Win some swag, stay connected, and show your SED spirit!

SED is raffling off a prize package including an SED T-shirt, water bottle, and other goodies.

To enter, visit www.bu.edu/sed/update-email and update your contact info.

You may be the winner!
Dear Alumni and Friends,

As we wade through this election season and continue to ride the turbulence of the Great Recession, the media and too many political leaders have lost sight of the role education plays in a successful society. While pundits are quick to lament the public’s lack of scientific knowledge sufficient to empower innovation, lack of critical thinking skills needed to make wise political choices, and lack of literacy and numeracy required to effectively understand and analyze a mortgage agreement, few have pointed out the important role of a strong public education system that prepares citizens to live and thrive in this new century. What we learn in schools is critical to our health and future as a nation.

At SED, we are trying to do our part. The Donald D. Durrell Reading & Writing Clinic works with struggling readers to get and keep them on track to becoming fully literate. Our math educators have won a national award for the Noyce Foundation in collaboration with Math for America to increase the number of math teachers in high-need schools, and we are currently working on a similar grant with the College of Engineering. Professors Jennifer Green (special education) and Melissa Holt (counseling studies) traveled to Indonesia in March to lead introductory workshops for a civic education training program.

“What we learn in schools is critical to our health and future as a nation.”

Sincerely,

Hardin L. K. Coleman
Dean and Professor, BU School of Education

617-353-3213

Dean and Professor, BU School of Education

Cover photographs by Vernon Doucette

Cover story: Recruiting a Family. The Dean’s Hosts celebrate 40 years of building a community.

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Produced by Boston University Creative Services

Editor

Patrick L. Kennedy (COM’04)

Contributing Writers

Alex Beach (COM’08), Susan Seligson (COM’08), Corinne Sierakower (COM’08), Andrew Thurston

Graphic Designer

Frederic B. Burke

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Young Alums Teaching Near and Far

Reports from the field—from Marlborough to Ncwelengwe

EVELYN MANNING (CS/’03) is serving in the Peace Corps in South Africa. She teaches seventh-grade English at the Gasebonwe Junior Middle School in Ncwelengwe Village, in the country’s Northern Cape Province.

Manning’s students, who are native Setswana speakers, came to her with about a third-grade level of English. Manning had two months to learn Setswana before starting at the school. “Other challenges include the fact that I have 61 learners in my class who sit in three rows of bench/table desks (three to a desk),” she writes, “and no textbooks to speak of.”

In addition, Manning teaches library and computer classes. “This has been especially fun for me, as the kids are so eager to learn,” she writes.

To read Manning’s blog about her Peace Corps experience, visit: wakawakasa.wordpress.com.

HEATHER KOHN (‘09, ’10) is in the Marlborough, Massachusetts, public school system, where she is teaching in the brand-new MPS STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Early College High School. The school combines project-based learning with community involvement and internships in STEM-related careers. By the time they graduate, students may earn up to 16 college credits through Framingham State University.

To learn more, visit: marlborough.schoolfusion.us.

JAY QUARANTELLO III (’11) is teaching at the Crazy Horse School on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, near the Badlands National Park.

“Reservation schools,” he writes, “are some of the poorest-performing schools in the country,” and it’s no exaggeration to trace the problems in Lakota education back to the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. “After the Indians defeated Custer,” Quarantello explains, “the U.S. military ‘crushed the Lakota warriors’ and forced their people onto reservations, ‘damaging a way of life that included following migratory hunting patterns, living as a close-knit village, and educating children through one-on-one teaching.’

For the next century, religious groups controlled reservation education, engendering in the Lakota a deep skepticism of white-run schools. Though that has changed since the 1970s, the reservation still suffers from 85 percent unemployment. ‘Alcohol abuse, drug abuse, and suicide are much higher here compared to the national average,’ says Quarantello. ‘The U.S. government placed the Lakota in a desolate (yet beautiful) part of the state and failed to provide the means to create a self-sustaining economy; thus there is a perpetual cycle of poverty.’

Despite all that, Quarantello says every day at the Crazy Horse School brings a ‘glimpse at the human capacity to persevere. Each day students come into school, put their struggles aside, and strive to go to college.’ In his classroom, ‘for the first time in their lives, students are reading complete novels, writing research papers, and applying for colleges and scholarships that had previously been seen as unattainable.’

