Every semester, there is a group of teacher candidates who are rarely seen on campus, but who are probably as busy as they have ever been in their college careers. They are the Education Department’s student teachers, who are nearing the end of their studies at Blackburn, and actively preparing for the teaching profession.

Each candidate has already spent at least 60 hours in the same classroom before beginning student teaching, since each was enrolled in ED 391-Applied Clinical Practice—during Fall 2013. The pre-clinical experience prepares student teachers to “hit the ground running” during student teaching. This spring, the Department has six student teachers in area schools. They are:

Lexi Bilbruck, who is student teaching at Litchfield Middle School. She is teaching in a sixth grade Mathematics classroom and her Cooperating Teacher is Jill Huff. Lexi shared some “pearls of wisdom” from her teaching experience: 1) Don’t procrastinate, 2) Have a positive attitude, 3) Get involved in the cooperating school activities, and 4) Smile everyday!

Masey Blasa is at Morrisonville Junior and Senior High School, with Cooperating Teacher Janet Walch. Masey is teaching science to middle and high school students. Masey’s advice to teacher candidates is: 1) Take advantage of opportunities in the Education program by mentoring others, 2) Thoroughly plan lessons to meet the needs of students, 3) Get involved with your students, since there is much to learn from them, and 4) Be flexible, since things can change very quickly in the classroom.

Lindsey Leach’s student teaching assignment is at Lee Elementary School in Springfield. She is in a self-contained second grade classroom and her Cooperating Teacher is Lori Quarton. Lindsey’s advice centers around being inquisitive. Don’t be afraid to ask questions to gain different points of view from faculty and staff at the school. Their helpful ideas can help you grow your teaching abilities and add variety to your teaching style.

Keli Plenske has been assigned to Ben-Gil Elementary School in Gillespie. She is in a self-contained fourth grade classroom and her Cooperating Teacher is Melissa Bussmann.

Sarah Thomas is student teaching at West Elementary in Alton in a third grade classroom with Cooperating Teacher LeeAnn West. Sarah’s advice includes: 1) Plan every lesson to be prepared with all necessary materials, 2) Expect the unexpected every day, 3) Establish a good working relationship and communicate regularly with your cooperating teacher—he/she is often the key to an excellent experience, and 4) Don’t become overly stressed about your Action Research Project!

Allison Williams is student teaching in a fourth grade self-contained classroom at Greenfield Elementary School. Her Cooperating Teacher is Nicole Emery.

We will hear more about the student teachers later in the semester as they present their Action Research Projects in May. Until then, they may be “out of sight” for most of the faculty, staff, and teacher candidates in the Education Program, but they are frequently on our minds!
The Shift From Zero Tolerance

by Megan Lawless

The rising problem of violence in schools has made teachers very aware about the fact that they must keep a close eye on their classroom surroundings. However, the Obama Administration feels that teachers and school administrators may be taking the “Vigilant Eye” policy to the extreme. The rate of suspensions and expulsions has skyrocketed since Zero Tolerance was put into place in the mid-1990’s. Some students have received extreme punishments for minor infractions such as smoking or vulgar language. Many teachers now see Zero Tolerance policies as more of a nuisance than a helping aid.

Originally, Zero Tolerance was created to put a stop to weapons, drugs and violent acts on school grounds. Since it was instated in the 90’s, the policies have been broadened to include smoking, alcohol and school disturbances. The problem is that there has been a dramatic increase of disciplinary actions for minor disturbances that otherwise could have been resolved on a lower level of the disciplinary system.

Race and ethnic backgrounds have become a catalyst for unnecessary and extreme punishments, specifically targeting some minority groups and special-education students. When disciplining a student with a disability, most schools do not take into account that the student has a disability. In a normal situation the discipline would have been adapted for the special education student and resulted in an appropriate form of punishment. According to Education Weekly, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice have urged school leaders to draft and apply rules in ways that are fair to all racial, ethnic, and demographic groups. They also recommend easing the zero-tolerance policies that are said to have led to unnecessarily high rates of suspensions and expulsions within the last twenty years.

As new information about Zero Tolerance is brought to light, teachers and administrators are asked to remember their obligations under Title IV and Title V of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which states that there shall be no discriminatory treatment by schools. Schools are required by law to take into consideration their discipline policies and to review whether they are drafted and implemented in a fair way.

