The bursary, founded by retired teacher Dr. Harold (Bud) Dilling (pictured above), will be granted to students who would be otherwise disadvantaged and unable to successfully complete their studies. The establishment of the bursary followed Bud's visit to Lakehead University a few years ago.

“In view of the quality of education I observed at Lakehead University, I couldn't resist helping students who need a bit of a hands-up to maximize their potential in this inclusive environment,” he explains.

Bud began his teaching career in Lambton County in 1948. During his time there, he completed the requirements for a B.A. degree (Western University, 1954). Subsequently, he attained his Bachelor, Master, and Doctor of Education degrees from the University of Toronto, where he wrote a thesis based on the studies of the education of Indigenous students. In 1965, he was engaged as Research Director for the Scarborough Board of Education, a position held until 1988.

A recognized expert in the field of Indigenous education, Bud was granted the CEA Whitworth Award by the Canadian Education Association in 1988, the year of his retirement, for his dedication to the profession and for “Distinguished Contributions to Educational Research.”



Faculty News

Teacher Education Research Fund Awards

Congratulations to the recipients of the recently established Teacher Education Research Fund Award! This new Faculty fund was established to promote research that strengthens the links between theory and practice, with the ultimate aim of improving students' experiences. This year, five individuals/teams were supported through the award, which is open to Contract Lecturers, students, and faculty alike.



“Teacher Education and Educational Theory: Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions of *The Rediscovery of Teaching*”

Researcher: Dr. Doron Yosef-Hassidim
(Contract Lecturer, Thunder Bay)

“The goal of my research is to engage teacher candidates with a contemporary text in educational theory: *The Rediscovery of Teaching* (2017) by Gert Biesta. As part of my research, I am examining students’ understanding and appreciation of the text, as well as the influence of the text on their perceptions of teaching.

The connections between philosophers and educators are often superficial, and professional educators do not typically engage with philosophy. Teacher candidates tend to prefer hands-on material that can be ‘brought to the classroom,’ and their engagement with educational theory and the philosophy of education is subsequently minimal. By examining participants’ views on education and teaching after reading the book, my study aims to reveal the potential contribution of educational theory literature to teacher education, and the feasibility—as well as the challenges—of integrating such literature in teacher education programs. Such an understating will be instrumental in better incorporating educational theory literature in teacher education programs; nurturing better teachers with broader, deeper, and more critical views of their profession; and establishing a stronger education system.”



“Planting Seeds of Change through Critical, Collaborative, and Caring Online Pedagogy in Teacher Education”

Researchers: Dr. Sarah Driessens (upper left), Dr. Leigh-Anne Ingram (upper right), and Dr. Sarah Hunter (below) (Contract Lecturers, Orillia)

“In March 2020, like millions of educators around the globe, our research team was catapulted into the virtual environment for our teacher education courses. As female contract faculty, we developed a collaborative approach to teaching Language Arts. Our approach valued our shared principles as critical educators who recognize the need for a caring, mindful, and trauma-informed approach to teaching. This led us to ask a crucial research question: *What does it look like to create a critical and collaborative feminist learning environment in a virtual space; what challenges and benefits does it present for both students and faculty, and how can it add to the literature on teaching?*

Especially as our team has never met in person, we share concerns about the missing ‘human’ aspects of teaching in person. Drawing on critical literacy, feminist theories, and autoethnography, our project is a qualitative examination of our pedagogical experiment. We seek to strengthen the link between theory and practice in teacher education, documenting our pedagogy through a combination of qualitative strategies such as letter-writing, small group discussions, and critical self-reflections. As the world moves increasingly online, our experience will add findings to the academic world, as we seek to humanize online learning for students, and perhaps faculty as well.”

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“Teaching Music, Drama, and Dance from a Creative, Holistic Perspective Online: Three Instructors’ Perspectives”

Researchers: Dr. Janet Spring and Michael Clipperton (Contract Lecturers, Orillia) and Geoffrey Tan (Graduate Assistant, Orillia)



Principal Investigator Dr. Janet Spring explains that “music, drama, and dance instruction is experiential, holistic, and participatory in nature, and shared interactive experiences enhance our learning socially, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually in a face-to-face classroom. But, how do we, as instructors, foster this creativity and sense of community in an online environment?”

