

# EDUCATION BUZZ

Centenary University's Education and Mathematics  
Department Newsletter



## Going the Distance

Across the country, college students have faced the challenges of moving to remote learning to finish their spring semesters. For future teachers, this transition happened not only in their higher ed classrooms but also in their field placements. Centenary University's clinical interns rose to the challenge, teaming up with their cooperating teachers to develop and implement distance learning plans in innovative ways.

Meanwhile, the Education Department's graduate students, who include teachers and administrators from across the state, have also had to transition their learning environments. These educators have exhibited impressive versatility and creativity while still forging ahead to earn their graduate degrees and certificates.

In *Stories from the Classroom* of this issue of *Education Buzz*, educators and clinical interns share their stories and experiences with distance learning.

## Departmental Events

### Education Forum

On Monday April 27th, the Education and Mathematics Department celebrated the Spring 2020 clinical interns during the virtual Education Forum. The teacher candidates faced unprecedented challenges this semester when their student teaching transitioned to virtual instruction. Centenary's President Dr. Bruce Murphy and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Amy D'Olivo expressed appreciation toward the educators for their hard work during such unprecedented times. The event also featured guest speakers Dr. Danielle Kovach (2014 Council for Exceptional Children Teacher of the Year and the 2011 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year) and Kimberly Dickstein-Hughes (2019-2020 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year) who both shared words of inspiration with the Spring 2020 interns. The Education and Mathematics Department congratulates the following students for their dedication and hard work in the onsite and online classroom this semester:

**Carmella Amerise**

**Sachel Bise**

**Haneen Hamed**

**Joseph Lake**

**Brendon Leon-Rossi**

**Alexander Leontaris**

**Carly Palmer**

**Lauren Ropp**

**Brian Rozanski**

**Olivia Stuber**

**Katrina Tajiddin**

**Danielle Tornillo**

**Amanda Vita**

**Sydney Watkins**

These teacher candidates have shown their versatility and creativity both in and outside the classroom. They are representative of Centenary's commitment toward others, and the Education and Mathematics Department is proud of their dedication and outstanding achievements.

# Stories from the Classroom

## Professional Development and Technology

By Dr. Jeanene Dutt, Principal at North Warren Regional School. Ed.D from Centenary University, 2019

At North Warren Regional School we provide individualized “Teacher Tech Cohorts” for all interested teachers. Our vision is to provide meaningful professional development, to help build capacity, and to provide tools for practices using technology in the classroom. We collaborate with a consulting group to offer teachers exposure to



pedagogies that are more compatible and therefore more successful with the use of technology in the classroom than traditional “teach and practice” models. PD is presented in an applied, and non confrontational way, with technology applications and workflows that allow for teaching better while working less. We also provide this PD while in a total virtual learning environment.

## Ever Growing Field of Education

By Carmella Amerise, Clinical intern at Byram Lakes Elementary School. BA in Elementary Education and TOSD Endorsement, May 2020



Distance learning has been a great adventure especially since this is uncharted territory. While it has not been easy, I think it is a great advancement for the education field. Distance learning has involved developing ways to keep students involved in their academics but also trying to not have them stare at computer screens for multiple hours a day. We have integrated daily Google meetings for the students so teachers can interact and talk with their students. We have also

incorporated live read aloud time during those meetings. Some are utilizing [Google Meet](#) to also continue guided reading time. They designate specific times for a small group of students at once and reenact it as if they were still in the classroom. For math, we utilize [BrainPop Jr.](#), daily-checks through Pearson, and also have students use materials at home to create graphs/charts and have them record their drawings and email a picture of their work. We utilize [MysteryScience](#) and interactive PowerPoints. We do our best to keep the learning multisensory and cross-disciplinary; so far it has been successful.

