



Center for Educational Pluralism

2002

Spring Edition

Spring Quarter Discussion Sessions: (in Miller Hall 250)

- May 7 @12-1 pm
- May 13 @ 4-5 pm
- May 22 6:30-8:30 pm
VOICES PANEL in Wilson
Library Presentation
Room
- May 23 @10-11am
- May 31 @11-12 pm
- June 4 @ 1-2 pm
- June 10 @ 12-1 pm



Inside this issue:

- Anti-Gay Harrassment in Schools* 2
- Resource Review: Beyond Heroes and Holidays* 2
- Center for Service Learning* 2
- Applying to Student Teach Next Year?* 4

Voices Panel - Body Image in the Classroom

As we enter into the teaching profession there will be many issues relating to diversity that we need to be aware of. Being aware of our students' perceptions of their bodies is important so that we can help them treat themselves and others with respect.

Have you ever heard a third grader say, "I'm too fat"? Or a teenager say, "I hate my body"? Sometimes they are fishing for compliments. Sometimes they really mean it. Today there are more overweight children as a whole than in the past. Yet they want to be thinner than ever. The media doesn't help with their definition of beauty in the form of a 99-pound model. And in regard to the issue of obese children, fast food and even some school cafeterias are feeding students fat, sugar, and salt in excessive amounts. In addition to issues of weight, body images may be affected by being a racial minority, having a disability, and various other physical deviations from the "norm" or western ideal. What do you do as a teacher when you hear students say self-



depreciating comments in your classroom? We may want to have a classroom lesson that demonstrates how people they see on TV and in magazine ads are not true representations of how most people are. (Cont'd on page 3)

What is Asperger's Syndrome?

Asperger's syndrome has been described as a form of autism, sharing similar traits of monotonic speech, social isolation, and lack of empathy (Osborne). However, individuals with Asperger's often talk as if they were professors. Their language is high in vocabulary and fact oriented, where obsessive interests range from memorizing entire TV shows to knowing everything about deep-fat fryers. Individuals with Asperger's may seem a little "off," but

they are talented and sweet with normal to above average IQ's.

Though children with Asperger's have an amazing ability with factual information, they have problems with social interaction, communication, and play (Osborne). They have difficulty identifying and responding to social signals, finding it hard to be a part of a conversation. Conversations tend to be one-sided where the individual with Asperger's (Con'd on page 3)

Anti-Gay Harassment in Schools

Anti-gay harassment and violence in schools are problems that still exist for many adolescents. The Safe Schools Coalition of Washington State conducted a five-year research project* to document volunteered incidents from gay bashing to physical violence. The report was dedicated to Bill Clayton (1978-1995) and an unreported "young person" who took their own lives because of anti-gay harassment. This research is also a testament to all the resilient survivors of anti-gay hate crimes. The events used in this study range in age and intensity and involve unresponsive educators and administrators. Some examples of events included in the study were students being called "faggot," "gay-boy," "joto" (Spanish for "queer") and "dyke," while present adults did not object to the language. One case involved a sixth grade boy who had his diary stolen and the perpetrators sold the pages to his classmates. The content included his questions concerning his gender and sexuality. During class, when the teacher stepped away, the students physically attacked him and tore his clothes off. This is just one of the one hundred and eleven cases depicted in the guide, while

many others go unreported. The first step, as an educator or administrator involves recognition of the abuse and distinguishing it from other forms of name-calling and brutality. The research project recommended in-service training about sexual diversity for teachers and staff to show the difficulties for GLBT adolescents. Though funding is not always available for such endeavors. The Center for Educational Pluralism has several videos that offer a foundation for students and staff in their quest for understanding and empathizing with queer youth.

These videos are:

It's Elementary; Talking About Gay Issues in School Friends of Project Ten; Who's Afraid of Project Ten? Teaching Respect for All

*Reis, Beth. They don't even know me! Understanding Anti-Gay Harassment and Violence in Schools. Jan. 1999.

Resource Review: Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anit-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development

Beyond Heroes and Holidays is a great resource to help teachers integrate multicultural education in their classrooms. This 437-page volume includes readings to educate teachers and cast the vision for multicultural education, lesson plans for early childhood through high school classes, and a resource guide with information on books, videos, and internet sites.

The lesson plans, which constitute a large portion of the book, include lessons for all subject areas, from social studies to math, science, the arts, and technology. Lessons cover topics such as "Exploring Economic Inequities" in the

math classroom, "Environmental Racism and Native American Reservations" in the science classroom, and "The Institutionalization of Racism" for the social studies classroom.