Our collaborative, narrative self-study explores the teaching and learning processes we developed—from the planning stages to the implementation and evaluation period—of a year-long Music, Drama and Dance course for preservice teachers. Through journaling, story

writing, and informal conversations, we investigated our attempts to link the holistic and participatory nature of the course to practice, moving from a traditional classroom to an online platform during a pandemic. In doing so, we critiqued and deconstructed the issues we faced during the course, including our modifications to teaching strategies and course expectations.

There is very little existing research related to this topic, and as such, our study will serve as professional development for future instructors who are delivering courses in Music, Drama and Dance using an online platform.”



“Student Perceptions of Contract Grading in a Teacher Preparation Course”

Researcher: Lucas Johnson (Contract Lecturer and Doctoral Student, Thunder Bay)

“My study examines students’ perceptions of engagement-based grading (also known as contract grading), as implemented in an undergraduate course in Educational Technologies. The guiding

research question is: *What are students’ perceptions about contract grading before and after experiencing a course that uses this type of*

assessment strategy? In the course, students are empowered to determine the amount of work they want to do to achieve a certain grade. There are some required assignments and some optional assignments.

The overall aim of the engagement-based grading approach is to remove grading as an impediment to learning. Among students, grades can cause significant stress. Engagement-based grading, where students agree on, and complete a predetermined amount of work to achieve a certain grade, can potentially alleviate some of this stress, which in turn can allow students to engage more fully with the material of the course and concentrate on the learning outcomes.

My study design includes pre-course and post-course data collection to gather student perceptions of the grading policy deployed in the course. The data gathered will be shared with the Faculty and beyond, to contribute to the body of knowledge related to student satisfaction and grading policies and procedures.”



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“Even Happier to Be Here! An Inquiry into the Student Experience in Orillia”

Researchers (pictured from left to right): Dr. Gary Pluim (Principal Investigator); Jana Semeniuk (Graduate Student); Liana Clarysse and Kate Cooper (Contract Lecturers). Other team members: Dr. Sarah Hunter (pictured in “Planting Seeds,” above) and Dr. Patrick Radebe (Contract Lecturers); Matt Boucher (Graduate Student); Allison Strath, Angelo Vaccaro, Doris Espinoza, and Michael Chen (Professional Program Students).

“In 2018 we launched the ‘Operation Happy to Be Here’ project to promote avenues for student voice, agency, and participation within the Professional Program in Orillia. That project ranged from straw polls, focus groups, and think tanks

which spurred various outcomes, from cohort teams to healthy lunches to mindfulness programming and program improvements. Many of our findings have also been used to support student projects in courses such as *Democracy and Education*, and for graduate research such as Matthew Boucher’s examination of the relationship between financial strain and student engagement.

Our *Teacher Education Research Fund* award allows us to deepen this inquiry by investigating the impact of the pandemic and the migration to online learning, different perceptions of the program by various student sub-groups, and how the student experience in Orillia has changed over time. It enables us to pursue advanced research methods in statistical analyses and descriptive coding, as well as opportunities to present our findings to the faculty and beyond. The recommendations from our work will be shared on an updated project website, in a forthcoming chapter in the Canadian Association for Teacher Education’s *Crisis and Opportunity: How Canadian Bachelor of Education Programs Responded to the Pandemic*, at a June 2021 panel at the Canadian Society for the Study of Education conference, and through other related internal and external publications.”



Dr. Connie Russell Named Lakehead University Research Chair in Environmental Education

Dr. Connie Russell (Professor, Faculty of Education, Thunder Bay campus) has been named the Lakehead University Research Chair

in Environmental Education. The adjudication committee noted that Dr. Russell is “an established scholar who has made major impacts in the field” and lauded her national and international reputation, publication record, editing work, and outstanding

record of graduate student supervision. They also appreciated “the social importance and timeliness” of the research project she proposed on humour and environmental education.