Of course, getting to this point took hard work and dedication. When we received word that school was closing, we only had a week to prepare. Considering I am completing my student teaching in a first-grade classroom, online learning/activities has not been a typical resource for how students complete their work. I was part of all the meetings that took place during the week we had, and I helped guide the teachers on how to utilize Google Classroom to the fullest. We spent any free time during the school day and hours outside the normal school day preparing. I prepped the teachers on how to create classrooms, activities, how to upload, and how to keep track of their students’ progress through the online classroom. I also created information sheets for the parents. I have since been able to fully interact with parents, students, and the first-grade team; my placement has been so supportive and provided me a teacher domain email. I also participate conference calls with the first-grade team and the principal to stay on the same page and help the teachers when they need it most. Distance learning is new to everyone and some are more tech-savvy than others; I have been happy to be here every step of the way for the teachers and help in any way I can. Our goal is to make sure students are achieving and have access to their education. It may not have been easy, but it has been worth it and has truly been an enriching experience.

# Stories from the Classroom

## Distance Learning: Paving New Ways for Educators Everywhere

By Ana Sodi, clinical intern at West Morris Central High School. Postbaccalaureate in Secondary Education and Math and TOSD Endorsement, anticipated December 2020

I have been doing my Practicum placement at West Morris Central High School with Ms. Harrington. She has been a great asset and support throughout this whole experience. I have watched students master their factoring skills in the time I have been at WMC. Ms. Harrington and I spend a lot of time planning activities together. A



A lot of the planning was changed due to the distance learning. We have a shared Google Doc where we brainstorm ideas, as well as Facetime any time I need assistance or clarification on an activity. We didn't know how students were going to respond to not being physically in the classroom and having a lot more distractions at home.

I started out slow when it came to eLearning. My co-op wanted to make sure that the students were comfortable with this new learning before allowing me to interact with them. The first thing I did was make a YouTube Live stream for about 7 minutes saying hello to the students and explaining the activity of the day. It definitely felt weird talking into the camera and not seeing anyone on the other side, but it was a nice introduction to eLearning. Prior to starting distance learning, I was able to go to a professional development day to discuss how WMC was going to proceed with eLearning and the technology they would be using.

After WMC came back from Spring Break, they agreed to start using [Google Meets](#) as a form of communication and a teaching resource for the students. I was able to attend the training for Google Meets. My co-op and I decided that we could split the class in three and have smaller groups on a Google Meets. This worked out great. I had about 5 students

for the whole period. Some of the activities we did together were related to Factoring for the Algebra components, and for Geometry, we covered Trigonometric ratios.

I would start the Google Meets and rotate asking students the steps to factor Difference of Two Squares, or finding the Greatest Common Factor, and now we are working on solving quadratic equations by factoring and using the quadratic formula. I have a mini whiteboard where I write the problem and the steps the students are telling me so everyone can see it. Google Meets has the ability for students to "raise their hands," so I know when they have a question. They have also been taught that they have to mute themselves until they are called on so that everyone is not talking at the same time. I think moving to Google Meets was the best decision for students and for teachers. The conversation flows better and students are able to interact with the teacher and each other.

Other activities and resources I have used during distance learning have been online platforms. We like to use [Desmos](#) a lot in the classroom. They have the graphing calculator, but they also have matching cards and activities. We also use [Formative](#) a lot. It looks very similar to Khan Academy and the practice problems they have. The teacher is able to give direct feedback on a question while the student is doing it. The students know that they got it right when there is a green light in the top right hand corner, and they know they can move on to the next problem. [Pear Deck](#) is another platform that we use a lot to sketch graphs or answer any other type of question. My co-op has used them to do brain breaks with the class. We did an activity where the students had to draw a picture that described them, and we had to guess who drew what as a fun brain break in the middle of class. My co-op and I agree that during this distance learning it is important to keep things fun and not make everything about school. Using the brain breaks is the way we let the students enjoy a little bit of time not thinking about math or school. We have also used [Quizizz](#) as a brain break to see who knows their classmates the best. The last one we did was a huge class Pictionary online using [skribbl.io](#). It was so much fun to see the creativity that students can come up with.

Overall, distance learning has been very interesting. It is not

something I expected to be doing in my years in school. However, I am extremely impressed with how WMC is handling all of this. I am grateful to be a part of the team with them. Dr. Turrisi is my supervisor and she was able to observe one of my Google Meets classes. It was great that she was able to see hands on what I was doing and also see how the students are adjusting to this type of learning.



Centenary's Education students enjoy their online class meetings.