As the years have gone by, Zero Tolerance is now seen in a different light. To many teachers, the policies are too strict and are a distraction to the learning environment. Students are often more concerned about getting in trouble than they are their studies. Student concerns over being disciplined have greatly affected the quality of school work. Grades have slipped and more students than ever before are being suspended and expelled for actions that previously would not call for such extreme measures. There is now a shift away from strict Zero Tolerance policies in the works. This shift has introduced hope in the schools that eventually the classroom disruptions will stop and grades will rise.

References:
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/03/education/seeing-the-toll-schools-revisit-zero-tolerance.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/01/15/17discipline.h33.html
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/01/10/16policies.h32.html?intc=EW-QC13-EWH

March Scholastic Book Orders forms are here! We have the latest brochures available in the Education Office and Curriculum Library. There are many great titles for purchase at excellent prices, so pick up your order forms today! Book orders are due in the Education Office on March 28th.
Education Events

Spring ’14 First Field Trip
by Abbey Jones

On February 26th, teacher candidates enrolled in ED 354 -Elementary School Methods in Social Sciences and ED 356 -Elementary School Methods in Language Arts—participated in a successful field trip to St. Agnes School in Springfield, IL. Throughout the day, candidates taught language arts and social studies lessons to students in various grades.

Social Studies Methods candidates were accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Della Montgomery. During the social studies lessons, each candidate presented a different “talking statue.” A talking statue is one who portrays a historical figure to others. Each candidate used poster board with a head cut out to transform into their historical figure in a blink of an eye. While wearing the poster, the teacher candidates described the person’s life and accomplishments. Some of the historical figures portrayed were: Amelia Earhart, Martin Luther King, Jr., Walt Disney and Rosa Parks.

Language Arts Methods candidates were joined by their teacher, Mrs. Claudia Pitchford. Candidates created anchor charts (mobile bulletin boards) to help them teach their lessons. Every anchor chart was based upon a mentor text. The mentor text was used as guidance and provided an example to help teach the lesson. Each candidate taught her lesson for about fifteen minutes and then asked the classroom students to work on their writing prompts.

This field experience was one for the books. Each teacher candidate had the privilege to teach to a great school of children. Each classroom had an average of 20-25 students in attendance. As the day progressed, Blackburn teacher candidates realized the students at St. Agnes are well advanced in their content. They absolutely love learning and were extremely excited to have college students teaching them for the day. This made the Blackburn students’ experience even more enjoyable. They were able to make quick connections with the students and become more comfortable in front of a classroom.

Overall, this was a fantastic experience for Blackburn teacher candidates and elementary students at St. Agnes. Students in both methods courses are excited to have the opportunity to teach again at St. Agnes at the end of March.

Pathway Scholar at Blackburn

The Education Department received notification in late February that Elizabeth Meehan, a sophomore Teacher Education Candidate, was awarded a Pathway Scholarship from the Golden Apple Foundation. Golden Apple is an organization that works to develop and support teacher excellence in Illinois, especially in schools of need.

In order to qualify for the Pathway Scholarship, students must be in their second year at an Illinois college or university that has partnered with the Golden Apple Foundation. They must also meet academic and testing requirements, and are required to participate in Summer Institutes sponsored by Golden Apple. After completing a bachelor’s degree and earning Teacher Licensure, Pathway Scholars agree to teach for five years at an Illinois school of need as defined by the Golden Apple Foundation.

Elizabeth is currently completing the Spring 2014 semester abroad, and when she returns to Blackburn in August, she will have the distinction of being a Golden Apple Pathway Scholar. Congratulations, Elizabeth!

New Additions in the Curriculum Library

The Curriculum Library in the lower level of Rahme has just added several new books and teaching materials for teacher candidates’ use. The latest Newbery and Caldecott Award-winning books are on display in the library. Thanks to the book orders placed through Scholastic Books, we were also able to purchase new teacher resource books in Language Arts and Science. In addition, we’ve added new literacy, math, and science games and activities in the manipulatives sections of the library.

There are many resources available in the Curriculum Library to help with lesson planning and to help teacher candidates add a special dimension to the lessons they teach during methods classes.

