

The
YELLOW BRICK
ROAD of
EDUCATION

BY RODNEY H. CLARKEN

The story *The Wizard of Oz* provides an archetype for helping us find the brains, heart and courage we need to be successful teachers and learners. As I look back on my life and my forty years in education, I find my story, and the story of many of the teachers, teacher educators, teacher candidates and educational leaders I have worked with can be told or understood as our own journeys to Oz and finding our way home. Each of the characters—Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, the Lion and the Wizard—represent aspects of our selves that need to be developed in order for us to become truly whole as individuals and teachers.

This search for a brain (knowing and truth), a heart (caring and love) and courage (willing and justice) is a journey down the yellow brick road to becoming a teacher. As we develop these capacities, we can more effectively share them with others and help others develop them in themselves. Until teachers find their authentic voices, they will be of limited success in educating others. We do not actually give our students brains, heart and courage, rather we teach, encourage and provide opportunities to help them to realize and develop these capacities in themselves.

Education is a fundamental human right. It is the cause of the progress of individuals and nations. To the extent that our minds, hearts and wills allow, education should help us construct meaningful and productive lives. However, education alone cannot provide opportunities for all to realize their gifts and talents and serve others. All segments of society must work together to achieve this noble purpose.

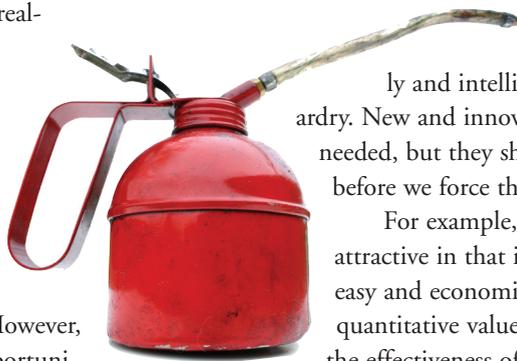
Education has, can and will continue to reform. Educational institutions and culture have to adapt to changing conditions, and right now the world is changing at a tornadic pace.

Unfortunately, education and teachers are being unfairly blamed for many of society's problems by reformers who wish to overhaul the American education system. Many of these reformers have limited knowledge or experience in teaching or education. Some among the

policy makers, critics in the media and business community suppose their expertise or success in politics, finding fault or making money equips them to also be experts and successful in educational reform as well. However, many of their proposals are not supported by the evidence from research studies or from scholars in the field.

Further, their business models that seek to quantify and put a price on the intricate, complex and interrelated activities of education are harmfully reductive, skewed and faulty. They threaten to further diminish and devalue education and their reform proposals work against what they claim to be supporting. The rhetoric and assumptions upon which most of educational reform claims are made subvert the best interests of education.

The Wizard of Oz might represent those reformers and media that pretend to have the answers and hide behind the curtains of half-truths while offering displays of power along with fake diplomas in place of true knowledge, clocks for hearts rather than authentic care and love, and worthless medals for courage while they violate basic human rights.



Education and teachers are being unfairly blamed for many of society's problems by reformers who wish to overhaul the American education system.

For reforms to be effective, they should be based on sound facts and principles systematically and intelligently applied, not rhetorical wizardry. New and innovative ideas in education are truly needed, but they should be tested for effectiveness before we force them into policy and onto practice.

For example, test-based accountability is attractive in that it promises an objective, accurate, easy and economical way to measure and assigns a quantitative value to the learning of students and the effectiveness of teachers and schools. However, when these tests are not a fair or accurate indication of the quality or outcome sought, they are deceptive, unfair and demoralizing.

Evaluating education and teachers fairly, clearly and honestly is a complex, difficult, expensive and time-consuming endeavor. Student test scores are an unstable and unreliable measure of teachers. When high stakes tests are used to reward or punish, the process becomes vulnerable to misuses and abuses, such as teaching to the tests, teaching test-taking strategies, neglecting what is not tested and cheating. The result will be that test scores will rise while learning suffers.

