

# EDUCATION BUZZ

Centenary University's Education and Humanities  
Department Newsletter

## Social Emotional Growth in the Classroom

**By Katherine Murawski, Bachelor of Arts in  
Education K-6 Elementary Education and Teacher of  
Students with Disabilities Endorsement '21**



I am a clinical intern at Memorial School at Washington Borough School District where I have completed my practicum and student teaching. I have been teaching in a third-grade general education setting and have recently switched over to a second-through-fourth-grade language learning disabilities classroom. Being part of the clinical internship program, I have also substitute taught at Memorial School both semesters. This has been a wonderful opportunity as I have gained experience in different grades and built relationships with different students throughout the school.

One of the biggest highlights of my school year so far has been teaching a group of students that are so excited to be in school. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected schools in a magnitude of ways and one of the biggest factors being the lack of social interaction. Students are now spending days with friends they haven't seen in nearly two years and meeting new friends (not just through a computer screen). After the first week of school, the class had an end of the week

reflection where the students shared a "highlight" and a "lowlight" of the week with the class. A boy in the class shared that his highlight was that they were able to spend time with their friends for the first time in "what feels like forever." Many students shared about the new friends they had made and some even shared about getting to know their teachers. Overall, the students' highlights focused on the social interaction they experienced that week, which speaks volumes about how much they had missed that.

On the other end of that spectrum, over the two years, students have missed out on their social and emotional learning and growth that typically takes place in school. Therefore, the district implemented a new curriculum developed by Sanford Harmony to implement social emotional learning throughout the grade levels. I was lucky enough to take part in the training and implementation of this curriculum. The curriculum came with premade lessons, activities, discussions, and resources to use for various grade levels. My cooperating teacher and I took these resources and began to build our own social and emotional learning (SEL) lessons from them. SEL became part of our daily routine. I believe that it built one of the strongest classroom communities. The whole class seemed to care for and befriend each other more quickly than any other classroom I observed.

This unexpected growth in social and emotional learning proves how much these students needed education in diversity, inclusion, empathy, communication, and so much more. While I am not grateful for this pandemic, I am grateful that it brought me to the realm of social and emotional learning that I will implement for the rest of my teaching career. The past couple of years has taught all of us to be kind and respectful to others. Now it's time to teach the future generations the same. I am beyond thankful for my experience at Washington Borough School District and cannot wait to implement the wonderful tools and resources I have learned there in my own classroom soon.

# Stories from the Classroom

## Co-Teachers Bring Centenary Learning to the Classroom



**Jonathan Dowler (history) and Matthew Milner (history special education) are currently working towards their M.Ed in Educational Practice at Centenary. They teach at West Morris Mendham High School.**

When an opportunity to collaborate within the classroom presented itself, we both leaped at the chance. As two like-minded educators early in our careers, the opportunity to create and refine a long-term collaborative relationship was almost too good to be true. With our first-year co-teaching underway, we decided to extend our collaboration beyond the classroom and enrolled in a master's degree program simultaneously. We hoped to not only improve our individual crafts by implementing ideas from our college courses, but also to use our co-taught history classroom as a test-bed for innovative techniques learned within the program.

After two years in the Master of Education in Educational Practice program, it is clear that this commitment to collaborative development has already strengthened our practice. Immersing ourselves in pedagogy and discussion each week provides a structured time committed to reflection and discussion. Where this opportunity truly shines, however, is in providing a space to connect with other educators and approach each discussion as a team rather than as an individual.

Collaboration and parity are at the heart of our successful co-teaching relationship. In our classroom, the students viewed the general and special education teachers as equally qualified and important. This was only possible through a dedication to innovation and equal participation in researching, planning, assessing, and implementing new ideas. Despite unexpected challenges, including the pandemic, we remained committed to implementing creative practices and maximizing engagement, especially through simulations. For instance, while still in person the students roleplayed as members of Jamestown during Bacon's Rebellion to explore class and race conflicts. During asynchronous remote teaching, they navigated the Gilded Age through a custom-made Google Slides Choose Your Own Adventure.

Ultimately, our collaboration was successful because we shared a passion for creating engaging lessons that highlighted the skills students need to succeed while having fun along the way. Our administrators were helpful in not only providing a collaborative opportunity, but also in ensuring common prep time in which to plan. Any co-teaching relationship can be successful if both participants have open minds, similar goals, and a sense of mutual respect.

