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**Editor:**  
David J Banville

## Myra Sadker, Gender Equity Pioneer



*-Editor's Note: David Sadker has provided the SOE Newsletter with this excerpt from a book chapter titled, "Myra and Me" to be published in the book, They Led by Teaching, due out later this year. It will be published by Kappa Delta Pi.*

### Sexism Finds Us

When Myra and I co-authored articles and proposals, faculty and students would refer to our co-authored work as "David's" article and "David's" proposals. When Myra said: "But I wrote it too!" a faculty member responded, "Of course, when we say 'David', we mean 'Myra' too!" In class, a similar pattern developed as males dominated class discussion, (me included). Female voices, if not silent, were quieter, less frequent, less influential. As Myra took her turn as editor of the school newspaper (another UMass norm was rotating editorships), she wrote an editorial entitled "The Only Socially Acceptable Form of Discrimination." She discussed how it felt to be female, and invisible in a doctoral program. As chance (or was it fate?) would have it, that editorial was read by Lou Fischer, a professor who also edited a series of issues oriented books for Harper and Row. "Would you be interested in writing a book about what happens to girls in school?" he asked. And so it began.

A one-page editorial, printed in a mimeographed school of education newspaper, with a circulation of about 150, guided our professional lives for the next 25 years. That question, "What happens to girls in school?" became the focus of our research and writing. How strange that for us, the formal curriculum became far less influential than the informal one. While certainly useful and necessary, in the final analysis, the courses we studied, the long list of books we read, the worry over the next test, those long nights finishing term papers (before the advent of the word processor!), and the enduring double trauma of completing two very different dissertations, did not shape our professional focus. All that sweat, effort, and worry led us to a degree; much of our professional contribution, however, came down to figuring out if our UMass experiences were personal - or prevalent. Was sexism a factor in America's schools?

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## Education in Iraq: A First Hand Perspective By Marianne Baldwin

In January, I had the opportunity to travel to Baghdad, Iraq with an independent delegation of US academics for peace. We spent a week with professors and students at the University of Baghdad. In addition to dialoguing with my Iraqi counterparts, I had the opportunity to visit a Kindergarten class. Throughout the course of my trip, I observed a great sense of isolation, particularly within the educational system. I identified three major challenges to the Iraqi educational system: a lack of resources, a lack of exchange (in both ideas and resources) between Iraq and other countries, and a lack of freedom of speech and expression. These challenges have had a grave effect on close to a generation of students.

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(Sadker, continued from page 1)

### Defining a Field

In *Sexism in School and Society* (1973), Myra's first book, she helped define a field. Few studies had been done about sexism, and the majority of those focused on males. Let's face it, many people did not know what sexism meant. (I believe that it was coined around 1970 at the Women's Studies program at Cornell University, along with another phrase, "sexual harassment".) Before then, there were no terms to identify bias based on gender. In fact, when Betty Freidan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, she referred to gender bias as "the problem that has no name." Not surprisingly, the library revealed precious few articles on the topic. Myra took what was available, pulled together the few studies, began observing schools, reading school texts, and interviewing educators and students. She saw that from the pages of textbooks to career counseling, girls were being channeled into second rate careers and limited futures. Administration and leadership of teaching (the "women's" profession) was in the hands of men, with 80 percent of the elementary teachers being female, while 80 percent of the principals were male. At high school and in the superintendent's office, males occupied over 90 percent of the leadership positions. It was not at all unusual to discover public school athletic budgets providing ten times more funds for males sports than female sports. Back then, even the Ivy League colleges were closed to women. Myra found girls doing their work and getting high report card grades, but often not finding success in careers. It was a terrible trade off. Girls were trading in their futures for teacher and parental approval, and terrific report card grades. Some of today's writers refer to this as the ability-achievement gap.

