



## Minnetrista Cultural Center

# Reading Outdoors Is Successful and Popular

by Claudia McVicker

What is reading? Louise Rosenblatt (1978) in *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* defined it as a transaction that occurs between the reader, the text, and the environment. It's not the reader alone; not the text alone; nor the environment alone, but a unique melding of the three. At Minnetrista, one of Ball State University's professional development schools, EDRDG 430-Corrective Reading students are prescribing to Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading. They are taking reading to Minnetrista.

During the course of the semester, EDRDG 430 students learn to assess and diagnose the reading difficulties of a struggling reader. Typically, the children that come for tutoring are reading below their grade level, report a dislike for reading, and have low comprehension scores.

Through attitude surveys and interest interviews, Ball State tutors learn that most of the children do not read for pleasure, do not feel good about their ability to read, and do not have positive self-esteem regarding their personal literacy. In some cases, children state they do not like school in general. Considering these thoughts, what do we do to help them overcome their reading difficulties? Certainly not more of the same.

At Minnetrista, the resources are available to recreate assessment so it does not feel like assessment to the children. In fact, they are not told they

(Right)  
Reluctant writers are inspired by nature and the "world of words" they see in a natural, outdoor setting!



A child's phonemic awareness and alphabetic principles can be taught and assessed in Minnetrista's Alphabet Flower Garden.

are being observed and recorded when watching the children write the words with sidewalk chalk on the pavement. What child could feel test anxiety from these activities? Last, the tutors take the children into the G.A. Ball house to sit down and have the child read passages so they can do a miscue analysis of their oral reading and ask them comprehension questions. It is an inviting place for them. Some sit in window seats, others on overstuffed sofas, and some are seated at

a formal dining room table. On a second floor there is a pair out on the screened in porch; one child said, "It's like a tree house, it's so close to the trees!" Even something as daunting as miscue analysis testing seems appealing in this special place.

At Minnetrista, the resources are available to provide reading and writing lessons in a relaxed setting. Last summer the tutoring sessions were called Camp-Read-and-Write-A-Lot! The children needed something different. The

## Minnetrista Reading Continued

tutors used the information they gained to create thematic study units to surround the reading goals they wrote for their tutees.

The children and tutors are so busily engaged in their themes that both report the hour goes too fast!

Last summer, two of the children were

fascinated with the turtles they could see sunning themselves on logs at the edge of the White River. They could be seen every morning. Their unit was about turtles. The naturalist gave them a little lecture in the Discovery Cabin where they were allowed to touch a turtle. Later in the week, they were down by the river.

They had binoculars around their necks and their tutors were supporting their reading in an adult field guide on turtles! Their interest in turtles inspired them to

attempt reading at a higher level; well above their instructional level of reading according to their miscue analysis scores.

Two girls in the group this past fall were interested in dolls and Elisabeth Ball's dollhouse back in the woods. They viewed some dolls at Minnetrista's museum collections department. They read books that had dolls in them and had a reading tea party in the doll house on their last day of tutoring. Another girl was fascinated with Elisabeth's poetry and wrote her own poetry book. She insisted on reading me her newest poem every time I went by to observe the tutor. Her little book was full of poems. She read them without hesitation; after all, she was the author of those words! Many of the children learn that authoring is a great way to work on reading! It is a good lesson for the education students too. I want them to go out into the

teaching profession inspired to have kids write on a daily basis.

Many success stories exist. A child who was very hard to keep on task and reported that he could not read, fell in love with ants. He attempted to read about them on several occasions. He wanted to know how to make an ant farm of his own. His tutor helped him make an ant farm out of a pop bottle and supported him in writing a book about ants. She reported



When is assessment not assessment to a child? When assessment is in the form of a hike down a beautiful woodland path! This student hikes through the woods and reads sight words he encounters hanging on tree limbs, weeds, and flowers. A huge departure from the old Dolch Word Flashcard Assessment!

that he was not hard to keep on task once she discovered he liked ants. Incidentally, she told me at the first of the semester that she disliked being out doors and did not like this "buggy" place. The last time I saw her, she was down in the dirt helping him pick up ants to put in the makeshift ant farm! I plan to use this as an example during seminar that the best teachers are willing to learn alongside their students!

So, back to the original question. How can a museum be a professional development school for preservice teachers and children? Louise Rosenblatt (1978) said it best when she argued, "Reading is the transaction between the text, the reader, and the environment." The reading transactions that happen in this environment called Minnetrista are certainly occurring at a Professional Development School like no other!