Another misguided reform is pay-for-performance. It may work for people whose primary motivations are monetary or for those who do not need to work together in cooperation and collaboration to achieve a long-term goal, whose sole aim is to benefit others, as teaching does. For teachers who need to be motivated by higher ideals of truth, service and justice to be truly effective, such materialistic and selfish motives are counter-productive.

Pay teachers a respectable wage and accord them the respect, honor and status they deserve. This will attract the best and brightest in our society to become teachers and keep them in classrooms. Committed teachers will do their best and will not need to be manipulated or cajoled by extra pay to do their jobs. Find ways to fairly evaluate and compensate their work, but realize teaching is an extraordinarily complex and challenging job.

When approaches used to determine accountability and apply incentives are faulty, decisions based on them can be destructive.

People tend to be internally motivated by challenge and accomplishment. The key to fostering motivation is to encourage internal and autonomous striving and use external rewards with wisdom. Tests can be motivating

when they are used to provide relevant information or feedback, but are demotivating when they are controlling or too difficult. If teachers are pushed to sacrifice the best interests of their students and communities for such short-term and shortsighted aims as high stakes standardized test scores, merit pay or other incentives, we begin losing the soul of education.

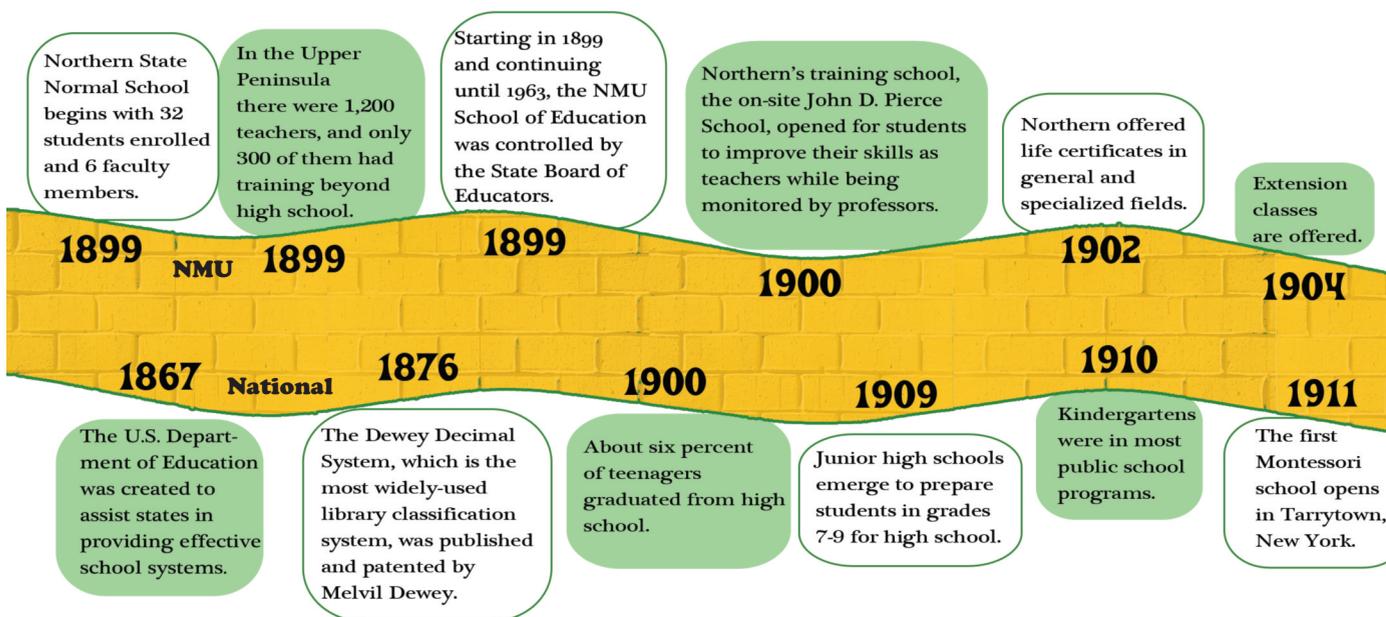
Teachers help students and classes become excited about learning, progress toward their goals and uncover more of their true natures and noble selves. Serving in the awakening and unfolding of another's possibilities is one of the great rewards of teaching.

