

EDUCATION BUZZ

Centenary University's Education and Humanities
Department Newsletter

An Everlasting Impact: In Memory of a Teacher, a Mentor, a Colleague

This April, Centenary University was devastated by the loss of Dr. Cathleen Benedict, a valuable professor in the Education and Humanities Department and director of the special education graduate programs. Dr. Benedict loved her students, and it showed in the ways that she advocated for them and cherished her time in the classroom developing relationships.



Dr. Benedict taught in Denville for over 20 years at Riverview Elementary School as a general and special education teacher. Dr. Benedict also earned her M.Ed in Educational Practice from Centenary in 2006 and then her Doctor of Education degree with a concentration in Teacher Leadership from Rutgers University in 2014. She spent a year teaching in the United Kingdom, specifically Northern Ireland where she taught a class of Primary 5 students. In 2017, Dr. Benedict was hired at Centenary and contributed greatly to the Education and Humanities Department, stepping into a leadership position and being a valuable member of the Department.

Department Chair Dr. Marianne Pratschler said, "There is a poem by Carol Merkel titled 'Afterglow.' It makes me think of Dr. Benedict. She leaves behind such happy memories. She has touched so many lives softly and gently over her years as a teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend. She will be dearly missed."

Current Centenary student Melanie Flynn said about Dr. Benedict, "Dr. Benedict had an everlasting impact on all her students. I was ever so lucky to have her as my fourth-grade teacher and then my mentor and professor so many years later when I came to Centenary. She always vowed to be a champion for children and to never write with a red pen. I am so lucky to continue her legacy of being a champion for children when I begin my career. I miss her terribly--she will always be my guiding light." Melanie was also the recipient of the Cathleen Benedict Memorial Scholarship.

Dr. Benedict's legacy will continue to live on through her students. She was an inspiration for educators and will be missed incredibly.

Spring 2022 Clinical Interns

The Education and Humanities Department congratulates the following graduates for completing their Education degree this Spring. We wish them all the best of luck and look forward to hearing about their careers!

Juliana Alvarado Vega
Mariana Arango Guzman
Caitlin Bailey
Jocelyn Barmore
Catherine Budzilovich
Ryan Collins
Tricia Degeorge
Emily DePalma
Hailey Erickson
Andrea Fattorusso
Lauren Fernicola
Abigail Gooding
Alexis Hacker
Hailey Hobson
Kaleigh Iavarone
Amirah Ibrahim
Cassidy Jameson
Lindsey Kazar
Sarah Lieback
Sarah Martowicz
Christopher Muce
Joselyn Navarro
Nikolas Polizos
Lilian Radel
Megan Rafferty
Olivia Scharnikow
Rachel Scimeca
Amanda Tietjen
Krystal Van Wageninge
Jenna Mae Witt
Taylor Wright

Stories from the Classroom

One Good Thing

By Tricia DeGeorge

Clinical Intern teaching Kindergarten at Mountain Villa School in Allamuchy



On my first day of student teaching in Kindergarten, my co-op gave me some words of advice. She told me, “There will be good days and bad days with the students. The good days, of course, are great, but on the bad days, I want you to think of one good thing that happened that day. You may struggle to come up with that one good

thing but think of it before you leave.”

There was a particular day I recall, where the students were not on task. They were not paying attention, not listening, and they were talking out of turn. I was feeling frustrated and a bit defeated. Then, I read the class a story. It was the second day in a week-long theme of “It’s okay to be different.” When I finished the story, I began asking the students questions. One little boy raised his hand (instead of speaking out of turn for which I was grateful) and said, “It’s just like Ferdinand from yesterday. He was different too.” I was so proud that this student made that text-to-text connection. I immediately looked at my co-op. She nodded her head and said, “There’s your one thing.”

My co-op and I reflected on that moment before we left the classroom that day. We talked about how amazing it was that such a young child was able to make that connection. He understood the meaning behind the story we read today and was able to realize that the story from yesterday had the same theme! It was the one redeeming thing in a not-so-good day, and it seemed to make it all okay. I left that day feeling good about teaching.

I now understand why she had given me this advice on the first day. Much like life in general, it is inevitable that there will be bad days while teaching. Days where nothing seems to go as you planned, but if you can find that one thing, that one shining moment to reflect upon, it somehow magically erases the rest of it. Thanks to this advice, I’ve left school every day with a positive attitude.