*"Myra found girls doing their work and getting high report card grades, but often not finding success in careers. It was a terrible trade off."*

In the 1970s, the idea that females were in any way paying a price because of their gender was a fairly new - and threatening concept. Myra soon learned that hostile audiences awaited her, particularly among the male leadership. At a national school principals' conference in Detroit, Myra was an invited guest at a "Meet the Authors" lecture series. It was early in the 1970s, and Myra was thrilled at the prospect of sharing these new and exciting ideas with educational leaders. She called me later that night to tell me the good news, and the bad news. The room was packed with hundreds of principals, attracted, Myra thought, by her topic. In fact, her photo in the program, and the idea that she would be speaking about sex attracted them. When she explained the difference between sex education and sex bias, (not an insignificant difference) the room all but emptied. The "backlash" was to officially arrive two decades later, but the force of resistance was there from the start.

Myra's book, published in 1973, was one of the first books to delineate what sex bias looks like in schools and classrooms. Society's sexist assumptions were everywhere: Education was more important for boys, girls who were "overeducated" would face life long problems, and gender different career paths were natural and preordained. Straying from these assumptions sparked questions about one's political leanings and sexual orientation. Myra showed personal courage in detailing these issues, and professional courage in challenging accepted practices. In *Sexism in School and Society*, Myra introduced new concepts and words, popularizing phrases like: "sexism in school" and "gender bias in curriculum and instruction." She also challenged old ideas and proposed new ways to look at classroom life.

This is just a part of Myra's legacy, and why we honor her with Myra Sadker Day.

Please join us for Myra Sadker Day, Wednesday, March 5, 2003, from 5:30-8:00 PM in Mary Graydon Rooms 3,4, & 5.

The winner of this year's Myra Sadker Curriculum Equity Award is Mary Mazzio, Olympic athlete and award winning independent film maker; she will be present to accept this award and discuss her film "Apple Pie", which provides an insight into star athletes and their mothers. In addition, the Student Equity Award will be presented.

For more information, please contact Karen Zittleman at [kzittleman@earthlink.net](mailto:kzittleman@earthlink.net) or David Sadker at [dsadker@aol.com](mailto:dsadker@aol.com) or via telephone at (301) 229-8483.



## Student Reflections: Choosing the Teaching Profession

By David Parr, B.A. Elementary Education

I came to American University after having grown up in the Washington area and graduating from a large ethnically and economically diverse high school in 1997. Like many eighteen year olds, I had no idea what I wanted to pursue in college, but I did know that I was drawn to Political Science and Sociology. I had always been fascinated with equal rights and making sure that people got what they needed and deserved. I attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison and took a variety of courses in Political Science and Sociology. After 2 1/2 years I declared a Sociology major which gave me a lot of opportunities to express my opinions about class, race, education, and politics. Although I enjoyed discussing and learning about the work being done in the field, I didn't have an interest in becoming an academic. In class we talked about the inequality and injustice in our society, but I felt detached because so much of what we discussed was theoretical. I couldn't sit at a desk and write studies about why poor children fail; I needed to work hand-on to make a difference.

I missed the diversity of the metro DC area and left Wisconsin and returned home, unsure about my future. After a year of minimum wage work, I began tutoring 2<sup>nd</sup> graders in math and reading at the elementary school I had attended as a child. I found how much difference one person could make in a child's life. (continued on pg. 4)

By Suzanne Lussier, M.A.T. Student

I came into the Masters in Teaching program at American University with an undergraduate degree in Applied Art from Gonzaga University in Spokane Washington. After a year of freelance art and work in the advertising industry, I decided that I wanted a career that would positively affect the lives of others, so I decided to get involved in education.

I came into American University through the cohort that is set up with Teach for America, an organization that I work with, that is committed to improving the education of children in the inner city schools in Washington DC, along with 16 other cities in the United States. Teaching and earning my MAT simultaneously is both exhausting and uplifting. I am learning how to teach while I teach, applying lessons from my classes at American to my own teaching on a daily basis. I face challenges and struggles in my first year of teaching that are often discussed and focused on in my classes at American University. It is great to hear in my classes that other people face the same challenges I do. Through my courses at American I have developed a network in which I can learn from others who are in the same position I am. I believe that in life we are always learning, and that we need to embrace the lessons we learn both in and out of the classroom. One of the best ways to learn is through hands on work.

