"Riga is a breathing wonder… and the air enriched with essence of pine trees is an elixir of good health and happy thoughts."
—Lena Loktionova  
page 5

April is National Poetry Month—
Students Share Their Personal Expressions With the SOE

I know two children very well; they are my friends

One lives very far north
Where it is cold for most of the year

The other lives near the center of the earth
Where it is warm, even hot, most of the year

I have a fluffy coat to give away
And a straw hat that I no longer need

My friend from the north told me he is very cold and
My friend from the center of the earth often is burned from the sun

I think about each of their problems
And I think about what I could do to help

I will send my friend from the north my coat
This friend may have liked the hat, but he really needs the warmth

My friend from the center of the earth will receive my hat
At times this friend talks about being cold, but she needs the shade more

The two children I know are in many ways the same
But they have two separate needs

My job, as a teacher,
Is to meet their needs the best way I know how

Two Children from Far Away
By Joyce Macek

Look for More Pace Poetry Throughout This Issue!
In Their Own Words—Introducing New Faces in the SOE

In our ongoing series, the Forum brings you personal statements from new members of the Pace New York School of Education faculty and staff. This month, we were pleased to speak with Professor Michael Weinrab and Dr. Julie Carter. —Eds.

Professor Michael Weinrab

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves.

—Rainer Maria Rilke

If you have received an email from me recently, this is the signature you saw at the end of the message. Although I already have another quotation in waiting, I’m sentimentally holding on to this one. For who among us does not struggle on a daily basis—hourly, every few minutes, even right at this very moment!—with something that calls out for resolution, that appears to us more like a blunt instrument of challenge than a simple question in need of a response?

I came to Pace, and remain here, because I like to “try to love the questions themselves” in a community. New York City teachers are confronted with a staggering number of questions over the course of a day, ranging from the mundane and external (“Can I please just go to the bathroom?!”) to the profound and personal (“What is the best way for me to respond in this situation right now?”). Since there is no authoritative guide written on the subject of your life (or mine) we walk along accumulating the best wisdom we can find. When I can, it makes me feel good to be a thought-partner to a fellow traveler, be they a student, instructor, university president, or security worker. When I am wearing my instructor clothes, you are most likely to see me in a class of teachers-students-candidates working around the subject of literacy, most specifically methods in teaching, reading and writing. This semester, however, I am absorbed with action research—three separate sections of it.

When I am wearing my “civilian” clothes, you are likely to find me in standing bow pose at Bikram yoga (www.bikramyogaportsmouth.com), working on a wooden bookshelf in my home workshop (also known as my dining room), or writing out any number of plans or lists according to a wonderful organizational system I have recently come to use based on David Allen’s book, Getting Things Done: The Art of Stressfree Productivity (check it out at www.davideo.com). If any of these topics interest you, feel free to email me at mweinraub@pace.edu. I promise I’ll write back ;).

Dr. Julie Carter

Hello to students and new colleagues! My name is Julie Carter and I am teaching on the city campus of Pace’s School of Education.

Coming to teach at Pace has been a homecoming of sorts, as I’ve been living, learning and teaching in Buffalo, New York for the past ten years. My passion (in education anyway) is the research and teaching around issues of culture, politics and identity as they play out every day in schools. What does that mean you ask? Well although we don’t notice such things first, issues of social class, sexuality, race, popular culture, and identity in general, each contribute to the successes and failures of everyday teaching and learning.

In particular, the ways we think about teaching and learning as they function to enhance social justice in classrooms fascinates me. I

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figured this out while working for not-for-profit educational initiatives such as gender equity in math, science and technology, and in service learning program development projects in NYC.

I moved to Buffalo to pursue my graduate degrees (Ed.M. and Ph.D. in Social Foundations) and a teaching certificate in 7-12 Social Studies. I’ve taught at both undergraduate and graduate levels in education. For three years I was on the faculty at a College in Buffalo, teaching mostly Canadian pre-service teachers—a huge population of students, with Buffalo so close to the Canadian border. This year, in addition to teaching courses for Alt Cert students, I am working on two research projects: one about the experiences of new teachers in “Small Schools” and one about alternately certified students and the kind of action research they do. You can check my articles in Educational Studies and The Journal for Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education.

My passions outside of education include crafting of all kinds. If I’m wearing jewelry, I’ve most likely made it myself. Each year I go through crafting stages—last year it was soap-making and this year I’m returning to knitting. My cell phone greeting is “Craft or Die” so that gives you some idea of my mania.

At Pace I am most looking forward to helping the SOE “craft” its new role as the institution of choice for many of the country’s brightest and most committed teachers. I look forward to contributing all I can to best prepare teachers for success in New York’s schools.