We found a variety of co-teaching strategies to be effective before the pandemic. A seamless transition of teacher roles using the Team Teaching model proved most successful and was our default approach. Parallel Teaching also presented a great opportunity to divide the class and form two much smaller groups. This helped with parity and opened up opportunities for students that normally would be intimidated to speak in a larger group. Station Teaching opened up a great opportunity for the students to move around the room learning in different formats with different media, including each of us as specialists. These three approaches were the backbone of our lesson strategies.

Alongside a commitment to collaboration, we also decided to reassess the traditional approach to American history. Many of the freshmen students in our college prep inclusion classroom struggled to see the value of their learning through traditional teaching strategies. We decided to introduce a new concept, the "Why Should I Care?" (WHY-SIC) element where students could ask us directly the value of that day's lesson or activity. If we were unable to provide an answer, the lesson ended early or that section was skipped. By opening each lesson with a statement that directly explained why the lesson was valuable to their lives, we were forced to ensure that everything we did in the classroom was valuable to them as learners. Through backward design and collaborative student-centered planning, we never had to end a lesson early.

While we are not teaching together this year, we do have a shared class and a shared prep in which we collaboratively plan together. Hopefully, as teaching returns to a sense of normalcy we will be fortunate enough to reunite in the same classroom once again. Until then, we always have our classes at Centenary to help collaboratively improve our craft.

# Stories from the Classroom

## Back to School: The Transition From Virtual Instruction to the Classroom

**By Anthony Carida, clinical intern at Belvidere High School. B.A. in History from McDaniel College. Postbaccalaureate Teacher of Social Studies and TOSD Endorsement, Centenary University, anticipated December 2022**

The fall of 2021 has been a time of transition for both the students I have been working with and me. During this time, students have returned to the classroom after almost a year and a half of virtual instruction. At the same time, this fall was my first time being in a high school classroom since the day I graduated way back in 2016. This semester, I had the pleasure of doing my Practicum placement at Belvidere High School under the guidance of Mr. Chris Coyle. Covid-19 restrictions and virtual learning had prevented me from physically being in a classroom for the entirety of my time in the Postbaccalaureate Education program, so making my return to the classroom in a teaching role was nerve wracking as I'm sure it was for the students as well. After all, I was placed with Juniors, so they had really only been in the high school for half a year before their educational journey completely changed. Also, a year and a half is a long time to be away from the classroom, so there was certainly going to be an adjustment period for everybody, teachers included.



Since the class I was in was U.S. History 2, we began the school year by testing the students on what they had learned in U.S. History 1 the previous year. This gave Mr. Coyle and me a good idea of what the students had retained from their virtual instruction and what may need to be reinforced. Much like the students, I started out slow when it came to

teaching classes. The main reason behind this was to make sure everybody was comfortable being back in the classroom. Mr. Coyle wanted to establish a rhythm and rapport with the students, and he wanted to make sure I had a chance to see how the class operated before taking the reins. At first, Mr. Coyle would teach the first couple classes and then I would copy what he did with the later classes. This way I could see how things worked before taking the lead myself. It wasn't long before I found myself becoming more comfortable in the classroom, and I could sense the same for my students. We had eased them in with simple notes and group work but have slowly yet surely increased the difficulty of the assignments and the complexity of the content.

As students gradually became more comfortable being in the classroom, and I became more comfortable teaching the class, I began forming some great relationships with many of the students. I personally believe that being in the classroom has reminded us of the benefit of face-to-face communication. During virtual instruction, Mr. Coyle told me that many students seemed inattentive during Zoom calls and just handed in the assigned work. However, the ease of communication in the classroom makes the learning process easier for everybody. During what Mr. Coyle calls "commercial breaks," which are essentially brain breaks where the class engages in an off-topic discussion, I have learned a lot about my students, and they have learned a lot about me. We have talked about the positive and negative aspects of Marvel movies, which cartoons were popular when we were children, and some students have even shared some incredible stories from their personal lives that connect to the in-class material. These conversations are beneficial for both the teacher and the student, and they can only happen in the classroom.

Now that we have reached the end of the semester, my nerves have vanished. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Belvidere High School, and I will miss working with these students. However, I look forward to making new connections and taking on an even larger role in the education of the students I will work with during my full-time student teaching next fall.