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## Ann Ferren Teaching Conference

By Mary Ellen Rose, Doctoral Student

Participating in the *Ann Ferren Conference for Teachers* held on January 11, 2003 here at American University, was not just honor, it was also an invaluable opportunity -- as a teacher *and* as a graduate student. More often than not, teachers teach, and students learn. This Saturday, in particular, provided several occasions for the students to teach, and the teachers to learn.

For twenty-five unnervingly honest minutes, three graduate students had the opportunity to impart the proverbial *candid riposte* teachers compel their students to offer, but which students wisely deflect for fear of consequential fall-out from any earnest criticism. Through the pretense of role-play, the faculty was given a peek into their best attributes of instructional efficacy and their worst moments of egocentric behavior as perceived through the eyes and ears of the apprentice at the desk before them.

Compiled from information gleaned during a similar exercise practiced at the Greenburg Seminars (of which many SOE graduate students are participants), the performers rendered their interpretations of both effective and / or unproductive teaching practices witnessed in the classroom. Various professors' *first day of class introductions* and *mid-term moments* were portrayed in a pseudo classroom setting (with the front row of the audience playing the appropriate student roles). Narratives, which ran the gamut of blatant indifference to informality to a fault, were met, judging from the audience's response, with enough familiarity to make most everyone squirm with remorse and / or laugh with recollection.

The remainder of the conference was equally informative as it provided opportunities to observe various teaching methodologies, to learn from captivating speakers, and to participate in instructional activities. The gateway that opens the route toward occasions for stretching oneself beyond the comfort of political correctness, and into the fearful realm of intrapersonal reflection, may actually make us better teachers. It is a door we should all take the time to walk through for the good of our profession. (In addition to Mary Ellen, SOE graduate student Basmah Omair participated in this conference).

*(Iraqi Education, continued from page 1)*

A great respect for western education is immediately evident. Fifty percent of the faculty of the University of Baghdad was trained in the United States and many professors were excited to meet professors or students from their Alma Maters. Yet, the people of Iraq have been ostensibly cut off from the west for the past 12 years. Since the Gulf War, students and faculty have been unable to obtain visas to travel to the US, and many other countries, for educational purposes. One professor said that he has traveled out of the country for conferences twice in the last 12 years, once to Jordan and once to India. As a professor, he feels his ability to adequately do his job is greatly hampered by his inability to travel to conferences. This lack of exchange is to the detriment of both the people of Iraq and the west; increased academic exchange is essential.

In addition to the lack of exchange in thoughts, a lack of resources, such as texts, journals and equipment is a serious problem for students and teachers. This is most evident in the sciences. U.N. sanctions ban the importation of books, journals and lab equipment. One professor of English language told me that he had a great deal of difficulty writing his Master's thesis because he did not have the necessary sources. He wrote to professors in the US, England and Australia to ask for assistance; some responded by sending sources, while others were less kind.

Lastly, the work of professors and students is greatly hampered by their inability to freely express themselves. Internet, where available, is limited to state approved sites. Papers and discussions must also toe the government's line. Without the freedom to explore all ideas, educational inquiry is lost. Without educational inquiry, new ideas have little room to grow. Many professors expressed a fear of brain drain. The war of 1991, continued pressures from sanctions, and the repression of thought by the Hussein regime have weakened the educational experiences of an entire generation of students. More information on Marianne's trip can be found at: <http://www.angelfire.com/folk/baghdad>

*(Marianne is working towards her master's degree in Education, as well as in International Peace and Conflict Resolution).*

*(Parr, continued from page 3)*

I was ready to go back to school. I knew I had to become an elementary school teacher. I wanted to stay in the DC area, and found the non-degree program at AU, where one is given 2 semesters to prove one's ability. AU will then transfer those credits into a full time degree program.