Beyond Heroes and Holidays can help teachers challenge their students to think beyond their preconceived ideas of multiculturalism, and is a great addition to any classroom. It is available at the CEP and can be checked out for a one-week period.

Center for Service-Learning

We interviewed the Center for Service-Learning representative, Rachel Pigott, and asked her the following questions:

1. What is the Center for Service-Learning? What do you do?

We are a liaison between faculty, students and the community. We provide support to professors by helping them find community partners to work with their students.

2. What is Service-Learning? What are



The Center for Service-Learning is located on the 4th floor of Wilson Library. They are open from 9-4 Monday-Friday.

some examples?

Service-Learning combines quality academic instruction with community-based learning. Students apply classroom knowledge to real life experiences to enhance learning, build community, gain personal insight and develop leadership skills. Service-Learning connects people to their community and allows them to get more involved.

This past fall, we worked with the Whatcom Human Rights Task Force and Com. 297. The students coordinated (*Cont'd on page 3*)

Cont'd - Asperger's Syndrome

focuses on their obsessive interest and tends not to notice that the other person may not be interested.

According to O.A.S.I.S (Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support), Asperger's is a neurological disorder named for a Viennese physician, Hans Asperger. In 1944 he published a paper describing a pattern of behaviors in several young boys who had normal intelligence and language development, but exhibited autistic-like behaviors. It wasn't until 1994 that AS was added to the DSM IV and only in the past few years has AS been recognized by professionals and parents.

Other characteristics of Asperger's syndrome to look for include: stereotypic motor movements, extreme lack of organization, math disability, strong spelling, poor writing and reading hension, failure to develop peer relationships with appropriate age level, and inflexible devotion to routine and change (A.S.P.I.E.).

Asperger's syndrome is a new disorder and difficult to diagnose, making it challenging to provide individuals with appropriate special educational needs. For more information on Asperger's syndrome, check out the websites listed below.

Asperger's Syndrome Parent Information Environment. 19 April, 2002.

<http://www.aspie.org/main.html>

Kirby, Barbara. "What is Asperger Syndrome?" *Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support (O.A.S.I.S).* 19 April, 2002.

<http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/aswhatisit.html>

Osborne, Lawrence. "The Little Professors Syndrome." *The New York Times on the web.* 19 April, 2002.

<http://www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/20000618mag-asperger.html>

Cont'd - Body Image in the Classroom

Ask them to think of their friends and relatives. Do they look like people they see in the media? Another idea that you can use as an educator is to teach about how beauty is defined differently throughout history and across cultures. Students can learn about what it means to exercise for health, not appearance. Have pictures on the walls and in books of people of various shapes, sizes, colors, dressed differently, and of different physical abilities. Discuss with your students the stereotypes they have based on physical appear-

"...teach about how beauty is defined differently throughout history and across cultures."

ances and question them on the validity of their beliefs. Give them opportunities to demonstrate their talents and share commonalities with each other to build community and their sense of self worth.

Come to the **VOICES Panel on May 22nd from 6:30 to 8:30 pm in the Wilson Library Presentation Room** to discuss with other students and educators from the community about how to deal with body image in the classroom.

Cont'd - Center for Service-Learning

the monthly Diversity Film Series, which included tasks such as choosing the films and finding guest speakers for the event. We have also worked with agencies like the ESC, LGBTA and Red Cross.

3. Who is able to access the Center for Service-Learning?

We take faculty requests and student drop-ins. Community Agencies call and ask for project ideas and student interns. We can help to place students into Service-Learning projects.

4. How can Ed. majors get involved with the Service-

Learning?

Students can come in to get ideas on how to use service-learning in their course planning.

5. How can Service-Learning be implemented into the classroom?

It gets students out of the classroom and puts context to their learning so that they have a better chance of retaining information.

Please use the Center for Service-Learning as a resource and explore how you can use Service-Learning in your classroom.



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*Visit us on the Web at:
www.wce.wwu.edu/cep*

Applying to student teach next year?

Have you started thinking about how to meet your Diversity in Education Requirement? Remember, this requirement must be completed by the time you apply to student teach. Get an early start with meeting the D.E.R. and save yourself the rush next fall quarter. There are 3 ways to fulfill the D.E.R.:

1. Take a class– stop by the CEP for more information about classes available through Western.
2. The Individual Diversity Plan– a plan that you create to meet the requirements with help from the CEP staff. The activities in the plan can be incorporated into your course work, job experiences, practicum placements, and community service.
3. The Introduction to Diversity in Education Activity Packet– contains a series of reading assignments, questions about the readings, and activities.

Stop by the CEP today to get started!



Spring CEP staff

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