As Dr. Russell notes: “Doom-and-gloom discourse is unfortunately quite common in environmental circles. That can leave learners feeling overwhelmed, so it is no wonder that some tune out or retreat in despair. There has been a surge of interest in the emotional dimensions of environmental education recently, but thus far the possibilities and pitfalls of using humour have received little attention in the field. There are many questions worth exploring, including why, when, where, and how environmental educators choose to use humour and what impacts it may have on teaching and learning, mental health, and environmental engagement.” She is currently collaborating with colleagues on a special issue of the journal, *Environmental Education Research*, that is focusing on humour. It has garnered interest from scholars, cartoonists, and comedians from around the world, and she hopes it will feed a number of research and teaching partnerships.

Dr. Russell says, “I am grateful to have been awarded a LU Research Chair since it gives me more time to focus on research as well as some funding that can be used to employ graduate students as research assistants.”

Congratulations to the First Cohort of “MLES-STEM Teaching Training Program” Graduates

The first cohort of students from China's Maple Leaf Schools are set to graduate from the MLES-STEM Teaching Training Program.

The program—a partnership between China's Maple Leaf Educational Systems (MLES) and Lakehead's Faculties of Education and Science and Environmental Studies—sees an annual cohort of select graduates from Maple Leaf high schools in China coming to Lakehead to study for their Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Education degrees. Upon graduation from a customized five-year program, the students can return to China to work as qualified Math or Science teachers at a Maple Leaf school.

As a result of this partnership, there are a number of Maple Leaf students in the Faculty of Education Professional Program (Thunder Bay), with the first cohort of five students graduating in 2021.

Dr. Wayne Melville, Dean of the Faculty of Education, notes that: “Over the past decade, the Faculty of Education has established a strong working relationship with Maple Leaf Schools. From having our teacher candidates undertake placements in China, to collaborating on the development of a graduate program and now educating the next generation of Maple Leaf STEM teachers, it is a relationship built on professionalism, expertise, a shared commitment to students, and strong personal bonds. The personal, intellectual, and cultural connections made through this initiative are even more important in times of political tension, and we look forward to continuing to work together in the future.”

A Growth Opportunity

For Maple Leaf students, one of the program benefits lies in gaining experience in a new—and in some ways, very different—educational system. The underlying philosophies of education in China and Canada differ: for example, the Chinese educational system tends to be more focused on precision and retention, whereas the Canadian system seeks to promote student self-determination and independence. Teaching strategies differ, as well.



Tengwei Yu will graduate from the MLES-STEM program this year.

Tengwei Yu, one of the graduating students of the program, explains that “completing 105 days of teaching placement in Canadian schools, and having lots of time in our courses to share ideas with peers through classroom discussions, has allowed me to experience the differences between the Canadian system and the Chinese one. Living and teaching in a new country, learning a new culture and making new friends has been a chance to grow.”

Tianqi Wang, another graduating student of the program, explains that “learning in a different environment has made me more independent to

solve problems and face challenges. When I graduate, I plan to go back home and become a Math teacher in Dalian, and this program helps me to have a better understanding of how schools in Canada work, compared to schools in China. The teaching placements have been great opportunities to try out new teaching strategies.”

Challenges and Supports

While there are many benefits to pursuing an educational program in a new country, there are also challenges that Maple Leaf (and all international students) face. This includes the disorienting feelings associated with culture shock and being unfamiliar with local customs, services, and systems. There are also significant challenges in completing an academic program in a second language.

Homesickness is a universal experience among international students as well—and in some instances, this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Tongmu Hu, currently in her first year of the BEd Professional Program, explains that she hasn't been back to her home in Chongqing in almost two years. She says that missing home, and working and teaching in English, have posed challenges for her.

“Teaching virtually in my Fall placement was a bit hard for me because I am unfamiliar with the pronunciation of English names,” she explains. “I would see names on the screens but I didn't hear students' voices and wouldn't know how the English names are pronounced.”