The Impact of Graduate Studies in Education

By Rachel Hadley

Special Education Teacher, Bridgewater Raritan School District

I decided to enroll in the Master of Education in Literacy Instruction Program because I was interested in learning how to implement research-based best practices in literacy instruction throughout the various grades that I teach. I also wanted to expand my knowledge of curriculum design and differentiated instruction, so the program seemed like a perfect match for my aspirations.



While in the program, I have learned about a variety of research-based best practices within the literacy framework, such as using authentic literature for read alouds, strategies to enhance students’ reading comprehension, multisensory language instruction, the importance of motivating students through authentic activities, standards implementation, grouping strategies, assessment techniques, curriculum development, and more.

I use these practices daily to benefit NJ’s students by teaching in an in-class resource setting where all (general education and special education) students are taught through small groups in all subjects. When teaching the literacy block, students receive small group instruction for guided reading, phonics, and writing. These small groups are developed based on the students’ current levels, which are flexible and identified by a variety of assessments I use. I meet the needs of these diverse learners through authentic activities that are engaging. The students are motivated to learn through their success. I love to see the students read, write, laugh, sing, and be engaged in their own learning.

I graduate in May 2022 with my Master of Education in Literacy Instruction, Reading Specialist Certification, and NJ Supervisor Licensure. I aspire to couple these new certifications with my current work in special education and hope to become a Special Education Supervisor in my home district. I am looking forward to continuing my education further.

Stories from the Classroom

My Student Teaching Experience!

By Lauren Fericola '22

Clinical Internship at Benedict A. Cucinella Elementary School in Long Valley



For my student teaching placement, I was given the opportunity to go and spend my senior year in the Preschool Disabled classroom at Benedict A. Cucinella Elementary School. This classroom is split up into a morning and afternoon class but totals thirteen students when put together. Speech and Occupational Therapy services are infused in this classroom, and then students who qualify for Physical Therapy leave the classroom twice a week. There is an ABA therapist, paraprofessional, and then of course the main teacher. Being a part of this classroom has taught me and shown me how to be a successful educator. I have learned how to handle certain situations, accommodate lessons for certain students, and saw different approaches that I could use moving forward in my career as a teacher. The special education teacher, Amanda Miranda, and the Speech Pathologist, Kellianne Zuzero, are exceptional role models for the teaching profession. From day one of being in their classroom, I have felt welcomed and a part of their preschool class.

A lesson that I have enjoyed teaching is the “letter of the week.” I use a poster that on one side is the letter in upper-and lower-case form, and then the other side has several pictures of objects that start with that letter. I have each student come up and trace their finger on the letter and practice identifying it and pronouncing the sound it makes. Then, I flip it over and have each student come up and point to identify something they see on the poster. After our poster, I bring out the “magic box” where I have them close

their eyes while I put manipulatives inside. One by one each student will come up and stick their hand in the box to pull an object out. The student will identify what it is and then practice forming a sentence by saying “I found a___.” To end that lesson, we listen to a song about that letter. We repeat this process for every letter of the week.

Being in the classroom has taught me so much about the teaching profession and just how much every day is different in its own fun and exciting way. The students that I have worked with this past year are so smart and were a great class to be a part of. They looked at me as their main teacher, and it was clear that they truly enjoyed the time we spent together. I attended parent meetings and IEP meetings every Friday, which helped me learn more about what needs to be done and said during those meetings.

One of my favorite memories from this school year was the Halloween celebration and parade. All of us teachers dressed up as different holidays, and the kids were all something different. We then participated in the parade with the rest of the school. It was a lot of fun being able to see the kids so excited! I am honored and fortunate enough to have applied and received the Preschool Intergraded teaching position at Cucinella Elementary school for the next coming school year. I am very excited and grateful for the opportunities that Cucinella and Centenary have given me!



Centenarians for Others

By Izabelle Weisman

The Education honor society, Kappa Delta Epsilon (KDE), worked to embellish the Centenary campus throughout the 2021-2022 academic school year. During the fall and spring semesters, numerous members of KDE decorated the bulletin boards in Brotherton Hall and other areas on campus to enhance the aesthetic appeal within the building, leading to increased morale and pride throughout the campus. KDE President, Andrea Fattorusso, explained in an interview that the idea was initially discussed with professors of education Dr. Pratschler and Professor McCoy and was well-received by faculty, staff, and KDE members alike. Andrea likewise added that further benefits of the bulletin board decorating were “a great practice” for KDE members in preparation for their soon-approaching careers as educators.