# Stories from the Classroom

## The Practicum Experience

**By Nikolas Polizos, clinical intern at Newton Township High School. BA in Secondary Education in Social Studies and TOSD endorsement Centenary University anticipated May 2022**

I have been doing my practicum student teaching at Newton Township High School this fall, and it has been nothing short of an amazing experience so far. My cooperating teacher is Mr. Grifone, and I could not have asked for a better mentor in this whole process. Mr. Grifone is the kind of person that any student teacher would be so fortunate to have. I'll never forget speaking with my supervisor and her saying, "you hit the jackpot getting this guy as a co-op." She couldn't have been more right about it. The student teaching experience relies heavily on that relationship you have with your cooperating teacher. Under his wing, I have learned so many strategies and classroom management skills that will assist me so much during my first few years of teaching.



Students, especially in high school, can definitely be intimidating at first. Half the kids I'm with during the day are taller than me, and I don't consider myself a very short person. But something that drew me to teaching high school students in the first place was the opportunity to build a positive relationship with these kids. I still remember the impact certain teachers had on me when I

was in high school, and that is exactly what I want to do with these students. A majority of students nowadays see school as another one of their chores. It's something they HAVE to do. My goal is for students to WANT to come to my class because they know it is a safe and fun place for students from all walks of life to have an equal opportunity in building themselves to who they want to be.

The lessons I taught this semester were primarily within World History classes. One lesson that definitely sticks out to me as my most favorite, was the lesson on the English Civil War. The English Civil War was a conflict in England that involved the Roundheads, who were seeking to limit the King's power, and the Cavaliers, who supported the King fully. We played this really engaging and interactive game as a class where they had to decipher the differences between these two groups. The reason why I knew this lesson worked so well wasn't because students understood the content behind the lesson, it was actually what a student said to me after class. He said, "you know what, Mr. P? That game was okay. I actually had a good time doing it." Trust me, if a high school student ever says your lesson was "okay," you have outdone yourself.

Many of the lessons we use in my internship have to deal with technology. Google Classroom of course is the saving grace of all teachers now, but a few tools I recommend to any student teacher is EdPuzzle, which is a great assessment tool to gauge where your students' abilities are. Online Seterra is another great tool that I use for geographic assessments that allows students to compete and really bring a great atmosphere to the classroom.

If I could give one piece of advice to any incoming student teachers, it is to breathe. Student teaching on paper is incredibly scary; believe me, I was terrified too. But with the training we have gotten thus far, we are more than prepared for some of the things we are going to experience during our internship. The best thing about teaching is that every day is a new day.



## Fall 2021 Education Forum

By Izabelle Weisman

On December 13, 2021, the Education Department recognized the Fall 2021 clinical interns. The celebration included inspiring and encouraging words spoken by Dr. Marianne Pratschler, Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Amy D'Olivo, and Centenary University's President Dr. Bruce Murphy. Additionally, keynote speaker, Professor Katherine Chrusz joined in on commemorating the graduates, providing inspirational insights into the interns' near futures as educators.

As the celebration commenced, the hard work and dedication of the clinical interns were highlighted, pointing out the astounding work they completed throughout their time both inside and outside of classrooms. The pre-service teachers likewise had the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences student teaching and time in Centenary's Education Department, many expressing gratitude to the committed faculty members who worked alongside them throughout their journey to becoming educators. The Education Department congratulates the following passionate and devoted future teachers:

Francesca Amati  
Andrea Deriso  
Kaytel Iturralde  
Veronica Matulla  
LoriAnn Coronato  
Katie Murawski  
Kellie Nicklus  
Allie Pierson



## Tribute to Dr. Alyce Hunter

Early in the Fall semester, Centenary lost one of our beloved adjunct faculty members in the Educational Leadership program. Dr. Alyce Hunter was a professor, mentor, dissertation chair, and friend to many Centenary students and alumni. Entrusted with introducing our doctoral students to the dissertation process, Dr. Hunter was known for her calm and reassuring ways. Dozens of Centenary students were fortunate enough to have her as their dissertation chair, and she treated each student as though their work was the only job she had.

Dr. Hunter was proud of her work at Lehigh University, where she received her doctorate. She was also awarded a prestigious Fulbright Fellowship to study education in Japan, and she also studied in South Korea, China, and Serbia. She taught and was an administrator in various school districts in New Jersey, including West Morris Regional High School District, West Windsor Plainsboro, and Franklin (Somerset County). She was an adjunct professor at Rutgers University-Graduate School of Education, Centenary University-Graduate School of Education, Wagner College-Graduate School of Education, Lesley University, and University of Phoenix. To honor Dr. Hunter's contribution and legacy, the annual "Dissertation of the Year" award is being renamed in her honor.