## Muncie Community

### Mitchell Elementary Student Activities

by Lynette Varner

The faculty and student teachers at Mitchell Elementary have been involved in a variety of projects. Tiffany Minnefield and Joe Fugate, student teachers in Mr. Purtlebaugh's fourth grade and Mr. McKenzie's fifth grade were trained by James Leslie to lead the "Initiatives" group at the Adventure and Environmental Learning Center. After a



Tiffany Minnefield (far right), student teacher, facilitates an initiative ball toss.



Student teachers who organized the Fall PTO Festival.

full day of training they taught the "Initiatives" activities to three groups of fifth graders from Mitchell on September 12, 2003. "Going to Camp Adventure was an excellent opportunity for me to interact with my students outside of the classroom," said Fugate. "I was able to interact with them in a new way that gave me an appreciation for each student as an individual."

## Students Enjoy Many Fall

Mitchell teachers are continuing the tradition of presenting "Showcase Lessons" for the student teachers. Participating teachers develop a



Joe Fugate (left), a student teacher, works with a student during a challenge education activity.

specialized lesson and invite the student teachers to observe as they teach the lesson. The teachers also present each student teacher with a Monthly Activity Box containing many activity and bulletin board ideas for each month of the school year.

Pedro Pacheco was also invited to share the story of his cultural exchange with the EDEL 350 students during a panel presentation on "Multiculturalism in the Classroom." The panel included eight families from Mitchell Elementary, one family from Burriss, and one family from Yorktown. Each of the panelists shared their views on multiculturalism and how the school can work with the parents to promote understanding and tolerance. As the panelists were thanked for sharing their time and knowledge Mr. Pacheco replied, "We are all ambassadors for our countries and cities. It is important for parents to share their cultural heritage."

## Muncie Central High School Builds Character Among Staff and Students

by Ruth Warren

Several years ago Muncie Central was placed on probationary accreditation. One reason the school was on probation was because of its graduation rates. During this time, school officials began to explore becoming a professional development school with Ball State University. Within two years Muncie Central was a professional development school. "Throughout that time I have found the people from Ball State willing to answer questions and come in to the school to conduct research. Overall, it has been a good relationship," said Dick Daniel, Muncie Central principal. The partnership Muncie Central formed with Ball State has assisted the school in being removed from probationary accreditation.

"Probably the initiative with the biggest impact is character education," said Daniel. Last year, Muncie Central teachers and administrators attended the National Staff Development Council Conference. Character was the topic of several sessions during that conference. Teachers returned enthused with the possibilities of using character as a way to help fulfill the PL221 requirements for improvement of school climate. The idea was taken to both the PDS committee and to the PL221 Committee. A group from Muncie Central visited MSD Lawrence staff and Dr. Duane Hodgin to see how they were progressing with their character initiative. MSD Lawrence Schools have had character education for several years. "So, we started off last spring working on our own [staff] character first," said Daniel. "We decided as a staff we needed to work on ourselves first because you can't go around telling other people they need to have better character if you haven't looked at yourself in the mirror." This year programs included a daily e-mail, "The Bearcat Way." Kaye Harrell a Muncie Central science teacher who attended the NSDC sessions creates and sends the e-mails. Each e-mail relates in a fun way to improving character and may include congratulations to teams or individuals, or include a sound bite or a song. Also, a

board in the main office is designated for thank you notes both to and from Central staff. "The reaction from staff to the e-mails and to the thank you board has been overwhelmingly positive," said Daniel. "They are making a difference in



Teacher Kaye Harrell provides the *Bearcat Way* uplifting and character-building focused daily e-mails to Muncie Central employees.

our daily lives because it is a little perk up. When you open one of the e-mails you have to smile. And they are thought provoking. I am seeing a change of attitude on everyone's part." The character initiative is a result of working with the PDS partnership.