High praises ensued from the Centenary faculty and staff after the completion of the boards, as many of their offices reside in the Brotherton building. The future teachers generated an overall increase in positivity on campus through the creativity expressed in their unique and purposeful designs.



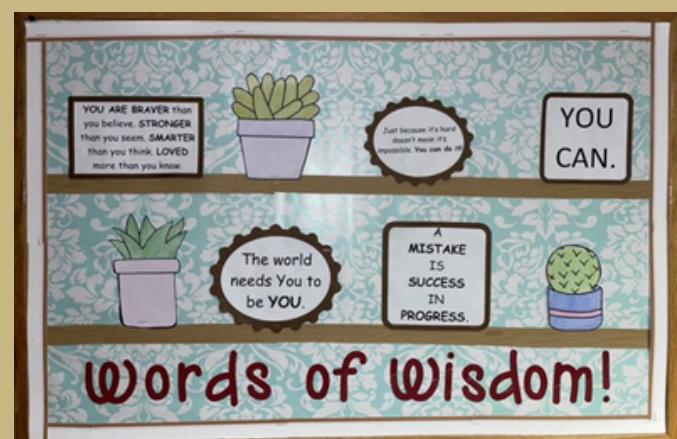
Bulletin Board by Kaycee Cerni



Bulletin Board by Danielle Yawger



Bulletin Board by Amanda Tietjen



Bulletin Board by Andrea Fattorusso

Alumni Spotlight



Spring 2022 Alumni Spotlight: Professor Katherine Chrusz By Andrew Voorhees

This semester's Alumni Spotlight is on Centenary's very own Professor Katherine Chrusz. Professor Chrusz first attended Centenary University back in the year 1987 as a student in the college's preschool program--a time that she reflects fondly on, remembering "some of the activities that I engaged in and playing on the slide on campus."

Professor Chrusz eventually returned to Centenary in 2008 and went on to receive her M.A. in Special Education and is currently in the dissertation phase of Centenary's doctoral program for Educational Leadership. When asked what her favorite aspect of the Centenary Campus was, she replied with two different answers. In the physical sense, her favorite aspect of Centenary is "how it has changed over the years," expressing how "it is incredible to see the new buildings that have been erected and how areas have been converted to best meet the needs of the students and the community." However, in a more spiritual sense, her favorite aspect of the Centenary Campus would have to be the people, stating that "each person is recognized as an individual, and all parties are committed to achieving success. The personalized attention that the students

receive and the level of dedication from the faculty and staff are some of the attributes that make the university so special."

When I asked her why she decided to return to Centenary to become a professor, Professor Chrusz reflected on how much of her success she owes to the university, stating, "throughout my journey as a student, each professor that I had was a wealth of knowledge, extremely patient, and unbelievably supportive. Every course that I took served a purpose, and I was able to apply much of what I had learned into practice." She also said, "I knew that it had come time for me to pay it forward."

In the final part of our interview, Professor Chrusz left us with some very wise words of advice, that being to "try your best and communicate with your professors" and that "your success is our success."



By Izabelle Weisman

Article: "3 Ways Teachers Can Reduce Their Stress Level" by Rachel Fuhrman

Video: "The Mindset of a Champion" by Carson Byblow

Quote: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." -Nelson Mandela

Awards

Robert Battistini

United Methodist Church Exemplary Teacher of the Year Award

Dr. Battistini, associate professor of English, Chair of Humanities, and Director of the General Education, earned this award for his contributions to Centenary's academic programs and positive and meaningful impact on students. Dr. Battistini engages his students in his classroom and shows genuine care for the success of all Centenary students.

January O'Neill

Joel Kortb Adjunct Teacher of the Year Award

In her first year as an Education adjunct, January O'Neill made a strong impact on her students, building positive relationships and offering them guidance as they worked toward their Education degrees.

Hailey Hobson

Centenary University Red Knot Award

As the University's transfer student with the highest grade point average, Hailey was honored with this prestigious award. Hailey earned her Bachelor of Arts in Education, Elementary K-6 certification, and Teacher of Students with Disabilities endorsement. Hailey is an accomplished scholar who transfers her hard work into her classroom practice. She is professional and caring as both a college student and classroom teacher.