## Centenarians for Others

Centenary's Education Honor Society Kappa Delta Epsilon (KDE) has been working to provide service to the local community and the university.

Working together with Alpha Pi Delta, KDE helped run a food drive aimed at restocking Centenary's foodbank. Prior to this food drive, the shelves in our foodbank were empty. However, collectively, Alpha Pi Delta and KDE were able to restock them.

KDE also decorated a Cyclone-themed bulletin board in Brotherton Hall.



# Alumni Spotlight

## Interview with Dr. Gulay Maffia, Ed.D. 2019.

### Could you tell us a bit about your Centenary education? From which year and program did you graduate? What made you choose to study at Centenary?

I received my Ed.D. through Centenary University's Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership program in May



2019. As one of the program's first graduates, I am a proud member of "Cohort 1." If it were not for Dr. Frederiks, who was the Chair of the Education Department, I would not have started the doctorate program at Centenary. At the time, I had a spot secured at another well-respected program; however, Dr. Frederiks reached out to me individually as he did for my other cohort members and encouraged me to join the first cohort. I am thankful for Dr. Frederiks' thoughtful approach, which led me to choose Centenary University and allowed me to have a wonderful experience.

### What is your current occupation? What are some highlights that you have experienced in your career?

I currently serve as a Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant (LDT-C) at Sparta Middle School. I have been fortunate to work for well over a decade in a supportive environment valuing professional development which helped me grow as an educator. I credit my learning at Centenary University for the highlights in my career; I passed my qualifying exam for the National Certification for Educational Diagnosticians (NCED) credential while attending the Educational Leadership Doctorate program at Centenary University. The NCED is the premier national credential for special education assessment professionals who hold high standards of practice. After completing the program, I passed the Praxis and earned a New Jersey School Administrator certificate. I have also been an Adjunct Professor of Education in Centenary University's Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultant post-graduate certification program since its start in 2020. It has been a privilege to collaborate with Dr. Benedict, Director of Centenary's Graduate Programs in Special Education in the LDT-C program offering opportunities for teachers to take a leadership role and make an impact on student learning. As an expert in applying educational theory as functional practices in the classroom, Dr. Benedict is a mentor to me. Dr. Benedict is a positive role model as someone who values collaboration, and I have her number on speed dial for all matters in education!

### In what areas do you feel Centenary University has prepared you for your current role in Education?

The teaching that I have been exposed to during my doctorate program helped prepare me to expand my role as an educational diagnostician and meet any leadership responsibilities, including the vigorous exploration of the subject matter of conflict management and communications. I felt that my professors have been a source of strength; they truly adopted me and understood my needs as an individual learner. As role models, they have shaped the way I approach my own practice both as a diagnostician and an adjunct professor and become lifelong mentors to me guiding the way I give back to my educational community.

### What were some of your favorite courses at Centenary?

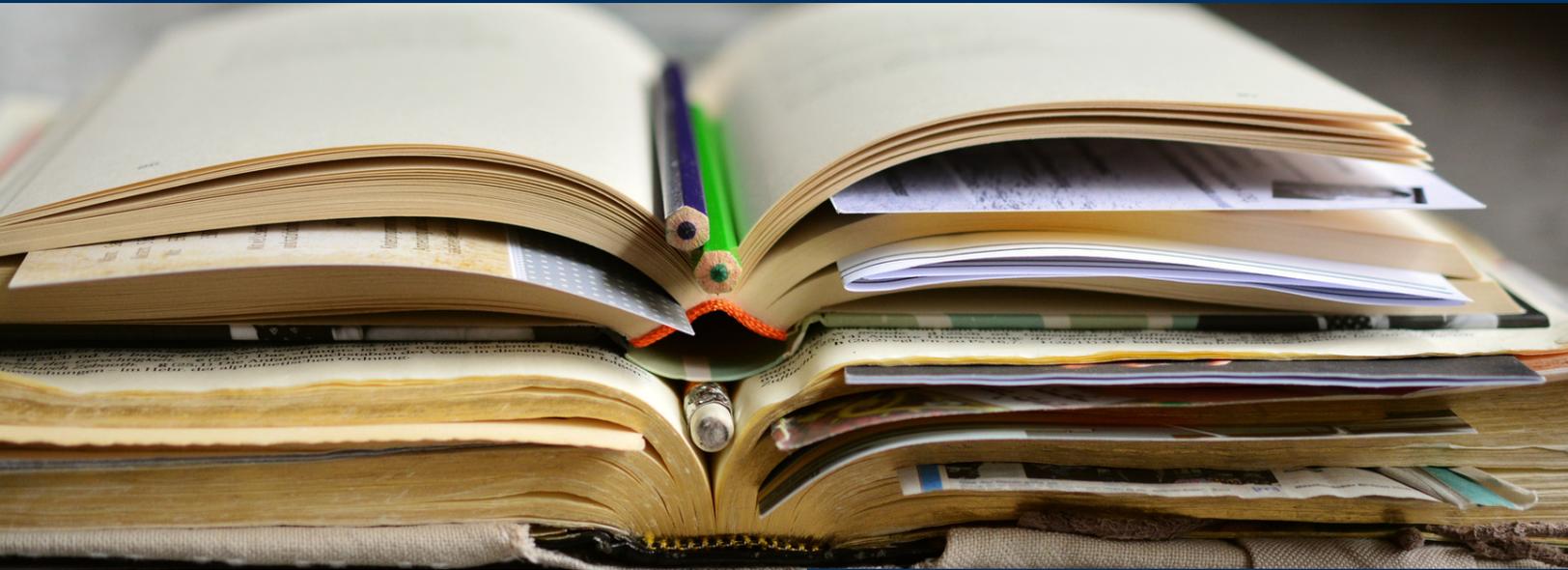
I would not be exaggerating if I said I found the coursework engaging in the doctorate program in its entirety, and my GPA supports that. However, if I must pick, I would say my favorite courses have been the dissertation and practicum classes in which the learning was truly collaborative and hands-on where we tackled extremely challenging research and the writing process with the support of the faculty and the camaraderie in our cohort.