**Book:** *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, M.D.

**Video:** Rita Pierson's TED Talk "Every Kid Needs a Champion"

**Podcast:** Angela Watson's Truth for Teachers

**Quote:** "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud" -- Maya Angelou

## Centenarians for Others

### Relay for Life

Centenary's Education Honor's Society, KDE, is participating in the American Cancer Society's Virtual Relay for Life. Last year, the team of future teachers won the Golden Sneaker Award. This year, the group's goal is to raise \$1,000. Donations can be made [here](#).

### Altruistic 3D Printing

Warren Hills High School students and faculty, working collaboratively with their counterparts of Mount Olive High School, used school 3D printers and other materials to make over 26,000 face shields. The face shields were donated to the New Jersey State Police who sent them to first responders and medical professionals throughout Hunterdon and Warren counties.

Warren Hills High School Principal Christopher Kavcak is a Centenary alum and was the recipient of the Visions Federal Credit Union Educational Leader of the Year Award in 2017.

Read the full story [here](#).

### Virtual Story Hour

Centenary students Carly Palmer, Olivia Stuber, Ashley Ayers, McKenna Heymann, and Joelle Wolfrum all realize the impact of story hour on our local community children. The students recorded videos of themselves reading stories aloud so Centenary's youngest students can still feel connected and benefit from community story hour. Story hour at Centenary is organized by Professor Lexis McCoy who has also continued to send videos of stories and warm messages to the children and literacy resources to the parents. Playing his banjo, Dr. Noah Haiduc-Dale has provided sing-along songs to encourage the kids to sing and dance. The videos from these students and professors bring familiar faces to the local children who can continue to enjoy their stories and songs.



# Alumni Spotlight

As Centenary's education students matriculate through the program, their clinical internship helps prepare them for the rigors of a career in education. Fortunately, they have the privilege of working closely on their teaching practice with Dr. Marianne Pratschler. Dr. Pratschler is not only a veteran teacher who promotes research-based best practices for future educators, but she is also a Centenary alum. Turning back to the mid-to-late 1970s, Dr. Pratschler fondly remembers Centenary as a "warm and welcoming place." She was a non-traditional student, which was rare at the time, but she reflects that "everyone had a smile and an offer of help." Dr. Pratschler received her AA in Early Childhood Education in 1978 and her BS in Education in 1979. She also holds the following certifications: Elementary Teacher (K-8), Nursery School Endorsement, Teacher of English, Teacher of Psychology, Teacher of the Handicapped, and Supervisor.



Dr. Pratschler finds that her education at Centenary had a big impact on her own classroom practice. She says, "Even though I was working with young learners by instinct, Centenary helped me back that up with sound theory and research-based strategies and techniques. Those classes gave me the confidence to teach every student how to read and more!" While she was an effective classroom teacher, she eventually was drawn back to Centenary, which she says

felt like "coming home." Dr. Pratschler has taught at Centenary since 1999. She is a role model for future educators and makes them think about the details of their teacher preparation while encouraging creativity and positive energy. For Dr. Pratschler, watching her students move through the program is truly rewarding: "Throughout the years I have seen pre-service teacher become teachers of the year in their districts, come back to Centenary for graduate degrees and become co-operating teachers for our new candidates. There is nothing better in the world of Education!"

Dr. Pratschler's nurturing demeanor has helped enlighten and cultivate students of all ages. When asked what her message would be to future students, she says, "Anyone who wants to be a teacher cannot find a better place to do it than Centenary. The professors are the best in the business; they have experienced what they teach. That goes for the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs. Being in the field from Day 1 makes pre-service teachers ready to hit the ground running. You will be so happy that you chose Centenary – like I am!"