Tricia DeGeorge and Loriann Coronado

Outstanding Academic Achievement Award

This award recognizes graduates who show outstanding professional and intellectual growth, a passion and commitment to the teaching profession, and involvement and support of the Centenary University Education and Humanities Department. Tricia is a post-baccalaureate student earning her Elementary K-6 certification and Teacher of Students with Disabilities endorsement. Loriann is graduating Centenary with her Bachelor of Arts in Education, Elementary K-6 certification, and Teacher of Students with Disabilities endorsement. Both Tricia and Loriann have consistently impressed the faculty in the Education and Humanities Department with their passion and dedication.

Marisa Wilson

Alyce Hunter Outstanding Dissertation Award

Marisa Wilson's dissertation is titled Leveraging Science Teacher Identity for the Recruitment of Future Science Teachers. Dr. Wilson is the Supervisor of Science for the Sparta Township School District.

Kaycee Cerni

Doris Moore Scholarship

This award is made possible by the generous support of Dr. Sandra Moore and her brother, Peter Moore, in memory of their mother, Doris L. Moore. Ms. Moore was an elementary art teacher who upheld the highest standards for herself and her students. The scholarship is awarded to a rising Junior or Senior with at least a 3.00 cumulative GPA in an Education major who exemplifies dedication to education and students. Kaycee is working toward earning her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, K-6 teaching certification, and Teacher of Students with Disabilities endorsement. She will be entering student teaching in the Fall of 2022.

New Jersey Distinguished Clinical Intern Nominees

This award is presented jointly by the New Jersey Department of Education and the New Jersey Association of Colleges for Teacher Preparation to publicly recognize the top graduates of New Jersey's teacher preparation programs and their highly dedicated cooperating teachers. The award ceremony will be held virtually in June. At this ceremony, 15 students will be named as NJ Distinguished Clinical Interns. Centenary's nominees are:

Lauren Fericola: Preschool

Cooperating Teacher: Amanda Miranda
Benedict A Cucinella School, Long Valley, NJ

Katherine Murawski: Third Grade

Cooperating Teachers: Eileen Freda & Jennifer Peters
Washington Memorial School, Washington Borough, NJ

Megan Rafferty: Third Grade

Cooperating Teachers: Devon Marques & Lauren Pedersen
Sandshore Elementary School, Budd Lake, NJ

Awards

Melanie Flynn

The Cathleen Benedict Memorial Scholarship

This award was presented in honor of Dr. Cathleen Benedict to help a future teacher prepare his or her classroom. Melanie is a post-baccalaureate student in Early Childhood Education and earning her Teacher of Students with Disabilities endorsement.

HUMANITIES AWARDS

Andréa Massimo

English Outstanding Achievement 3rd or 4th year

In just two years at Centenary, Andréa has demonstrated a rare level of intellectual leadership among her peers. She demonstrates in every course how to make head and heart coalesce in meaningful engagement with culture.

Sofia Senesie

English Outstanding Achievement 1st or 2nd year

Sofia is model of energy and enthusiasm for Humanities students: she's a Writing Collaboratory tutor, works on Prism, and...is about to start coaching her high school flag team! She has impressed the faculty with both her creative and critical work, and we look forward to two more great years with her.

Nicolas Cavallone

History Outstanding Achievement 3rd or 4th year

Nicolas Cavallone is a self-described paratrooper lover, amateur writer, and someone who was probably born in the wrong century. His historical knowledge is encyclopedic in breadth, and in class he has often been called on to fact check the professors.

John Aller

History Outstanding Achievement 3rd or 4th year

John Aller found his passion for history by traveling to over half of United States to see many historical sites as well as researching some of his hometown's local history. John's analytical mind kept him a couple steps ahead of the class in terms of understanding the importance of a historical moment and contemplating connections to other issues and events from the past.

Jake Lombardo, Carolyn Stoner, & Izabelle Weisman

Harry Strickhausen Memorial Scholarship

This award is for juniors who have impressed their professors with their class leadership, the excellence of their course work, and their overall promise. Jake, Carolyn, and Izabelle have made notable contributions in their courses and consistently produce high-quality work. All three award recipients are working toward earning their Secondary English NJ Teaching Certification. They are a high-achieving students, strong writers, and analytical thinkers.