### What are some of the greatest challenges that you see in education today, and how do you choose to combat these?

As educators, it is important for us to consider how we can provide a safe and comfortable learning experience to our students while facing the challenges brought on by Covid-19, such as following safety protocols, making the students' social and emotional learning a priority, and collaborating with the stakeholders in our learning community to address interruptions in student learning. I value reflective practices and collegial collaboration, which helps to be proactive in anticipating challenges and preparing for them. Our students are a source of inspiration to me, and I strive to do my part to help students adapt to the changes in their learning environment due to the unprecedented nature of the challenges we are facing currently.

### Do you have any advice for current Centenary students pursuing a career in education?

Students pursuing a career in education should remember we are never alone on the road to success. It is certainly a challenging time to be in education, but it also presents a unique opportunity in terms of the difference you can make for your students, and the rewards will be plentiful. Prioritize building relationships, celebrate the small gains, and ask for help when you need it. We were all new educators at one time, and we understand; there are various people who have supported me during my journey, and I am grateful for every one of them.



## Awards

**Dr. Nicholas Diaz**

**2021 Centenary University/Visions Federal Credit Union  
Education Leader of the Year**

Dr. Diaz is the Superintendent of Union and Franklin Township schools and a 2021 Ed.D graduate of Centenary University. Dr. Diaz was honored for his commitment to his district, attentiveness to student needs, and for fostering a school climate that positively impacts all individuals. This award is made possible by the generous support of the Visions Federal Credit Union.

## *DEFENSIVE CORNER*

The following Ed.D. candidates defended their dissertations this fall:

**Viviana Morales-Burgess:** "Exploring Gender Bias in STEM in a Kindergarten Classroom"

**Andrew Carfley:** "The Effects of Passion Based Learning on Student Risk-Taking and Resilience - a Qualitative Study"

**Nicholas Diaz:** "The Effect of School Culture on Teacher Retention"

**Roger Jinks:** "A Comparative Study Examining the Impact of NJ Senate Bill S2 on Student Performance on Standardized Assessments"

## Research

Dr. Jennifer Viaud Macones is currently a principal in Birchwood Elementary School District located in Rockaway, NJ. Dr. Viaud Macones is an alum of Centenary University, receiving her Master of Arts (M.A.) in Educational Leadership in 2014 and then coming back in 2017 to earn her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership (Ed.D). She earned several certifications during her time here at Centenary University, including: the New Jersey Principal Certification (2014), the New Jersey Supervisor Certification (2015,) and the New Jersey School Administrator Certificate (2018). Dr. Viaud Macones has recently extended her doctoral research into a published book. *Make Your School Awesome!* by Dr. Viaud Macones is about creating a positive environment for staff and students alike in the school to make everyone feel included and loved. Her intention was to inspire others to create this wonderful environment and transform the school into a place where students and staff want to be. Her book is now available on Amazon and many other outlets.

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