Professors can have a big impact on a student's future. During her time as a student at Centenary, Dr. Pratschler remembers a few who inspired her: "Dr. Diane MacKinnon, Professor of Psychology; a Centenary alum(AA) who was one of the first women to be admitted to Princeton; she was a pioneer who showed me how to be strong. Prof. Naera Knott, wife of Dr. Moses Knott, campus Chaplain and professor; she taught Marriage and the Family; always gentle and understated, she was a listener; she helped me find ways to solve my own problems and blossom where I was planted. Dr. Ernie Dalton, VPAA – the father of a friend I had started college with elsewhere; Dr. Dalton and his wife Ellen (who taught Home Economics) opened their home to me and all Centenary's ladies – no men at the time – he taught me to believe in myself that I could do anything." Certainly these individuals helped shape Dr. Pratschler into an educator who would make her own great impact on others. Centenary's 2018 Salutatorian Becky Clinebell greatly appreciates growing as an educator under Dr. Pratschler's guidance. Clinebell, who now teaches special education at Allamuchy Township School, says, "Dr. Pratschler brings a wealth of knowledge and experience into the classes she teaches. I greatly enjoyed our classroom discussions in which Dr. Pratschler weaves in her personal teaching experiences which brought the content at hand to life. As a novice teacher, I find myself drawing upon real-life teaching scenarios which my professors shared with me in class including topics such as classroom management, lesson planning, and challenging situations."

# Awards

## **Dr. Cathy Benedict**

### **Morris County Friends of Public Education**

Typically, three people are selected each year for this honor who have supported public education specifically in Morris County. Dr. Benedict was chosen for her involvement in restarting the Pre-Service NJEA Chapter on Centenary's campus and introducing students to the professional benefits of membership (such as professional development with colleagues in the field, attending the convention, etc.). Dr. Benedict wanted future educators to understand everything the NJEA has to offer.

## **Professor Kathy Turrisi**

### **2020 Centenary University Alumni Association Executive Board Alumni of the Year**

Professor Turrisi has taught a wide variety of students from pre-school to adults. These broad experiences included responsibility for the math curriculum in public schools, serving as a director and an instructor at several nationally recognized learning centers, developing hands-on manipulatives for use in classrooms, training teachers, and studying overseas in China to learn the language and culture and to research alternative approaches to learning mathematics. Professor Turrisi also developed and ran a free math tutoring program for children Grades 2-8 in Hackettstown. The tutors included Centenary University students, volunteers from Trinity United Methodist Church, and members of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, an organization that promotes professional and personal growth of women educators and excellence in education. Professor Turrisi addressed fear of math and encouraged tutors to create games and develop materials that made learning fun.

## **Carly Jane Palmer**

### **Kappa Delta Epsilon Leadership Award**

Carly Palmer proudly and effectively leads Kappa Delta Epsilon, one of the largest honor societies on campus. She is graduating with her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education and Teacher of Students with Disabilities endorsement. Carly was one of the first students selected to partake in the Education Department's full-time clinical intern program and has been teaching full-time with great success. Carly plans on becoming an elementary or special education teacher and is looking forward to graduate school.

## **Dr. Jenine Kastner**

### **SSP Architectural Group/Centenary University Doctoral Dissertation of the Year**

Jenine Kastner's dissertation is titled *Blended Learning: Moving Beyond the Thread, Quality of Blended Learning and Instructor Experiences*. Her research examined approaches to blended learning in higher education. This quantitative study also determined barriers to blended learning and looked into professional development practices. Dr. Kastner is currently the Director of Special Services for Clinton Public Schools.

## **Sydney Watkins**

### **Outstanding Academic Achievement in Education**

Sydney is graduating with her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education and her Teacher of Students with Disability certificate. She was selected to be a First Year Leader on campus (FYL) and was one of the first full-time clinical interns working full-time as a teacher during her field experience. She is a parliamentarian for Kappa Delta Epsilon Honor Society and volunteers for many service projects. After graduation, Sydney hopes to secure a special education teaching position.

## **Maxine Spann**

### **Doris Moore Scholarship**

Maxine is the first student to graduate from Centenary University with both Theater Arts and Education degrees. She is very proud to have been a part of the production *Marisol* as her Theater Thesis Project. Maxine has a true passion for both theater sound design and teaching children. She will appreciate whichever direction her path takes her!

## **Carmella Amarise**

### **Outstanding Academic Achievement Award Education and Mathematics**

Carmella is graduating with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Teacher of Students with Disabilities certificate. She is proud to have earned the honor of being on the Academic Dean's List with a department GPA of 3.9. Carmella is looking forward to pursuing a teaching position teaching special education students.