I now find school invigorating and much more enjoyable because I know what I want to do for the rest of my life. During Fall 2002, I took EDU-321-001 Field Exper: Observ & Analysis where I spent three mornings a week participating in The Read Aloud Program component of the Montgomery County kindergarten curriculum. For 2 1/2 hours each day, under the supervision of a staff curriculum specialist, I read to kindergarteners that had tested low in verbal skills upon entering kindergarten. The vast majority of these children were from homes where English was the second or third language. I felt completely comfortable working with these students, and found, especially with the boys, that the presence of a positive male role model can make a world of difference in their lives. I look forward to the completion of my degree, so that I can get into the classroom.

*(Lussier, continued from page 3)*

Working at an elementary school while attending the MAT program is a bit like a science major attending both lectures and labs. The difference is that my lab is full of young lives that are affected by my every move. This brings me to my fears. I want to be a positive influence on my students, and do the best for my students while I learn. I realize that everything I do in the classroom will effect how much the children learn, (or don't learn) and I fear that the students will not be given the education they deserve. I have faith though, that participating in the MAT program at American University will provide me with insight in education and will improve my teaching skills, which will in the long run positively affect the lives of my students.

## SOE Program Review

By Dean Lynn Fox

As many of you are aware, graduate programs in the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) were involved in a process known as "program review" during the Fall semester. In SOE, the programs that were recommended for termination by the Dean of CAS, Kay Mussell, were the Ph.D. in Education, and the M.A. in Educational Leadership, Technology, and Specialized Studies. I made a presentation to EPC Steering Committee and they endorsed our request for continuation of the Ph.D. program, but not the aforementioned M.A. programs. The December meeting of the full EPC, however, was divided in their support.

In late January, Dean Mussell forwarded her recommendations, and those of the EPC and EPC Steering Committee, to the Provost. The Provost and the full faculty senate are currently considering these recommendations. Again let me assure you that if you are already in one of these programs Dean Mussell has said that the University will honor its commitments to you. Please feel free to contact me or you program advisor if you have any questions. A final decision is expected to be announced in May.

## Website for New Teachers

By Karen DiGiovanni

My own past experience as an elementary school teacher is testimony to the reality that teaching is a rewarding and enjoyable profession. Teaching engenders tremendous personal and professional growth. In addition to the many rewards of teaching, there are myriad challenges. Perhaps foremost among them are the development of curricula compliant with state and district guidelines, the administration of standardized assessments, and the meeting of individual student needs. Fortunately, there are a variety of support structures that help new teachers to address these challenges. Many school districts have implemented mentoring programs that pair new teachers with veteran teachers, while others offer workshops that address the specific needs of beginning teachers.

I hope that my own offering, a web-based survival guide for new teachers created in Professor Sarah Irvine-Belson's "Uses of Technology in Education" course, will prove a further valued resource for those entering the profession. The guide provides useful information about classroom management, lesson planning, curriculum and instruction, special education, and membership in professional organizations. It can be accessed at :  
<http://www.karensguidefornewteachers.com>

*Karen DiGiovanni is a second year Ph.D. student. Her support field is Curriculum and Instruction.*



## Hawaii International Conference on Higher Education

By Arina Zonneberg

At the beginning of January, SOE Professor Vivian Vasquez, along with Ph.D. students Kathy Wilson, Jennifer Stewart, Melia Nebeker, and I went to the Hawaii International Conference on Education, held in Waikiki. The conference included presentations on a variety of topics relating to education. My presentation, "Leadership and Learning: A Look at American University Undergraduate Students," was well attended, and provided me with good feedback on the topic of leadership development for undergraduate students. The conference presented a great opportunity to meet others interested in this topic, and to learn more about a variety of education-related topics.

We were also able to take some time off from learning. Beach time, SCUBA diving, snorkeling, hiking, and volcano-exploration were just a few of the extracurricular activities I have heard about from this group! All in all, our time in Hawaii was full of academics and fun!