Schools like his need more good teachers, Quarantello adds. ‘If BU grads are adventure-oriented and mentally tough, the reservations in South Dakota need you.’
**IDA M. JOHNSTON AWARD**

**CLIFFORD JANEY (`84)**

Clifford Janey grew up in Roxbury, one of the largest and oldest African American communities in the U.S. Janey attended Dearborn Middle School, “one of the schools used as evidence by [NAACP] lawyers to advance the desegregation case” against the city in the 1960s, Janey says, summing up “the Dun- gentis’ deteriorating condition.”

Janey then entered the highly regarded exam school Boston Latin, the nation’s oldest public school. “We had some great teachers at Latin School; we had some weak ones, as well,” he says with a laugh. He learned that student success “can’t be framed as a teacher-alone solution or a school-alone solution.”

Working in the Boston system from 1973 to 1995, Janey rose to become chief academic officer before he was hired as superintendent in Rochester, N.Y. From there, he worked with the union and city and business leaders to create a successful dropout-prevention program.

“I’ve always been guided by four fundamental principles,” Janey says. “Leadership, collaboration, innovation, and results.”

From 2004 to 2007, Janey was superintendent of schools in Washington, D.C. He had begun implementing a master education plan when a new mayor let Janey go to create the position of chancellor for the controversial Michelle Rhee, under whom half the district’s teachers and a third of its principals resigned, retired, or were fired, in just two years, from 2007 to 2009. But as Diane Ravitch wrote in the Washington Post, “The gains on the federal reading tests under Rhee were no greater than those under her predecessor, Superintendent Clifford Janey, which were achieved without the firings and angst of the Rhee era. From 2005 to 2007, under Janey, black fourth-grade students made a five-point gain in reading, but they made only a three-point gain under Rhee; Hispanic students made a 13-point gain in reading during Janey’s tenure, but only a one-point gain from 2007 to 2009.”

From there, Janey led the Newark Public Schools, where he partnered with parents, teachers, and university and business leaders to help boost high schools’ math test scores by 10 percentage points in reading, but they made only a three-point gain under Rhee; Hispanic students made a 13-point gain in reading during Janey’s tenure, but only a one-point gain from 2007 to 2009.”

“People who think education reform is going to happen with a walk-off home run are sadly mistaken,” Janey says. “There’s no magic bullet, no single, untested remedy.” In its laser focus on teacher qualifications, the reform movement is ignoring the economic and social health of urban neighborhoods, he fears. “Turning around schools, Janey says, means “doing the same with the communities in which those students reside.”

**DEAN ARTHUR HERBERT WILDE AWARD**

**ROGER HARRIS (`74)**

Roger Harris was sure he would die in Vietnam. As a skinny teenager in Roxbury, he had had his college dreams dashed when a high school football coach refused him a tryout. Harris came to BU, where he earned a Most Valuable Backfield Player award—and a BS from SED. He took a job at Hyde Park High that fall. It was 1974, the beginning of court-ordered desegregation in the Boston Public Schools.

“There were riots between black and white kids; there was brick-throwing—it was literally crazy,” Harris recalls. But the young teacher had a gift: “When I spoke, they would listen—the black kids and the white kids.”

Harris has been getting through to underserved kids ever since. In his nearly four decades in education, largely in Roxbury, he has been an award-winning principal, a published scholar, and a sought-after consultant.

Today he runs the Boston Renaissance Charter Public School in Hyde Park. Most of its 1,000 mainly black or Latino students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Harris found that many of their learning problems stemmed from simple vision problems: they needed glasses. The school now partners with New England Eye to provide them with specs and checkups.

Renaissance students are learning Mandarin Chinese, computer and business skills, and art and dance as well as the core subjects. “So many schools just focus on the MCAS,” Harris says. “We’ve made a commitment to educate the whole child.”

Over the years, Harris has planted the seeds of college and career success in hundreds of students. “There are a number of kids I taught who are now teachers, judges, businessmen,” he says. “The most rewarding thing is knowing the kids listened, learned, and benefited from my advice.”

If you would like to nominate someone for an SED Alumni Award, please visit www.bu.edu/SED/alumni/awards/nominations. Nominations are due July 30, 2012.
“The tomato jackets” spring to mind first when you mention the Dean’s Hosts to Allison Dalton Griffin (‘05, ‘09; CAS’05).