Muncie Central has increased its attendance at this year's NSDC conference. "The more people you have go, the more of an impact you will have on the overall staff," said Daniel. As more and more staff experience the conference, return to school and talk with colleagues, enthusiasm for positive change spreads. With a staff size of about 150, Daniel sent 5 people to this year's NSDC conference. He feels so strongly about the importance of the conference that he used Central funds to pay for two additional teachers to participate beyond what Title II funds covered. "We're seeing tangible evidence that it [attending the conference] makes a difference," said Daniel. "Each fall the teacher's association conducts a climate survey on our staff and since we have been attending the NSDC and implementing ideas from this conference our scores keep improving." Ideas have also spilled over into the use of professional development days. Surveys from teachers on a recent development day

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# Muncie Community Schools

## Teacher Voice Emphasized in Professional Development

by Ruth Warren

Storer Elementary teachers have taken professional development to the level of personal and team. Teachers have identified the area of writing as a focus;



Students from Mike Sheffield's fifth grade class discussed writing stories with Claire Ewart as part of a schoolwide celebration to focus on writing. Pictured above (left to right): Davis Richardson, Claire Ewart, and Wheeler Richardson.

planned goals, themes, and activities; and teamed with other teachers in their school. This past year the Storer Professional Development Committee wrote a Title II grant to focus on the area of writing. The grant was funded. The grant provided teachers a voice in creating an action plan for teaching writing in their classrooms. "Teachers need to have a voice in creating their professional development plan," according to Kathy Church, liaison. "I try to facilitate the process while they develop their ideas." Teachers were encouraged to form small teams interested in pursuing similar writing goals. Writing was an area identified in the school's PL 221 goal for enhancing student performance. The Professional Development Committee selected the kick-off event and teachers will be involved in designing the concluding celebration of writing.

Diane Bottomley has led three workshops for the teachers centered on writing. During the workshops, teachers learned effective ways to incorporate quality children's literature in their process writing instruction. The process involved in the workshops helped to facilitate team action plans for writing in their classrooms. Kathy Church will be collecting data throughout the project. The kickoff event hosted author Claire Ewart. Ms. Ewart writes many popular children's books including *Time Train*, *One Cold Night*, and *The Giant*. She writes as well as illustrates her own books. During her visit in October 2003, Ewart visited with groups of kindergarten through fifth grade children all day long. After school, she met with the teachers.

"Claire was brought in to provide information and motivation to staff, students, and teachers," said Church. "She was that!" Ewart talked with teachers and students about how she gets her ideas; reviewed her entire writing process; displayed how she illustrates her own books; and showed how books are printed. At one point Ewart shared one of her earlier illustrations she had done as a child. The kindergarten students with whom Ewart was talking were so inspired that they tried to imitate her drawing during their art time.



Renowned children's book author, Claire Ewart, spoke with Storer students in kindergarten through fifth grade about her writing and illustrating.

# Indianapolis Public

## Urban Semester Program E Award

by Ruth Warren

The Urban Semester Program, a collaboration of Ball State University's Teachers College, the College of Sciences and Humanities, and Indianapolis Public Schools, has been awarded the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education's Best Practice Award in Support of Diversity. According to AACTE, the award recognizes the infusion of diversity throughout all components of a school, college, or department of education as critical to teacher education and professional development. Specifically, the incorporation of issues related to culture, language, demographics, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, and exceptionalities in the education process are perceived as important. "The significance of this award is that it recognizes the effort we are making to teach diversity in our classes," said Nancy Melser, Ball State University elementary education faculty member. "It will provide motivation to continue these efforts."

The BSU Elementary Urban Semester Program places juniors and seniors in elementary education in Indianapolis urban schools. The urban elementary education experience began in 1997 with one elementary school, TC Steele School 98. During the first seven years of the program, 103 Ball State University students participated. By this time next year, more than 130 Ball State University students will have participated. The growth in the number of students is due to adding Booth Tarkington School 92 in the fall of 2002. Initially, the program offered 8 openings for student teachers. Now, there are 30 openings. While voluntary, the program is popular with a waiting list for the fall of 2004. Students work in the Indianapolis Public Schools from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. every day for a semester and take Ball State University courses onsite at an elementary school.

# Public Schools

## Boram Earns AACTE

Living in Indianapolis is not required of the Ball State University students.

Urban semester students participate in all school activities including parent-teacher conferences, Open House, faculty committees, in addition to preparing and teaching lessons. The courses are taught by a team of BSU faculty members. Students must take 17 credit hours or 6 classes during the Urban Semester experience. The curriculum for preservice teachers in the Urban Semester Program has been carefully tailored to reflect the diversity of the population with which they are working. BSU faculty work as a team with a cohort of preservice teachers. "I formed great relationships with my students, other BSU interns, and the BSU faculty," said Misty Boram who worked with the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Booth Tarkington. Preservice teachers regularly discuss and problem solve around many issues including nonnative English speakers, family lifestyle differences, poverty and