## **Haneen Hamed**

### **Exemplary Professionalism and Collegiality**

Haneen is earning her degree in Early Childhood Education. She handles herself with professionalism and grace. Haneen understands the importance of staying positive and the impact of that on her students. She is a very respectful and responsive communicator, which leads to developing positive relationships within the field and interpersonal success.

# Awards

**Kenney Lutz**  
**2019 Centenary University/Visions FCU**  
**Educational Leader Award**

The Educational Leader Award, made possible by a generous donation from Visions Federal Credit Union, honors a school leader who has transformed educational practices and positively impacted the culture and climate in his or her school community. Kenney Lutz is a Centenary alum and the assistant principal at Merriam Avenue School in Newton. Below is his account of the great work he has done to earn such an honor:



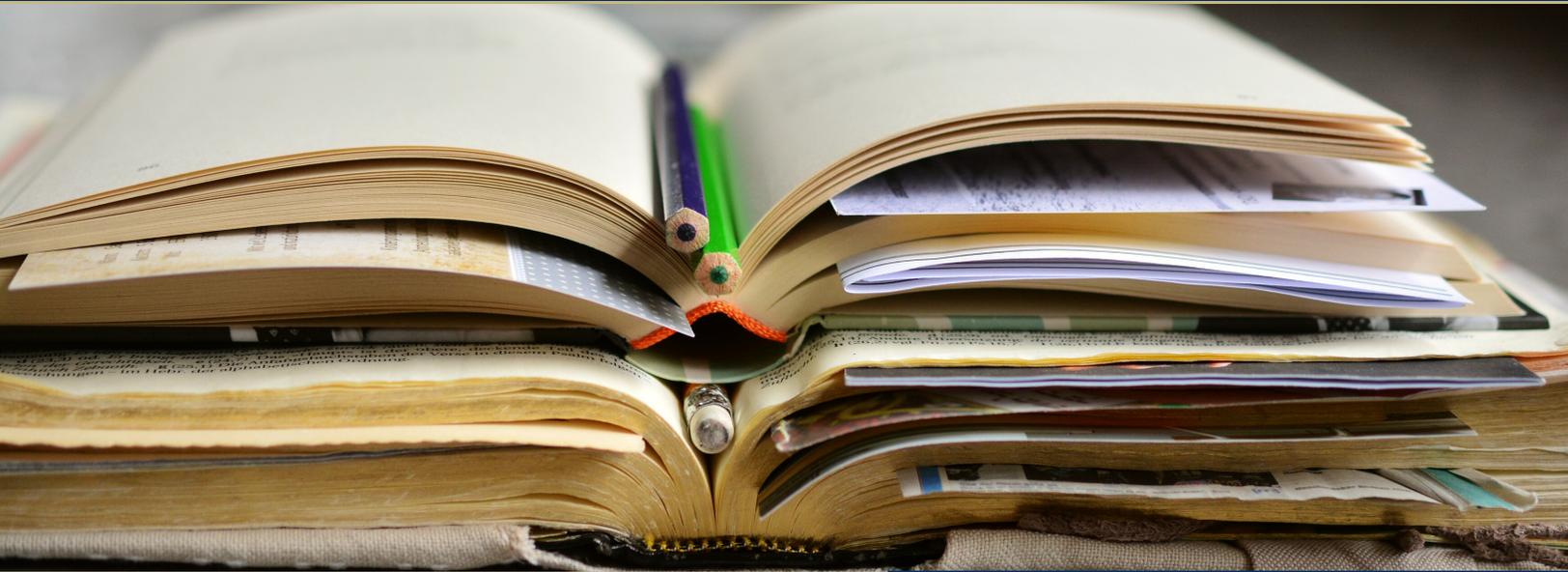
“I completed all of my undergraduate and graduate work at Centenary University. At the time when I started there it was Centenary College and as time progressed, it became Centenary University. The great thing about Centenary is this, as they grew their student population and expanded their program depth, Centenary did not lose their focus on how to treat the individual student. The University has continued a high level of excellence in keeping the students and their needs at the center of their concentration. Centenary is a very professional and challenging institution loaded with great personnel and resources. I could not have accomplished what I have today without all of the positive experiences and interactions that Centenary had provided me. If I had the choice to do it all over again, Centenary University would be where I would go again. Also my daughter, who is currently a junior in high school, has Centenary as her number one choice of universities to attend.