As a student, she and her fellow hosts received the memorable red fleece zip-ups as a thank-you gift from now-retired associate deans Boyd Dewey (‘74, ’79) and Joan Dee (‘59, ’73), who revived the program 40 years ago this fall. Instead of the Terrier scarlet everyone expected, the jackets that arrived were a garish tomato-red. “We took a look at them and started cracking up,” Griffin says. “But the thing is, we all wore them constantly,” she continues. “We whined about how ugly they were, but then we wore them everywhere. We were proud of being Dean’s Hosts and proud of being part of SED. You’d walk outside in the spring, and you’d see a sea of red jackets. To me, that’s the telling part of the story of the tomato jackets. It showed our allegiance.”

The Dean’s Hosts are SED’s ambassadors, a critical component of the School’s recruitment and external relations.

“Recruiting a Family”

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“We’re a small staff,” says Director of Student Services Jackie Boyle (MET’07, SED’13), and her department relies on these students to volunteer their time. The Dean’s Hosts meet with prospective students and their parents at three big open-house events, and

“I talk about how with ED 100, you get to be in a school your freshman year, and how unique that is to SED. I talk about the small class sizes. You can really get to know your professors.”

“Recruiting a Family”

“Recruiting a Family”
At countless island day visits, over the course of the academic year. They give tours of the School, and they bring interested high schoolers from around Boston, such as Salem and the JFK Presidential Museum. This is a great place to study among children’s books!”

Boyle, their protégé and successor. “I always ask myself, ‘Am I being effective? Am I teaching the message the Deans’ Hosts want to hear? Am I fulfilling the expectations of the School of Education?”

The hosts aren’t just giving canned speeches, either. “It’s difficult work—it’s not easy,” says Brett Feldman. “We’re talking to prospective students one-on-one, sitting down with them at lunch, talking to their parents, presenting to them. . . . You never quite know what they’re going to ask. As much as we think and plan for it, they always have a new and different angle on things, and it’s refreshing. It keeps me on my toes.”

Like the rest of the SED community, Dean’s Hosts pull together in a crisis. After the death of Dan Davis (see p. 13), advisor to freshman and sophomore history-education majors, that task fell to Boyle, who organized advising nights to help the underclassmen sort out their course options.

“My Dean’s Hosts came in and said, ‘We’ll help!’” Boyle says. “They talked to students about which classes to take. They sat with me in the computer lab and helped the freshmen put their schedules together. Because they’re good kids. They know when a community needs them.”

More than helping out a community, the Dean’s Hosts are, by recruiting and acclimating each incoming class, truly building one. “That’s my favorite thing, helping to shape the SED community,” says Matthew. “I’ve felt so supported from being part of it, so I just enjoy giving back to it two- and three-fold, in every way that I can.”

This tradition of giving back goes back at least 40 years and owes a debt to the associate deans who restarted the program, says Boyle, their protégé and successor. “I always ask myself, ‘Am I being enough Dean Doe? Am I being enough Dean Dewey?”

Dean Doe and Dean Dewey absolutely guided that organization,” says Griffin. “They were such kind and energetic, enthusiastic and inspiring people, and they really set the tone for SED as a community.” More than a community, she adds, “SED is a family. It really is. And the Dean’s Hosts help to bring the next part of the family in.”

At this year’s Boston University Alumni Weekend, September 21–23, 2012, the School of Education invites you to return to SED and celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Dean’s Hosts program! Keep an eye on www.bu.edu/sed/alumni for more information.

“A WORD FROM THE DEAN’S HOSTS CO-PRESIDENTS

“It’s nice to get to represent a school that we really believe in, and to bring new people into it—get the opportunity to talk to parents and students really for their first time in-depth about the School of Education. . . . You’re not just getting an education here. You’re in one of the best cities in the entire world, in probably the best state in the nation as far as education is concerned. The opportunities here are unbelievable.”

-BRETT FELDMAN (’13, CAS’13)

“You budget your time and pick your priorities, and one of my priorities is strengthening the School of Education community, and the Dean’s Hosts do that at the most basic level, because the Dean’s Hosts are helping to shape the community. We’re recruiting the students who are going to come be part of our community next year. I think this is really exciting. . . . I’ve felt so supported and grateful so much [here], and I just enjoy giving back two- and three-fold, in every way that I can.”