In recognition of the significant challenges associated with teaching in a second language, the Faculty of Education developed the “Conversation Café” program (see article on the following page), which helped Maple Leaf students practice their English language skills, including pronunciation, enunciation, grammar, and familiarity with colloquial English.

Tianqi Wang explains that, “the Conversation Cafe helped me practice English and prepared me to succeed in completing teaching placements in a second language. Through the Education program I also volunteered at the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association, where I worked with refugees to teach basic English words and grammar.”

Dr. Don Kerr, Chair of Undergraduate Studies in Education, offers congratulations to the students on behalf of the Faculty of Education.

“Congratulations to our first graduating class of Maple Leaf students! These students have come a long way. Their mastery of the English language has grown along with their knowledge of teaching and the culture of North American classrooms. They have much reason to look back on their time in Lakehead's Faculty of Education with pride.”



With one more year left in the Professional program, Tongmu Hu plans to return home and teach in Chongqing when she graduates.

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“Conversation Café” Supports MLES-STEM Students

The Conversation Café is an extracurricular program that was established two years ago to help Maple Leaf students practice their conversational skills in English, with a particular focus on preparing them for their teaching placements.

Lynn Crookham and Charleen Mackett (Contract Lecturers, Thunder Bay) run the program, meeting students for two hours a week throughout the year. Both retired Primary teachers, they bring years of teaching experience to their role and have developed a close relationship with the students.

Lynn explains that the scope of their weekly discussions is diverse: “We work on articulation, enunciation, and grammar, drawing on resources that focus specifically on what Chinese speakers need to sound like English speakers. We also aim to provide students with a professional vocabulary for teaching, as well as a framework for understanding the educational system in Ontario. Teaching strategies for classroom management is also important, as Maple Leaf students are encountering behaviours in the classroom that they would be unlikely to experience in China.”

Charleen adds that part of their goal is to create a fun learning environment. “First off, we establish that we’re going to laugh with each other, and we’re going to do silly things together. We work on facial expressions, with lots of zooming up to the camera to show pronunciation. The students read Shel Silverstein books, they brainstorm different ways to say ‘well done,’ and they practice introducing themselves expressively through PowerPoint presentations that include slides and pictures of their lives in China.”

Both Charleen and Lynn note that the Maple Leaf students are high achievers who work very hard in the program. Many are away from their families and support systems, and for those who returned home to complete their course work virtually, attending



Lynn Crookham (left) and Charleen Mackett run the Conversation Café.

the Conversation Café meant navigating a 12-hour time difference between China and Canada.

“The students are models of perseverance; they are giving it their all. We saw it on their placements and the Associate Teachers and students did too. Some of the ATs were requesting Maple Leaf students for their next placements!” Lynn says.

The Conversation Café is supported by Dr. Laurie Leslie (Thunder Bay Professional Experiences Coordinator), who attended sessions throughout the year along with three University graduate students who worked with Maple Leaf students directly. The Café also branched out into the broader community during the December holiday, as Maple Leaf students connected virtually with senior citizens in the community who were missing their families due to the pandemic.

“The goal was to help the students continue to practice their English skills and in return, help a senior overcome loneliness brought on by COVID-19,” Charleen explains. “It was also an opportunity (for both groups) to meet new people and learn from each other through English conversation.”



Dr. Sonia Mastrangelo Receives Grants to Explore Resident Well-Being and Maple Syrup Operation at Camphill Communities Ontario

Dr. Sonia Mastrangelo (Associate Professor, Orillia campus) is the recipient of two SSHRC grants, both related to Camphill Communities Ontario, a not-for-profit organization that provides residential programs for adults with developmental disabilities.

Located in Angus, Ontario, Camphill Communities Ontario offers day programs including:

farming opportunities, artistic and wellness activities, and social and cultural events for residents. It is home to a biodynamic farm, garden, bakery, pottery studio, woodworking shop, and maple syrup operation.