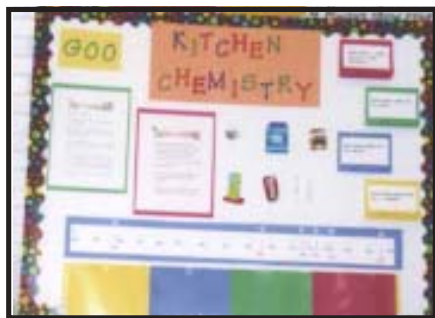
Family Fun Night brought together students, teachers, parents, and community members to learn about science, math, and social studies in the home.

socioeconomic status, cultural bias, and stereotypes. Each college class that preservice teachers take during the urban semester also requires a diversity project reflecting the experiences, needs, and background of the population with which they are working. "The assignments were time consuming and sometimes stressful, but I learned how much work actually goes into being a teacher," said Boram.

An activity that has been initiated as part of the Urban Semester Program is Family Fun Night. This is an informal evening event that now occurs a couple of nights a year at two IPS schools. The event draws hundreds of parents, siblings, family members, friends, and community members. Hands-on science, math and social studies projects are created by the



Kelli Davis, Ball State University student, shared her project with the IPS children.



"At my station, we made 'goo.' There were times when I couldn't see across the gym because there were so many children wanting to make some. It's a wonderful chance for the children to see how much fun learning is. Also, it's a great night for the families to be involved," said Michelle Leonard, third grade preservice teacher at T.C. Steele School 98.

preservice teachers using materials that can be found in most homes to point out ways that science, math, and social studies are present in the home. Parents are invited to participate in activities with their children. This project provides the preservice teachers the opportunity to experience community involvement, family interaction, and hands-on experience coordinating an extracurricular event. "I learned so many things and had so much fun . . . family fun night . . . [I got to] see parents come out and support their kids in the learning of new things," said Kari Miller, a Ball State University student who was placed in Booth Tarkington's kindergarten classroom. "We were told that the urban experience would change our lives, but until you go through it, you have no idea how much of an impact this program is." "The feeling I got when we were told how many of our students and their families walked

through the door [during Family Fun Night] is indescribable," said Boram. "It's something I will never be able to forget."

Preliminary studies on the Urban Semester Program indicate it is positively influencing preservice teacher attitudes towards teaching in an urban setting as well as their familiarity about the appropriate use of multicultural literature and resources. Many preservice teachers before they enter the program are intimidated by the environment and by the diverse population they will encounter. Studies have shown that they often believe they will encounter many discipline problems, dangerous environments, and parents who don't care about their children's performance in school. However, after they have participated in the Urban Semester Program, students feel more confident in their abilities, with their surroundings, and come to appreciate the diversity of the population. And, students who engage in this experience are seeking positions in urban settings. Students like Michelle Leonard who taught third grade at T.C. Steele School 98 have come away convinced that the urban environment is where they want to be. "Before Urban Semester, I probably wouldn't have given urban schools a second look while looking for a job," said Leonard. "Now, I am 95% sure that I want to teach in an urban environment." Annette Leitze, liaison, is studying just how many of the Ball State students who participated in the Urban Semester Program go on to teach in the urban environment. "We have had some who have, but not all," said Leitze.

# Southside Becomes A PDS



Principal John Robbins accepts the official BSU PDS Partnership document with Dean Roy Weaver, Adjunct Faculty Dale Basham, Liaison Alba Rosenman, BSU Acting President Beverly Pitts, and Adjunct Faculty Linda Ayers.

Tuesday, February 24, 2004, the newest Professional Development School was recognized at the Muncie Community Schools board meeting. Acting President and Provost Beverley Pitts presented the plaque symbolizing the new partnership. John Robbins, Southside principal; teachers Dale Basham and Linda Ayers; Alba Rosenman, the Ball State liaison; Ruth Swetnam, Director of Professional Development Schools Network; and Dean Roy Weaver participated in the recognition along with Marlin Creasy, superintendent. This school brings the number to seven PDS sites in Muncie.

*Muncie Central Continued from page 3*

were very positive. Daniel credits this to the efforts of his teachers, staff, and the Ball State PDS partnership. "Because the PDS partnership has helped us work on character and climate, we are seeing a lot of impact in other areas like student achievement and teacher achievement," said Daniel. Character education is a dynamic process and Daniel doesn't anticipate it will ever end. Daniel also sees the improvement toward an enjoyable climate for both teachers and students as a benefit of character education which will in turn he hopes raise student achievement. Muncie Central is implementing character education school-wide for its students during the second semester. Plans are taking shape toward implementing student rewards systems and highlighting specific character traits school-wide. Everybody in the school will be involved in character education, climate improvement, and student achievement.