-KATIE MATTHEWS (’12)

“I really enjoyed SED’s Transitional Mentor Program, which helped me meet people as a freshman. The History Educators Club is a great way to see historical places around Boston, such as Salem and the JFK Presidential Museum. And the library in the basement at SED is a great place to study among children’s books!”

COLLEEN MANKANY (’15), DEAN’S HOST AND MEMBER, HISTOEY EDUCATORS CLUB

Cover Story

Boston University School of Education | Spring/Summer 2012

www.bu.edu/sed
Charlotte has her career all mapped out. Depending on the day. When she grows up, the six-year-old announces while patrolling the class of soft toys on her bedroom floor, she’s going to be a teacher. Last month, her mom whispered, it was farmer; before that, “blood doctor.”

This, according to counseling expert Kimberly Howard, is the magical stage of career development. Charlotte isn’t concerned with the how of becoming a teacher—or blood doctor: “You just think it and it happens,” says Howard. “The younger kids, kindergarten, first grade, don’t understand that there is a process.”

And most teachers and parents are content to leave them to it, ready to prolong the magic and hold back reality for as long as possible. Howard, an associate professor and specialist on the different stages that children and youth go through in thinking about careers, believes that might be a mistake. Waiting until middle school to talk about jobs could, she argues, be too late, especially for kids from low-income or minority backgrounds.

HORIZONS NARROW EARLY

Little Charlotte’s ever-changing “When I grow up” declarations aren’t just representative of magical childhood moments. A decade ago, Howard studied kindergartners in the Boston neighborhood of Allston-Brighton and found the children only named professions they’d seen firsthand: In the case of Charlotte, a day at school opens up teacher, a trip to the petting zoo gets her thinking about farming, and a test at the pediatrician’s office sparks dreams of becoming a “blood doctor.”

Even at four and five, says Howard, the scope of children’s ambition can be narrowed—or broadened—by the world around them: “We know that kids as young as four are making judgments about what jobs are possible for them, and not, based on things such as gender and socioeconomic status. Kids are looking around and saying, ‘Possible for me, not possible for me, possible for him, but not possible for me.’”

Once set, such limits can be hard to shake. Children can dream of being an astronaut, but if they don’t think they can make it, they probably won’t. “Your confidence for pursuing a particular route can greatly influence whether you take it or not,” says Howard. If career counseling begins with a question about interests—“What are you interested in?”—it’s probably happening too late. “There’s a lot that leads up to what students say they’re interested in, and if you don’t back up to address and explore some of that, you’re essentially just continuing to perpetuate the status quo.”

Howard recommends elementary schools weave age-appropriate introductions to careers into classroom lessons. Instead of a biography project about Clara Barton, for example, teachers could look at nursing in general, exploring what the job involves or why people do it. And, while it’s great to bring in community members and parents to share job stories, schools can now turn to the Internet for role models from far beyond their traditional catchment areas. Howard says sites such as Career Locker (wiscareers.wisc.edu) and careercruising.com are packed with kid-oriented videos about people from diverse backgrounds and professions.

For children and youth from diverse or low-income backgrounds, such “modeling” is especially important. “There are a lot of messages, both implicit and explicit, that are offered to low-income kids and youth of color about what their place in the world is and isn’t, and what’s possible for them,” says Howard, who has undertaken counseling research on every thing from the perspectives of urban youth to working with young people who are transgendered.

One of the most interesting findings, says Howard, is that girls from every socioeconomic group aspire to careers requiring more education than those picked by comparable boys, but “the resulting salary was about the same as what the boys were pursing.” She speculates this might be because “occupations dominated by women generally have lower prestige and pay than those dominated by men,” or that boys could be making a cost-benefit analysis when considering potential careers: “As we’re working with youth in general,” says Howard, “that’s something we should be exploring with them—how long will it take to enter this occupation?”