Dr. Mastrangelo is the Principal Investigator in one of the research projects, entitled *An Exploration of Well-Being in Adults with Developmental Disabilities Residing at Camphill Communities Ontario*. This is a qualitative study exploring the lived experiences of adults with developmental disabilities living in the care farm setting. The research will proceed using a community-based participatory action research model and includes Erin Valenzuela, a graduate student in the MEd program who is slated to begin her PhD this summer, along with PhD candidate Claudia Flores.

“By using a video-based observation research approach coupled with video-elicitation interviews, the research will honour the voices of marginalized adults in the research process and document well-being and outcomes from their perspective,” she explains.

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The second grant was awarded to Dr. Mastrangelo, who will be serving as co-Investigator on the project and principal investigator Dr. Gerardo Reyes (from the Departments of Sustainability Sciences and Biology), along with Master's student Breanne Lywood. The second project, entitled *Fostering the Socio-Ecological Resilience of CCO's Maple Syrup Operation in the Face of Climate Change*, examines the maple syrup sugarbush operation at Camphill Communities Ontario. The research team is exploring adaptive strategies to reduce the operation's vulnerability to climate change, as well as the benefits of the maple syrup operation to Camphill Communities Ontario residents.

These research projects have emerged from a partnership between Lakehead University and Camphill Communities Ontario, and marks the first time that Camphill Communities Ontario has undertaken a systematic evaluation of the impacts of their programming during their 30+ years of operation.



Spotlight on Sharon Malyczewsky (Contract Lecturer, Orillia Campus)

Sharon Malyczewsky brings over 35 years of teaching experience to her work, including 10 years at the Faculty of Education (Orillia campus). In her earlier career she taught a wide range of subjects in both elementary and secondary schools, while her time at Lakehead has been spent teaching math in the BEd program. Her math teaching experiences have been extremely rewarding, she explains,

and she especially enjoys seeing the growth in many students' levels of mathematics confidence throughout the program.

"What a good teacher brings to any classroom, but perhaps particularly math, is honouring and respecting every student. There are students who come to us with fragile math knowledge and understanding, and when they write the Math Competency Exam, they are often shocked and even embarrassed by their results. So, in the first part of the year, my job has been about working with them to be okay with where they are, and letting them know that it's going to get better! Those who are willing to put in extra effort—and most of them do work hard—will succeed, and their confidence blossoms."

For the past seven years, Sharon has assumed the role of Math Exam Coordinator. It's a position she's now retiring from, although she plans to continue working as a Contract Lecturer in mathematics. She explains that her work as the Math Exam Coordinator involved assisting students who were struggling and "bringing a yoga breath to the stressful exam process."

"The Math Exam creates a lot of stress, but the Faculty responds by providing a lot of supports. For example, we offer mock exams and various 'brush up' sessions that any student can join.

We also organize and run a Peer Tutoring program, where people with math confidence tutor others. I would also meet directly with students who weren't successful in the exam, and we'd go through it and identify areas to work on for their next attempt. There was also work involved in developing, invigilating and marking the exams, which is a huge team effort across both campuses. I am fortunate to have worked with an incredible team of math educators, including Dr. Ruth Beatty, Dr. Alex Lawsen, Maria Cassasola and others."

She adds that in her years of teaching, she has seen an evolution in both the approaches to teaching math and the content of math instruction.

"The way I taught math when I started teaching a long time ago has evolved considerably. Now, we try to personalize it for students: when we present a problem to them, we try to make it meaningful in their lives. I have been using David Stocker's book on teaching math with social justice issues in mind (*Math That Matters: A Teacher Resource Linking Math and Social Justice*). We are also making a lot of connections to Indigenous-based math. Dr. Ruth Beatty in particular has been making these connections explicit in our curriculum."

Outside of work, Sharon is a very active person, with extensive experience snorkeling (Belize and the Caribbean coral reef systems have been among her favourite places to snorkel). She and her husband also coach volleyball, cross-country ski in the winter, and canoe in the warmer month on the river where they live. She is also part of a choir, and is excited to resume singing as part of a group once everyone is vaccinated. In the meantime, she keeps connected to friends through outdoor meet-ups and "parking lot luncheons, where we go to our favourite places and have lunch in the parking lot with our car windows open."