



**BUFFALO STATE**  
The State University of New York

# Elementary Education & Reading

**Volume 2**  
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## Global Book Hour Impacts Community



Bazil Anandaraj Ratnam, a seventh grader at City Honors School, is a remarkable young man. He has been attending Global Book Hour (GBH) at Wegmans on Amherst Street since its inception when he was in second grade.

Bazil, who attends each and every week with his mother, saw a flyer advertising GBH at his school. He wanted to attend because "he is so interested in books" and thought he might be able to improve his skills a bit. He and his mother take two buses from their apartment to Wegmans on Amherst Street every Saturday morning. In the five years that GBH has been held, Bazil has only missed two days. Since he receives a book each week, he has collected quite a library!

Asked why he attends each week, Bazil says that he enjoys the stories and enjoys learning about new places. His favorite book that we have read is the trickster tale, *Coyote*, by Gerald McDermott. He is a very creative person, so his favorite activity was when, at the end of a semester, the activity was to write his own book, following the theme of the semester, *Pay it Forward*. The children were provided blank hard cover books and wrote incredible prose and poetry. They also illustrated their books, with the assistance of teacher candidates.

Bazil was born in Pennsylvania of Sri Lankan Immigrants. His mother is Cristobel and his father is Antony. While at City Honors, Bazil tutors 6<sup>th</sup> graders in math, his favorite subject. He is unsure what he wants to be when he grows up, but hopes it will be something in math. I'm thinking it might be President of the United States!

Bazil isn't only about school; he is a great humanitarian also. At the age of 8, Bazil decided that, instead of Christmas presents for himself, he wanted to raise money for school supplies for children in India and Sri Lanka who were devastated by a tsunami. He wrote a letter that was read at GBH, and he raised \$83 that day. That was the start of "Kids Helping Kids." In the first two years, through dinners with entertainment, he raised \$2000. In the second year of the fundraiser, in addition to India and Sri Lanka, he sent money to Japan, as the children there were affected by an earthquake. This fall, he held his third fundraiser, and Bazil reported he raised \$1500.

Bazil is an amazing young man. We all appreciate his intelligence, creativity, leadership and kindness. He is a wonderful mentor and role model to the younger children who attend GBH. The world is his and I believe we will hear much from him in the future!

*By Dr. Kim Truesdell*

*Above: Bazil in 2009.*

*Right: Bazil with SUNY BS President Dr. Conway-Turner*



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## 20th Annual PDS Retreat

Twenty years ago, the pioneers of Buffalo State's burgeoning Professional Development Schools (PDS) Consortium sought effective strategies for developing excellent teachers. They conceived the idea of the PDS retreat, where experts and novices could share their research, experiences, and aspirations in a collegial atmosphere. There were eleven attendees at the first retreat, which served as a springboard for the years to come. This year, we celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that first meeting, welcoming 200 attendees in a gathering steeped in community and collaboration. Each year a keynote speaker addresses the group, sharing insights that encourage, educate, and inspire the partnership. We were delighted to welcome Ashli Skura Dreher, New York State Teacher of the Year to the retreat! Twenty-five additional breakout sessions from our faculty, principals, mentoring teachers, and teacher candidates informed the participants from WNY and other SUNY institutions.

*By Mrs. Leslie K. Day, PDS Co-Director*

*Right: Mrs. Day with Ashli Skura Dreher*

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the early PDS members and those who came after them, Buffalo State now has an award-winning PDS program of which the whole community can be proud. Plan to be a part of the twenty-first annual PDS retreat this fall; mark your calendars now for Friday, September 25, 2015!



# Teacher Tailgate

Embracing the importance of community, the department held a successful Teacher Tailgate event in early October. Teacher Candidates gathered in Bacon Hall for games, activities, food, and most importantly, information. TCs participated in “Acronym Trivia” – an opportunity to test (or show off) their knowledge of education lingo.

Additionally, attendees participated in a scavenger hunt that sent them to certain points along the floor in an effort to introduce themselves to faculty, explore the Dean’s new office, and familiarize themselves with the required certification seminars. There was a Certification Station stocked with handouts about the Certification process so TCs could gather information about everything from when to take their exams to how to get fingerprinted.