DESIGNING A SOLUTION

As an advisor to future classroom and guidance professionals—she teaches seven counseling-related courses at SED—Howard is aware that those conclusions won’t directly help those in schools, many of whom are more likely to be firefighting problems than proactively avoiding them. One current project aims to turn her knowledge into something teachers can use. She’s joined with engineering experts to develop middle school math and science curricula that build career education into everyday classroom activities, while still meeting national standards. Currently in the testing phase, the curricula contain “content focused on engineering,” a field which Howard says is projected to soon have more jobs than people to fill them.

At the end of the three-year project, Howard will review not just the students’ interest in and understanding of engineering careers, but “we’ll also be looking at the teachers and their confidence for teaching engineering in the classroom.” After all, she says, “it’s easy for harried teachers to ‘forget that what’s happening in the building and what you’re doing with the kids is really a foundation for what comes later;’” the nine-to-five. In her view, that applies to the youngest pupils, too, and it’s her recommendations on elementary school children that Howard expects to provoke the most interest and debate. “I would love a world where all kids have the freedom to dream and get the education they need so they can explore those opportunities,” she says. “If Little Charlotte likes the idea of being a ‘blood doctor,’ she should also know it’s an achievable aspiration—no matter what her background.”
In the United States is among the world’s top exporting countries, with more than $8.5 trillion in goods expected to leave our ports this year. From airplanes, cars, and semiconductors to soybeans, cotton, and coal, we ship American products to nearly every market in the world. And there’s another U.S. product making its way around the globe: civic education.

With funding from the federal government, the California-based Center for Civic Education has worked for nearly two decades to export civics curriculum and teacher training to more than 80 countries—helping citizens around the world to gain the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions that have long been pillars of U.S. civic education (see sidebar). Through his ties with the center, Associate Professor Charles White has helped bring American-style civic education to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and is now working with scholars in Indonesia and China to shape civic education in those countries.

OPENING THE DOOR
Introducing civic education to countries with little or no history of democracy takes patience, White says. “You push to get this piece in, and then a year or two later you push to get another piece in. It’s very, very incremental.”

The first step in importing Yankee-fried civic ed is to find a partner with whom to work. Ideally, that partner is the country’s central education ministry. In Hungary and the Czech Republic, for example, where the governments are eager to make democratic change, White has found the central ministries to be willing and helpful collaborators. In countries where democracy has a more tenuous hold, he’s had to seek other routes.

When he began working with the Center for Civic Education’s Russia project in the late 1990s, for example, he doubted he could immediately win the support of Russia’s federal education ministry; so he instead began his collaboration with a liberal-leaning regional governor. The programs White helped develop in Samara soon caught on in surrounding regions. “It was only then,” he says, “when we were experiencing some success and enthusiasm, that the federal ministry began taking notice.”

TEACHING THE TEACHERS
Once proponents of civic education have gained a foothold in a given country, their most common next step, says White, is to begin working with classroom teachers. In Russia, he and his colleagues developed a system of mobile teacher-training seminars. In other former Soviet countries, they took advantage of an existing infrastructure of teacher-training centers. “The centers of teacher education become our partners,” he says, “and we prepare people at those centers—sort of a train-the-trainers model.”

White is currently working on a similar model in Indonesia, which has undergone major democratic reforms in the past decade. In 2010, the United States and Indonesia signed a Comprehensive Partnership—an agreement to cooperate on matters of security, economic development, and education. As part of that agreement, White flew to Indonesia this spring to interview Indonesian scholars vying for the opportunity to come to Boston University in 2013 to earn doctoral degrees in civic education. When these students have completed their studies, they’ll return to Indonesia to oversee regional centers for civic education, where Indonesian schoolteachers will learn how to bring civic concepts into their classrooms.

FORMALIZING THE CURRICULUM
While teacher training can begin with booklets and worksheets, a strong system of civic education will eventually need formal classroom curricula and textbooks. In Mongolia, a former Soviet ally that first held democratic elections in 1990, a new national civic education ministry is this year overseeing the doctoral work of Haikun Du, a visiting scholar from China.

When he began working with the Center for Civic Education’s Mongolia project in 2006, White had to find a partner. “Russia’s ministry,” he says, “soon became convinced, he says, that this curriculum is insufficient. They would like to see China implement a more robust civic education. As he has studied the U.S. system of civic education, Du says, he has become particularly interested in the core values taught in American civics classes.