DEFENSIVE CORNER

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

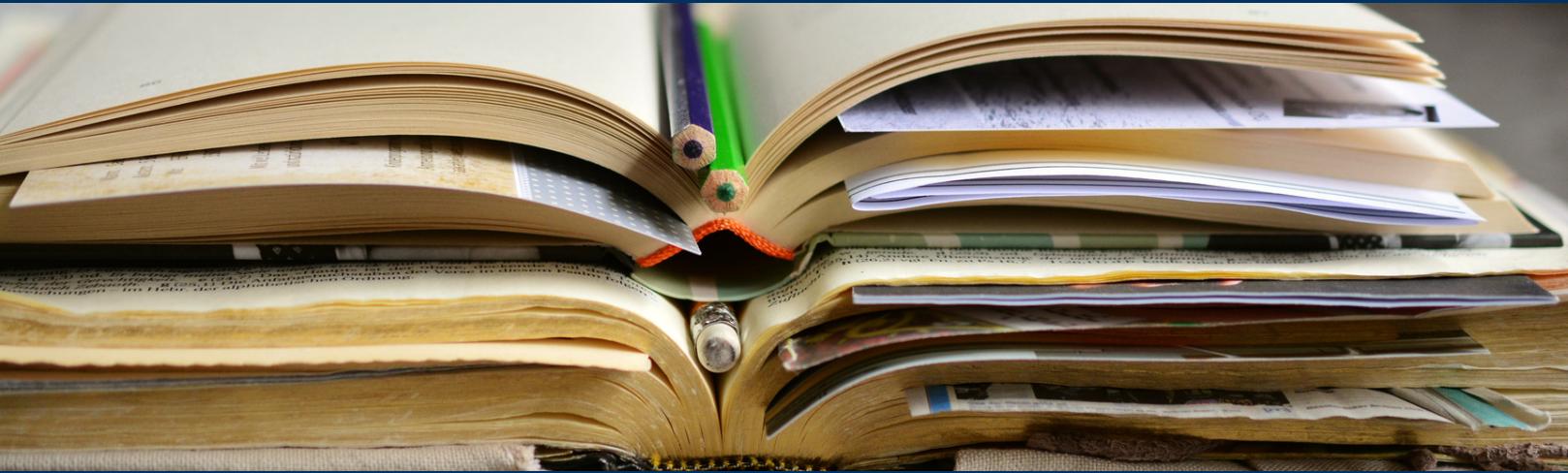
Matthew Beck: *The Economic Impact of Regionalization in a Rural New Jersey School District*

Christopher Marangon: *Principal Longevity: A Study of the Relationship Between Original Instructional Certification, Self-Reported Leadership Style and Longevity*

David Perricone: *Academic Engagement: Students' and Employers' Perceptions of Workplace Preparation and Skills Building Through Experiential Learning in a Sports Management Curriculum*

Jaime Walker: *New Jersey School Teachers' Perceptions of Social Emotional Learning*

Marisa Wilson: *Leveraging Science Teacher Identity for the Recruitment of Future Science Teachers*



KDE Induction Ceremony

By Izabelle Weisman

Education honor society, Kappa Delta Epsilon (KDE), held its induction ceremony on April 24, 2022. Family and friends joined in on the celebration as the fraternity inducted new members of the Gamma Zeta chapter while likewise recognizing the inductees from the previous year's virtual ceremony. New officers of the chapter were also inducted, including Natalie Kelson elected President, Zachary Orr as Vice President, Shelby Garno as Secretary, and Izabelle Weisman as Parliamentarian.

This particular ceremony, organized by KDE advisor Professor Lexis McCoy, held increased significance as it issued the return of in-person inductions since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, exhibiting an overall sense of community and togetherness in celebrating the achievements of the future teachers.

Additional highlights of the ceremony included Centenary's President Dr. Bruce Murphy delivering the opening remarks, graduating members of the chapter receiving their honor cords, and the presentation of the Doris L. Moore Scholarship, awarded to KDE member Kaycee Cerni.

At the end of the celebration, the group held a moment of silence in remembrance of professor and dear friend, Dr. Cathleen Benedict, who was dedicated to guiding and supporting the next generation of teachers.

Altogether, the Kappa Delta Epsilon induction ceremony was a joyous and momentous celebration for all, not only the inductees and returning members, but likewise for their professors, friends, and family in attendance.