## Anderson Community Schools

### Parental and Community Involvement at Highland High School

by Cathy Siebert

A critical component of the PL 221 legislation mandates parental and community involvement in schools that result in increased student achievement. Highland High School's efforts to involve more parents and the community were showcased at the annual Holmes Conference in January.

Speaking to approximately 26 attendees representing K-12 teachers and administrators and university faculty, Carol Hill, special educator at HHS, and Cathy Siebert, PDS liaison, shared the successes and obstacles of promoting effective collaboration with parents and communities. Among the successes they identified were increased dialogue between school, parents, and community; increased networking with local agencies and businesses; and increased visibility of the PDS liaison and PDS efforts within the community.

Unfortunately, the obstacles and challenges facing parental and community involvement with public schools are immense. As Lennon Brown, principal at Highland High School states:

Getting school people and parents and business members at the same table at the same time has been a huge obstacle. It has also been extremely difficult to reconcile the very different perspectives represented at the table. Parents and businesspeople tend not to recognize or understand many of the constraints we work within in public education. We have good-hearted people committed to these efforts, and yet we continue to struggle to make progress.

Acknowledging these difficulties, Highland High School's PL 221 team is currently crafting the direction of their 2004-2005 efforts.

## awards and honors

**John Robbins**, principal of Southside High School, was named Principal of the Year in District VI by the Indiana Association of School Principals.

**Shirley Thacker**, teacher at Harrison Elementary School, earned National Board Certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as of fall 2003.

# Professional Development Assumes a New Look at Anderson High School

by Cathy Siebert

This year, professional development activities at Anderson High School have taken teachers and administrators outside the walls of the schoolhouse and into the Anderson community. The Anderson Community Connections Ensuring Student Success (ACCESS) initiative originated from a recognition that too often teachers do not understand the needs of the community and members of the community do not understand the needs of the school.

To address this dilemma, teachers visited Mounds State Park, Anderson Public

Library, and the YMCA with an upcoming visit planned to the mayor and City Hall. At each site, speakers from the organization shared ways in which their efforts could support the work of teachers and the types of knowledge, skills, and dispositions they were looking for in high school graduates. Barb Lumbis clearly values the opportunities provided: "This has been an extremely enjoyable year of professional development activities. It's gotten us out of our building, out of our comfort zones, and put us in places where we've learned a lot about what members of our community are looking for from our graduates."

According to Vicky Thomas, in addition to providing connections within the community, professional development activities were designed to "celebrate the individual, rejuvenate teachers, and provide an opportunity to step away from previous efforts to gain a clearer perspective of potential new models for professional development." With Anderson High School undergoing substantial renovations next year, teachers will spend their May professional development time framing next year's activities by considering the question "We're Under Construction? Are You?"

## presentations

BSU PDS liaison **Pat Clark** and BSU faculty member **Sherry Kragler** presented a research poster session "The Effect of Incorporating Writing Materials in Early Childhood Classrooms on Young Children's Early Literacy Development," November 7, 2003, at the National Association of Young Children in Chicago, Illinois.

BSU PDS liaisons **Ann Leitze** and **Nancy Melser** presented "The Urban Semester: A Pre-student Teaching Field Experience for Elementary Education Majors," October 23-25, 2003, at the School Science and Mathematics Association Convention, Columbus, Ohio.

Teachers **Kris Nauman** and **Shirley Thacker** presented "The Reading/Writing Connection" at the 24th Annual Reading Conference November 14, 2003, at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

PDS director **Ruth Swetnam**, Title II project manager **Jackie Stillisano**, IPS administrator **Douglass Ann Kinkade**, principal **Lennon Brown**, and teacher **Ron Purtlebaugh** presented "Strengthening School-University Partnerships Through P-20 Professional Learning," December 4-6, 2003, at the Teacher Quality Enhancement 2003 Directors Conference, Los Angeles, California.

PDS director **Ruth Swetnam** and Title II project manager **Jackie Stillisano** presented "Action Research: A User-friendly Form of Professional Learning," December 6-10, 2003, at the National Staff Development Council's 35th Annual Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Teachers **Wendy Tungate** and **Ann Barnhill** presented the action research project "Science Materials and Toddlers," May 10, 2003, at the East Central Chapter of the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children in Muncie, Indiana.

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