*Arina Zonnenberg is a third year Ph.D. student. Her support field is Educational Leadership and Management.*

## Free Technology Training!

AU's "Center for Teaching Excellence" and "e-operations" offers free instructor-led training on a variety of computer applications, including MS Office Suite (Word, Excel, & PowerPoint), Dreamweaver web page creation software, and others!

Would you prefer to learn on your own? The Center also has documentation on MS Office Programs, as well as SPSS and SAS, and others.

For More Information, go to the Center's Website:  
[Http://www.american.edu/technology/resources/training/index.html](http://www.american.edu/technology/resources/training/index.html)

## New Book Publications: Professor Vivian Vasquez



School of Education Professor Vivian Vasquez has recently completed two books. The first one, titled, *Negotiating Critical Literacies with Young Children*, published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, is due for release in May. In this book, Vivian draws on her own classroom experience to demonstrate how issues raised from everyday conversations with pre-kindergarten children can be used to create an integrated critical literacy curriculum over the course of one school year. The book was very well received by those in the field of critical literacy.

Vivian's second book, titled *Getting Beyond I like the Book...: Creating Spaces for Critical Literacy in K-6 Classrooms* will be published in May by the International Reading Association (IRA), an association of over 300,000 from 99 countries. As a further testament to Vivian's work, the IRA selected this book as it's May 2003 Book of the Month.



## School of Education



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## International Training and Education (ITEP) Program Events

### ITEP Spring 2003 Open House, "Unity for Diversity"

Join us for an informal discussion with current and prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni, and organizations working in the field of international training and education.

Come at your leisure.  
Prospective Students are encouraged to attend!  
Friday, February 21, 2003  
5:00 pm—8:00 pm  
6th Floor, Butler Pavilion Board Room  
(Refreshments will be provided)

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Washington Consortium for Comparative and International Education and Training Presents

Conference of Student Research:  
"Rethinking Theories and Practices in International and Comparative Education"

Saturday, February 22, 2003; 9:30 am—4:30 pm  
(Registration begins at 9:00 AM)  
American University, Ward Circle Building  
Contact ITEP for more information; call (202) 885 3725 or  
Email [itep@american.edu](mailto:itep@american.edu)

## News & Announcements

### Upcoming Events

*Comprehensive Examination Dates*

April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003  
June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2003  
August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2003

**Please contact Judy Swanee, Graduate Advisor, concerning questions about registration or program of study forms at [swan@american.edu](mailto:swan@american.edu) or 202-885-3716.**

### In the Next Phase of her Professional Career....

Andrea Prejean, Ph.D., has left the School of Education for a position in the Office of Student Achievement at the National Education Association (NEA).

Andrea's smile and warm personality will be missed here at SOE, but we wish her all the best in the next phase of her life!  
Congratulations, Andrea!

### SOE Faculty Kudos!

- **Sarah Irvine-Belson** will be presenting papers at two conferences this spring. The first one, with co-author Ellie Zartman from the Lab School of Washington, is titled, "TechWorkshop2Go!" and will be presented at the Learning Disabilities Association conference in Chicago. In March, Sarah will present a paper entitled "Then the Sun came shining through: Implementing a thin-client environment in a special education school" at the Microcomputers in Education Conference in Tempe, AZ.
- **Flavia Ramos** was a guest lecturer at World Learning, Inc. She presented "The FotoDialogo Method: A Women's Empowerment Tool?" as part of a lecture series sponsored by The Women in Development (WID), the Education for Development Workgroups, and the Society for International Development (SID). Her article, "The FotoDialogo Method: Using Pictures and Storytelling as Learning Tools" is posted on the Arts for Global Development website: (<http://www.art4development.net/home.html>)
- **Vivian Vasquez** recently presented two papers at the Hawaii International Conference in Education. They are titled, "Using Everyday Issues and Everyday Texts to Negotiate Critical Literacies with Young Children" and "Teachers and Students Learning Together: A New Look at Professional Development."