Visit the Curriculum Library during posted open hours and ask the student librarian for assistance in borrowing books and other resources that can help make a good lesson plan a great one!
Has Spring Really Arrived?

by Jordyn Smith

Have you ever heard the expression, “March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb?”

Weather folklore, otherwise known as “weatherlore,” is a body of informal weather predictions commonly used in several cultures. The above expression comes from an English proverb, which was most often used in the state of Pennsylvania in the nineteenth century to predict weather conditions in the month of March.

Although humans have always expressed the desire to make accurate weather predictions, most of them are unreliable. This particular saying is one example of an undependable weather prediction. Weather folklore has been passed down from generation to generation by methods of oral and written transmission. Farmers, merchants, and sailors most often looked to these expressions to foresee tomorrow’s circumstances. Weather folklore often includes the use of rhymes and anecdotes in order to get the message across and/or to make it easier to memorize.

So what exactly does this particular saying mean? March is obviously a very changeable month. One day we can experience below freezing temperatures and snow accumulation, then the next day we might have spring-like temperatures. It is believed if March starts off cold and wintery, it will end up warm and sunny. The reverse is also supposedly true. If early March weather is nice, it comes creeping in like a lamb, but then late March weather will leave with a roar, like a lion. This proverb is based solely on the beliefs of our ancestors, who thought that bad spirits could control the weather.

This year, we have experienced many changes in March weather. Since March came in blustery and cold like a lion, will it end with gentle breezes, like a lamb?

References:
http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/March+comes+in+like+a+lion,+and+goes+out+like+a+lamb
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_lore

Book Review—Lincoln’s Grave Robbers

by Rachel McGown

One of the newest additions to the Education Department’s Curriculum Library is the crime thriller “Lincoln’s Grave Robbers” by Steve Sheinkin. This exciting tale for young teens tells the true story of the plot by the infamous Boyd Counterfeiting Gang to steal the remains of President Abraham Lincoln in 1876. The story follows the lives of the master counterfeiter Ben Boyd, his associates, and the Secret Service—the men in charge of tracking down all counterfeiters. The Secret Service made a significant accomplishment in arresting Ben Boyd in October 1875. In response, Ben Boyd’s associates led by James “Big Jim” Kennally, developed a plan to steal Abraham Lincoln’s remains as ransom in order to get Ben Boyd released from prison. The official plan to steal the remains was set for election night in 1876. Due to an informant, The Secret Service was able to stop the Boyd Gang at the grave site in Springfield, Illinois. This historically accurate book is great for students in middle school; it provides national and local history while being very entertaining and interesting. Make sure you stop by the Curriculum Library to check out this great paperback and many more novels and true stories!
Important Dates for Education Candidates
Spring 2014

March 26
ED 354 & ED 356 All-day Field Trip to St. Agnes School in Springfield

March 28
Applications for FA’14 Student Teaching due by 5:00 p.m.

April 8
ED 200 Field Trip to Brandon Site in Springfield, 2:00 p.m. (make-up date)

April 9
ED 330 All-day field trip to PORTA School in Petersburg

April 12
ILTS Exam Date (Content, APT)

April 21
Easter holiday

April 25
Regular registration deadline for June 7 ILTS exams (Content, APT)

April 29
Student Worker Appreciation Day, no classes and no work

May 5
SP’14 Student Teacher Action Research Fair in ADRs, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

May 9
Applications for Admission to TEP and Field Experience Logs due in Ed. Office by 5:00 p.m.

Score Reports from April 12 ILTS exams arrive

May 16
Baccalaureate; Late Registration deadline for June 7 ILTS Exams

May 18
Commencement

May 30
Regular registration deadline for July 12 ILTS Exams (Content, APT)

June 7
ILTS Exam Date (Content, APT)

Important Reminders

Now that spring break is over, the rest of the semester will move along very quickly! Early registration for Fall 2014 takes place the last week of March and the first week of April. Make an appointment with your advisor to plan your coursework for next semester. Consider taking some courses in the summer; ask your advisor about summer offerings—there are several on-line classes available. Pay attention to application submission dates that are listed on the “Important Dates” schedule—some courses require formal or conditional admission to the Teacher Education Program for enrollment. Should you have any questions about Education Program requirements or state testing, ask your advisor or call the Education Office for help.