The Museum of the City of New York: an Insider’s View

By Megan Cheresnick

When I was asked to write a bit about my experience working as a museum educator, I wasn't quite sure where to begin. The experience has been wonderful; I have had the pleasure of working with a talented and dedicated group of educators in an interesting and unique museum, and I would encourage anyone to visit.

The Museum of the City of New York is a "mid-sized" museum at the tip of Museum Mile on 103 and 5th Avenue. It boasts a wide array of artifacts from New York's history, as well as many varied changing exhibitions. Classroom and museum are woven together through the programs' use of permanent collections to highlight and expand upon significant content associated with the NY education standards. The thing I love most about my job and the people with whom I work are that we are not Docents/Tour Guides. We are educators. Rather than merely "talking at" the students and lecturing about a past that is disjointed from their experience, we foster conversations and ask questions. The museum is dedicated to providing an interactive and meaningful experience, and to addressing issues such as the Native American experience, slavery, and the women’s movement.

The eight educators involved completed a two-week training in the beginning of the year where we concentrated on these issues, and as a group brainstormed ways of ensuring that many different points of view were addressed. We also discussed how best to improve the programs as a whole.

The programs themselves are also wonderful. They range in topics from urban planning to the influence of trade in New York history, to looking at how toys reflect the history of a New York childhood. The programs are currently geared towards K-8, but in coming years, the museum is working on creating programs for older students as well.

The museum has four gallery programs which take place in the museum proper, and four classroom-based programs that happen “behind the scenes” of MCNY’s gallery space.

For information on both the Museum of the City of New York and its school programs, visit www.mcny.org. The website provides a comprehensive list of attractions, programs, and contacts.

Megan is a graduating MST candidate with a focus on education and the arts.

SAVE THE DATE!

Kappa Delta Pi initiation and auction to support Literacy Day is on Cinco de Mayo—Friday May 5, 2006.

Come for refreshments at 5:30 p.m. Initiation ceremony begins at 6:30. Both silent and active auction will end at 8:00 p.m. Donation of items for the auction will be gratefully accepted. Please contact Dr. Kathryn De Lawter in the School of Education.
Back to My Memories of Riga

By Lena Loktionova

My family is of Russian decent and closely tied to Russian cultural traditions. Both of my parents were young professionals who lived in Riga since the early 1970’s. At home we spoke Russian. But my community was split into two different and opposite cultures residing beside each other, and not by choice. Occupation of Latvian Territories by the Soviet Union in 1947 brought a lot of bitterness to the Latvian people. Many viewed Russian inhabitants as invaders. School systems were different for Latvian and Russian populations. Russian children received an education in our own language and followed our own traditions. In a Russian Secondary school, a ten year educational program was a requirement, and we studied six days a week. Latvians went to school for only eleven years total. After Latvia became independent in 1991, more than half of the population did not speak the Latvian language.

I went to the same school for eight years and studied with the same thirty students whom I had known since I was seven. Each year on the same day, September 1st, thousands of students were back at their desks, annoying and sometimes pleasing their teachers and parents. I carefully prepared for that day by dry-cleaning my uniform, a blue skirt and jacket, and by ironing my “special occasion” white shirt.

In 1981, I first stepped into the courtyard of Secondary School #34, located on Kandavas Street, right across from the Botanical Garden. I arrived extremely lat, for what I considered the most important day of my life. I cried all the way to my class group, absolutely sure that this year would not be spent in school. But my first teacher, Antonine Vasilievna, was a wholesome, kind, and interesting individual. Soon, that classroom where we spent six days a week, on the third floor of a sunny blue corridor, became our own private domain, our fortress, our home, and it belong only to us--thirty unruly, energetic boys and girls.

Together we produced small exhibits of artworks, celebrations of finishing our grammar book, and homemade holiday posters with cut-out faces from photographs. Every day I would take a bus for twenty minutes with two of my friends, Hristina and Anita to be at school by 8:15 a.m. sharp. It was a world of grammar, writing skills, math, and twice a week, art and music--my favorites. We sat two students to a table, the standard form of placement. The person who was next to you changed rarely. Often teachers paired a boy and a girl.

Discipline was the foundation of our education. If a student wanted to talk, he or she had to raise their hand, and stand before speaking to a teacher. Every week I took home a Student Diary which one of my parents had to sign, and it included not only content area subjects, but also marks for behavior. I am often asked what it was like to grow up in Communist society and to be raised as a daughter of Soviet settlers. I always answer that, despite the forced Proletarian regime and the hypocritical relationship between Communism and the youth of the 1980’s, I grew up in a society that valued human life, and our generation, as many generations before us, tried to pull forward to be and to see a better self. Although we had less than the rest of the world, I actually consider that an advantage. Happiness does not rely on possessions. A flight of creativity, a dream, a loved family and good trustful friends are treasures of the true path.