Throughout the event, students were able to chat with peers and socialize with faculty, fostering a sense of membership and belonging in the Buffalo State Education community as a result.



# Using Technology



As an educator, Dr. Chris Shively is adept at incorporating technology into his classroom. Due in part to his experience as a technology director, he is a proponent of free, open source programs that are easy for schools to adopt without butting up against budget constraints. Dr. Shively routinely shares his knowledge of these types of technological options with his graduate and undergraduate students. He has experimented with Wikispaces, Twitter, and everything in between in an effort to find ways for his students to learn and communicate effectively and enthusiastically.

This semester, Dr. Shively has adopted Google groups. This platform is very easy to access, can be embedded into other tools, such as Wikispaces, and features a discussion board format that is simpler and clearer than Blackboard’s. Another advantage to Google groups is that the discussion boards are open to anyone. Consequently, members of the community can be invited to contribute their experiences and expertise, creating a more vibrant learning experience.

*Interview with Dr. Chris Shively*



# Digging Deeper into the edTPA

One of New York State’s newest and most challenging teacher certification requirements is the edTPA. The Elementary Education and Reading department is working hard to prepare teacher candidates to meet this challenge. After completing a “boot camp” to familiarize themselves with the process, students are now

being given the chance to “dig deeper” into the edTPA. Although the sessions are completely voluntary, attendance has been good at several recently held afternoon meetings. Ms. Rosemary Arioli and Ms. Patricia George collaborate to dissect each task with groups of Teacher Candidates. The students are given the opportunity to view exemplars and discuss components,

giving them the tools they need to excel in this assessment. In addition, Digging Deeper sessions are not limited to those located in Buffalo. Ms. Arioli has met with Teacher Candidates in Rochester and Skyped with TCs completing their Student Teaching in New York City. The Digging Deeper sessions are a great example of the way in which the Elementary Education and Reading department provides strong support for its Teacher Candidates.

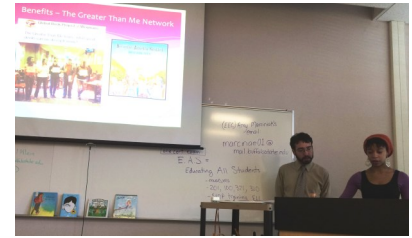
*Interview with Ms. Rosemary Arioli*



## EEC Update

The SUNY Buffalo State Elementary Education Club (EEC) has continued to serve Teacher Candidates this semester. EEC is looking to attract more members in order to reach even more TCs and broaden its impact. Benefits of joining EEC are numerous. The club occasionally hosts knowledgeable guest speakers, such as Dr. Nanci Monaco and Patty Recchio. EEC regularly reaches out into the community by, for example, conducting a read aloud at

Women's and Children's Hospital in downtown Buffalo. Additionally, EEC planned a trip to the Museum of disABILITY History in Amherst, NY to deepen understanding of issues that students with disabilities face. Ideas are also being explored regarding how EEC can promote knowledge of the teacher certification process for Teacher Candidates who are unaware of the new and changing requirements.



Additionally, members are researching new meeting times to accommodate members who are already in the field in an effort to make the club more accessible and inclusive. This spring, EEC members will be welcoming Dr. Sherri Weber as the group's faculty leader. Special thanks to Dr. Dianne McCarthy for many years of excellent leadership. Meetings are held on Tuesdays during Bengal Pause in Bacon 116A. All are welcome!

## Literacy in Math Instruction



*EEC co-president Amy Marciniak shares her experience from her PDS placement:*

Throughout my education at SUNY Buffalo State, I have been learning how important it is to incorporate and infuse literacy into mathematics. It sounded very strange to me because I perceived literacy and mathematics as being different as day and night. But I have found ways to reach that point of dusk in the classroom (I promise, no more day and night analogies).

In my PDS classroom, the students are learning how to subtract and add. Most recently, they learned about related facts and subtraction number sentences. Since I am teaching first grade, you can imagine that these students do not have strong writing skills. In their math lessons, they usually have a section in their worksheets where they must write out their own questions or explanations, and many of them struggle to do this task. To help them, our group orally tells me the answer and I use these answers to create a good response to the writing section.