Chinese schools don’t teach civics, Du explains; they instead teach a nationally approved curriculum of “ideological and political education,” which focuses on past and present Chinese leaders and their political philosophies. In light of the rapid social and economic change taking place in China, Du and other Chinese scholars have become convinced, he says, that this curriculum is insufficient. “They would like to see China implement a more robust social studies program that will, he says, help “cultivate a competent citizen.” He believes the program should include a set of core moral values similar to the democratic values taught in the United States, while also relying more on discussion, debate, and community service.

China is increasingly joining the global marketplace—even importing billions of dollars in American-made goods each year—but is the Chinese government ready to allow Western-style civic education within its borders? Du believes it is. “I think what I’m doing here, my research, will be useful in the near future,” he says. “The government wants citizens to be more competent, to get used to a more open society.” And with China preparing for major leadership changes—including a new president—in the coming year, he says, now is a perfect time to prepare for education reform.

AMERICAN-STYLE CIVIC EDUCATION
In the United States and increasingly throughout the world, civic education prepares students to carry out their roles as citizens by focusing on three interconnected topics:

- Civic Knowledge: Understanding how the government functions, its history, and the role of citizens in the political system.
- Civic Skills: Learning to think critically about political issues, make political decisions, influence policy, and monitor the workings of government.
- Civic Dispositions: Developing such democratic virtues as self-discipline, tolerance, patriotism, respect for the worth and dignity of individuals, a willingness to compromise, and a commitment to the rule of law.
A TASTE FOR NATURE

Make all education environmental education.

by ALEX BEACH ’09

SUSTAINABILITY HAS BECOME A BUZZWORD. ASK A STUDENT “WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?” and you are likely to receive answers such as environmentalism, conservation, “being green,” and resource management. These are undoubtedly important aspects of any definition of sustainability, especially as we venture into a future influenced by climate change and widespread environmental degradation. However, they do not encapsulate the concept. Instead, try asking that same student “What sustains you and allows you to thrive?” When posed in this manner, a much more diverse range of responses will be given: family, community, education, creative outlets, intellectual engagement, health and safety, love, religion, food, clean water, breathable air. With the exception of the last three, it is not so obvious that all of these components of a fulfilling life must be present in a healthy, natural environment. As educators, we have a responsibility to help our students understand the deep connections between nature and every other aspect of their lives.

David Orr, a professor of environmental studies and politics at Boston University School of Education, has published many works on the shortcomings of our educational system. During a 1990 commencement address, Orr shared the following quote from BU Professor Elie Wiesel (Hon.’74) on how the Germans, among the best-educated people in the world, could nevertheless commit such barbaric acts during the Second World War: “[Their] education emphasized ideas instead of values, concepts rather than human beings, abstraction rather than consciousness, answers instead of questions, ideology and efficiency rather than conscience.” According to Orr, the same could be said for the way our educational system has prepared us for dealing with the natural world today.

We have set up a system that encourages students to see success as the ability to memorize and regurgitate information that someone else has told them is important. In this system, a student might only be exposed to related issues in isolated segments—a unit on climate change in earth science class, or a lesson on food webs in biology—and even then never be made to fully understand the greater implications. The role of education should be to draw forth knowledge, rather than simply to train.

To change this paradigm, a more holistic view of education needs to be employed across all disciplines with an understanding that all education should be environmental education. There is no topic or discipline that is not dependent on a healthy environment. Science classes could strive to help students see the Earth and all living things as one interconnected system, in which changes to one component of the system can have profound impact on all other components. History classes could explore how many civilizations have been destroyed because of climate change or environmental mismanagement, as well as evaluate those that thrived by achieving a balance with their environment. Business classes could teach students about sustainably managing resources, investing in natural capital, and social and environmental externalities which are often overlooked in the pursuit of a quick profit. Social studies and English classes could help students develop visions for their futures that include a high standard of living and a healthy, natural environment. Art and music classes could embrace the creative inspiration and healing power of nature.