I came to the United States ten days short to my fifteenth birthday, an age of rough waters, and a new beginning in almost every respect. My childhood in Riga, the capital of the Soviet Republic of Latvia, was at that time happy and content, filled with the familiar faces of my family, friends, and teachers. I was sad for everything I had left behind, but at the same time life seemed exciting, as if I had been given a chance to write a new chapter in my life. Looking back to the many years I spent in Riga, I understand how important it can be to compare and contrast different societies, and what a source of wisdom it instilled in me. Riga is a breathing wonder, with its rich history and love of nature, deeply rooted in the folk art of Latvian songs and fairytales. Forest, amber, the coast of the Baltic Sea, and the air enriched with essence of pine trees is an elixir of good health and happy thoughts.

I feel privileged to have spent my childhood in the beautiful city of Riga. Different and often controversial aspects of my childhood in Latvia constructed a strong base on which to build my education at the universities of the United States. It predetermined many choices I have made, and has most of all allowed me to succeed in all of my ventures.
A Gallic Perspective

By Ayis Caperonis

I am a graduate student at Pace University School of Education. I am a Swiss citizen and lived in southern France most of my life. I went to school in the French educational system completed part of my baccalaureate in Literature there. When I was 18, I came to New Jersey to complete my last year of high school, and from there went to college at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. I have worked in real estate and retail for a couple years and now find myself wanting to make a career change, and pursue a Master's degree to become a French and Spanish teacher. I enjoy teaching languages, and think the teaching field is well suited for my personality and capabilities.

One main difference that I saw between the French and American educational systems is that there is much more respect for the teacher in France and Europe than there is in the United States. The teacher in Europe is the ultimate authority figure in the classroom. If the students did half of what some students do in the United States, they would be expelled from school, and the parents would support the teacher and not the other way around. Also, the teachers have a bond between them, where they will all help each other out to be successful in the classroom. In France the educational system is centralized and Paris decides the curriculum that every region in France will follow. Geography and history are very important, and do not just focus on one country. What goes on in different countries affects Europeans because of their proximity to one another.

Here, the remnants of the containment policy that the US adopted are still visible when we talk about history and geography. We are isolated by oceans and we have a sense of safety that seems to make us loath to learn of the outside world. Geography is almost a foreign subject to many Americans who often do not know the countries of Europe.

Another difference is that schooling is tougher than in the States. All subjects learned are tougher and no one has a choice of whether to take AP classes, since all classes are AP level over there and are mandatory. Languages are very important and every student in middle school takes two languages and sometimes three or four. You also have to decide your formation (area of interest) at the end of middle school when you are 14, and that choice will direct the entire course of your high school studies. If you change your mind, you are pretty much stuck studying what you do not want.

The baccalaureate is given at the end of high school, and is a test of all subjects that have different values depending on the orientation you chose at the end of middle school. There are many different Baccalaureate examinations, each one specific to your chosen formation. If you do not pass, you are directed to a manual apprenticeship and college is almost impossible to get into.

Classroom equality should be born within
Acceptance and understanding of our differences
Is paramount to our growing
Society should be born in our classes.

Harmony is at the core of understanding
Flexibility should be our duty
We are all children of one king
Misunderstanding can lead to pity.

Let’s lead our new world
Teachers unite for a better tomorrow
Education through understanding is our sword
Equipped in our classroom equality will grow.

Poem On Equality
By Ayis Caperonis

“In the form and function of play, man’s consciousness that he is embedded in a sacred order of things finds its first, highest, and holiest expression.”

—Johan Huizinga
Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play Element in Culture (1950)

“If fantasy play provides the nourishing habitat for the growth of cognitive, narrative, and social connectivity in young children, then it is surely the staging area for our common enterprise: an early school experience that best represents the natural development of young children.”

—Vivian G. Paley
Welcome to our Classroom
By Carol Hafer

Come into our classroom and sit on the rug.
Tell us about yourself.
Let us hear your voice.
Let us know what you think.
Let us listen to your dreams.

Come into our classroom and sit on the rug.
Dance for us in your own rhythm.
Sing for us in your own key.
Speak to us in your own words.
Be for us who you are.

Come into our classroom and sit on the rug.
Help us to know you.
Share yourself with us.
Share with us your wisdom.
So we may value your spirit.

Come into our classroom and sit on the rug.
Be one with us in our journey.
Join us in our quests.
Together, we will learn from each other.
Together, we will learn about the world.

The New York Campus of the Pace University School of Education prepares educators who promote justice, create caring classroom and school communities and enable all students to be successful learners.