“This is my 25th year in education. I started out as a special education teacher in Lopatcong Township. After a few years, I transitioned into a sixth grade teacher of all subjects. We departmentalized as a district a few years past that and I taught math and social studies for the remainder of my time in Lopatcong. I was recruited to go to Florida to coach high school baseball and taught fourth grade there for a few years then switched to Physical Education for the remainder of my time in Florida. My family and I moved back to New Jersey

where I accepted a second grade teaching job in Jersey City. I did that for two years, then became Dean Of Students in Jersey City. Then I was blessed with the opportunity to become an administrator in Newton. I am currently an Assistant Principal at Merriam Avenue School for the last 5 plus years and hold many district wide positions to add to my administrative experiences. Newton is a great place to work and [I] am honored to be a part of their talented administrative staff and I look to be a contributing factor for many years to come.

“I have been very fortunate to be part of an administrative team within my building and district that has been a driving force to enhance the way education is delivered in Newton. Under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Ken Greene, our district has continued to flourish. At Merriam Avenue School, Principal Kevin Stanton and I continue to research and implement best practices to our talented staff and have them produce magic for our eager students. Honestly, it is the staff that makes it go and Kevin and I support them in every way possible. If there would be one thing that I would like to highlight about our interaction with our families in Newton, it would be the sense of pride and community that we have established. We have worked hard not only in the classroom, but in the community, and character building areas to produce a “complete” student. Merriam Avenue School was fortunate to become not only a state recognized school of character, but also a national school of character all in the same year. There were many factors and individuals that had a hand in this, but the way the staff has the ability to be creative and the flexibility that they are provided while being supported is the key. Kevin and I are very involved with our staff and allow them to share their opinions and have a voice in the education process from soup to nuts. We as a team, with the support of our superintendent and the initiatives that he brings to the district, have created an environment that is rich in a multitude of ways, and we are very proud of that.

“It was very much an honor to win this award, but it is really a tribute to all of the people who have helped me along the way to become the educator and person that I am. From my parents, to my wife and kids, through all of the educators who have helped me out along my path, to the university that gave me the skills to succeed, to all of the professionals that I have worked with in my career, it is really those individuals that deserve the credit for what I have become as an educator and person. I want to thank Centenary for allowing me to share my path and welcome any and all reach outs to share ideas and thoughts related to the education profession.”



## DEFENSIVE CORNER

The following Ed.D. students defended their dissertations this spring:

**Anthony Giordano:** *A Comparative Study of Effective and Non-Effective Character Education Programs on Academic and Behavioral Improvements in School Districts*

**Leonard Kunz:** *Decision Making Process of Police Officers Employed by Small Police Departments*

**Douglas Compton:** *Perception of New Jersey Law Enforcement on Body-Worn Cameras*

**Joseph Flynn:** *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Designed Schools in New Jersey: Assessment of the Learning Environment*

**Jennifer Gallegly:** *Teachers' Efficacy and Attitudes Toward Learning Outside of the Four Walls*

**Monica Whitmore:** *A Quantitative Study of Per Pupil Expenditures, Spending in Relation to Adequacy Budget, and SAT Scores in New Jersey High Schools*

**Nick Sarlo:** *Teacher Perceptions of Cell Phone Utilization in the Classroom*

## Research

Doctoral candidate Brad Davis' article "A Comprehensive Induction Program: Create a Culture of Learning and Reflection From the Start" was published recently in *Educational Viewpoints*. In his article, Davis discusses ways to ease some of the challenges that new teachers face. He advocates for a comprehensive approach to induction that encourages communication and reflection.

The Spring 2020 issue of *Educational Viewpoints* also includes an article by doctoral candidate Nicole Shanklin titled "Redefining Your Role as a Central Office Leader: Why Stepping Out of the Office Matters." Shanklin provides six methods for administrators to make themselves more visible in their district. She understands the amount of work that can keep administrators in their offices, but encourages them to try to step out to work with others face to face.

Both articles can be accessed [here](#).