The students then copy down the sentence I have created. Other than this writing section, I have incorporated literacy in the math lessons by creating poems that prompt students to either solve a problem or practice writing out their number sentences. The students loved the poems, as I have also inserted some of the students' names into the story! Simple efforts such as these will not only help your students improve their math skills, but it is a great way for them to practice their reading and writing skills.

## Get Involved!

Being a teacher doesn't simply stop when the school day is over. It is a job that expands beyond the normal "nine to five" and is continuous and omnipresent as there are students, parents, and administrators counting on you. The School of Education at SUNY Buffalo State is trying to prepare all Teacher Candidates for the challenge of meeting the demands that this profession imposes.

To get the best out of the Education Department, students should get involved in extra-curricular activities that deepen their understanding of the topics discussed in regularly scheduled classes. There are many opportunities provided in the department for students to find enriching educational involvement. Elementary Education Club (EEC), Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Club HoLA, Book Buddies, PDS Consortium meetings and many more provide a range of engaging activities that give teacher candidates the opportunity to discuss and prepare for teaching

in a low-stress and informal setting. There is nothing to lose and a lot to gain from attending one of the sessions. Getting involved and sharing with peers can develop a sense of solidarity and community. One student interviewed said "It's good to know that I'm not the only person going through the things I'm going through. After talking with people further along than I am in the program, I know what to expect." For dates and times, check the School of Education page.



## Seminar Reminder:

All individuals who are applying for Initial Certification must have all of their required seminars completed. It is important to remember that these seminars are required not only for initial certification, but are a **graduation requirement as well**. Each seminar is offered on campus through the Continuing Professional Studies Office and a select few are offered online. The Child Abuse Identification Seminar is offered **FREE** online, be sure to take advantage of this! Each seminar on campus costs 35 dollars, with the exception of DASA which costs 50 dollars. The chart for required seminars can be found below! Any questions on certification should be directed to the Certification Office located in Chase Hall.

Certification Office – [www.buffalostate.edu/teachercertification](http://www.buffalostate.edu/teachercertification)

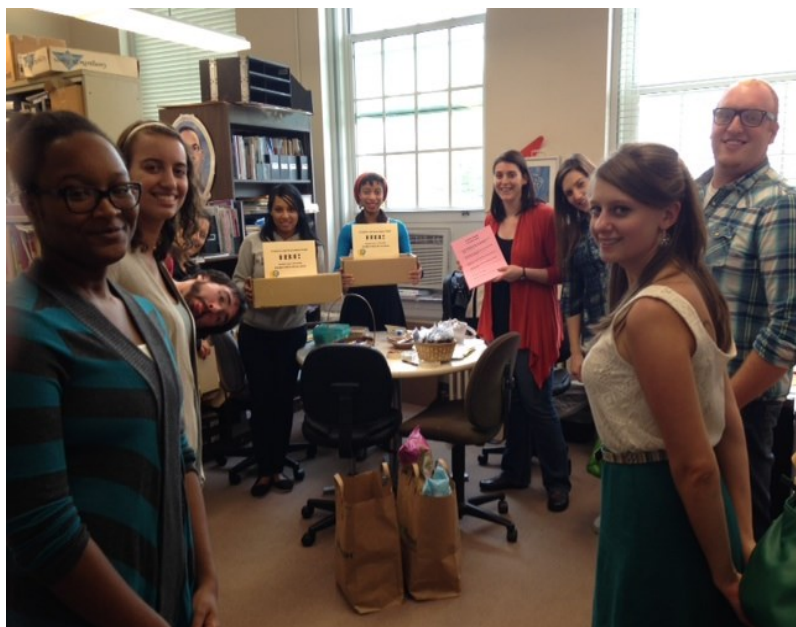
Continuing Professional Studies - <http://www.buffalostate.edu/continuingstudies/>

### Childhood/Early Childhood Majors

- S.A.V.E.
- Child Abuse Identification
- Alcohol & Other Drugs
- Fire & Arson
- HIV in the Classroom
- DASA Training (Anti-Bullying)



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