A critical foundation for any meaningful environmental education is the cultivation of a kinship with the natural world. People protect those things they love or deem valuable. Students will not fight to save our planet unless they have an intimate connection with her. According to Jane Austen, “They are much to be pitied who have not been given a taste for nature early in life.” Unfortunately, current generations are getting less and less of a taste from their predecessors. In his book Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv explores “nature-deficit disorder,” which occurs when children do not have enough experiences in or contact with the natural world. Not only do children with nature-deficit disorder lack a kinship with nature, but they also can exhibit numerous negative behavioral, social, emotional, cognitive, and physiological symptoms. As educators, we should actively work to provide our students with a surplus of nature, especially in the younger grades. Hold classes outside, go on more field trips, start a school garden. Even simple measures like opening the windows and blinds, or bringing more plants into the classroom can reinforce those important connections with nature. Education and the natural world should not, and cannot, be separated if we are to achieve a healthy, thriving, sustainable future for generations to come.

ALEX BEACH CAN BE REACHED AT abeach18@gmail.com.

To read more alumni op-eds, visit blogs.bu.edu/SED/alumni-op-eds. To submit your own, visit www.bu.edu/sed/alumni-at-sed/oped. Entries must be 500 to 750 words, on any topic in education.

IN MEMORIAM

Daniel Davis, beloved professor and advisor

by SUSAN SELIGSON

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SUSTAINABILITY HAS BECOME A BUZZWORD. ASK A STUDENT “WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?” and you are likely to receive answers such as environmentalism, conservation, “being green,” and resource management. These are undoubtedly important aspects of any definition of sustainability, especially as we venture into a future influenced by climate change and widespread environmental degradation. However, they do not encapsulate the concept. Instead, try asking that same student “What sustains you and allows you to thrive?” When posed in this manner, a much more diverse range of responses will be given: family, community, education, creative outlets, intellectual engagement, health and safety, love, religion, food, clean water, breathable air. With the exception of the last three, it is not so obvious that all of these components of a fulfilling life must be present in a healthy, natural environment. As educators, we have a responsibility to help our students understand the deep connections between nature and every other aspect of their lives.

David Orr, a professor of environmental studies and politics at Boston University School of Education, has published many works on the shortcomings of our educational system. During a 1990 commencement address, Orr shared the following quote from BU Professor Elie Wiesel (Hon.’74) on how the Germans, among the best-educated people in the world, could nevertheless commit such barbaric acts during the Second World War: “[Their] education emphasized ideas instead of values, concepts rather than human beings, abstraction rather than consciousness, answers instead of questions, ideology and efficiency rather than conscience.” According to Orr, the same could be said for the way our educational system has prepared us for dealing with the natural world today.

We have set up a system that encourages students to see success as the ability to memorize and regurgitate information that someone else has told them is important. In this system, a student might only be exposed to related issues in isolated segments—a unit on climate change in earth science class, or a lesson on food webs in biology—and even then never be made to fully understand the greater implications. The role of education should be to draw forth knowledge, rather than simply to train.

To change this paradigm, a more holistic view of education needs to be employed across all disciplines with an understanding that all education should be environmental education. There is no topic or discipline that is not dependent on a healthy environment. Science classes could strive to help students see the Earth and all living things as one interconnected system, in which changes to one component of the system can have profound impact on all other components. History classes could explore how many civilizations have been destroyed because of climate change or environmental mismanagement, as well as evaluate those that thrived by achieving a balance with their environment. Business classes could teach students about sustainably managing resources, investing in natural capital, and social and environmental externalities which are often overlooked in the pursuit of a quick profit. Social studies and English classes could help students develop visions for their futures that include a high standard of living and a healthy, natural environment. Art and music classes could embrace the creative inspiration and healing power of nature.

A critical foundation for any meaningful environmental education is the cultivation of a kinship with the natural world. People protect those things they love or deem valuable. Students will not fight to save our planet unless they have an intimate connection with her. According to Jane Austen, “They are much to be pitied who have not been given a taste for nature early in life.” Unfortunately, current generations are getting less and less of a taste from their predecessors. In his book Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv explores “nature-deficit disorder,” which occurs when children do not have enough experiences in or contact with the natural world. Not only do children with nature-deficit disorder lack a kinship with nature, but they also can exhibit numerous negative behavioral, social, emotional, cognitive, and physiological symptoms. As educators, we should actively work to provide our students with a surplus of nature, especially in the younger grades. Hold classes outside, go on more field trips, start a school garden. Even simple measures like opening the windows and blinds, or bringing more plants into the classroom can reinforce those important connections with nature. Education and the natural world should not, and cannot, be separated if we are to achieve a healthy, thriving, sustainable future for generations to come.

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