Often the fruits of a good teacher's labor do not become apparent until many years later. These fruits are not measured by tests, grades or policies. We value the teachers who most positively changed or influenced our lives, who cared, who saw our potential and encouraged us to become more, who opened our minds, illumined our hearts and quickened our wills.

In truth, education starts long before a child starts school. If we as a society are sincere about optimizing learning and improving educational outcomes, the greatest benefit with the least cost we can have on develop-



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ment, including the brain, the vital organ for learning, is to ensure healthy growth in the womb and the years before kindergarten. No amount of intervention or education in school can compensate for failure to develop properly in the womb and before school.

We live in a society that is not doing enough to encourage the proper physical, mental, emotional, moral and spiritual development of its young. If we really wish to turn things around, that is where we need to focus our attention: Give young children a good foundation upon which to build their futures.

May we all work for the minds, hearts and souls of all children, to educate and reform education according to



the highest principles of truth, love and justice. This is the home for which we all long. ■

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Note: Rodney Clarken is associate dean of teacher education, director of the School of Education and professor at Northern Michigan University. He started his career as an intern

counselor in the White Earth Indian Project, then was part of the Wisconsin Indian Teacher Corps and later an elementary, secondary and post-secondary teacher in Tanzania. In his 38 years in education, he has taught almost every grade level, from 1st grade to the doctoral level in rural, urban, public, private and international schools. In higher education, he has taught and worked in a Jesuit university in Detroit, a historically black land-grant university in the Virgin

Islands, teacher colleges in Botswana and China and an international university in Switzerland. He came to NMU in 1989. This article is taken from excerpts of a book he is writing on education.



The longest-serving chair of the Education Department, Gilbert Brown, conducted a study that found that Northern had helped to improve education in area rural schools and many schools had instituted vocational training with Northern's help.

A survey was released that tried to understand what teachers needed from a normal school. It was the first of its kind in the country.

Northern was closed for several weeks as a result of Spanish influenza, which had been carried back to the U.S. during World War I.

Northern attracted a lot of nuns from Wisconsin, Indiana and the Upper Peninsula who wished to earn teaching certificates and, in some cases, bachelor's degrees.

Northern stopped offering two-year teaching training programs.

1913-1916

1914

1918

1920s

1933

1919

Each state has a law that provides funds for transporting children to school.

1925

The Tennessee vs. John Scopes trial takes place. High school biology teacher John Scopes is convicted of teaching evolution.

1926

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is administered for the first time. It is based on the Army Alpha test.

1938

The ballpoint pen is patented.

1946

Congress approved the National School Lunch Act requiring schools to provide lunch for students.

1950

Middle schools emerge for grades 6-8 to meet the needs of preadolescents.

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

A perspective on public schools



Mary Brayak '84 MAE, Superintendent, principal and director of student services of Mid-Peninsula School District

Schools are forced to find ways to do more with less now—that's the expectation. It's certainly a challenging situation. Teachers, administrators and even students are being put under intense scrutiny, which I think is unfair. People who get into this profession generally want the best for their

students. But these teachers and administrators are having to pick up more and more and more to fill voids. For instance, we have lost our art program to budget cuts, teachers are stepping in and teaching art. Others are helping with physical education.

The end result of the ongoing budget situation and the feeling that educators are continually under a spotlight is that we're going to start to lose good teachers. There is nothing wrong with the state and the community wanting the best teachers and expecting improvement, but you need to give the teachers the tools and resources to be the best and to be able to continually improve.

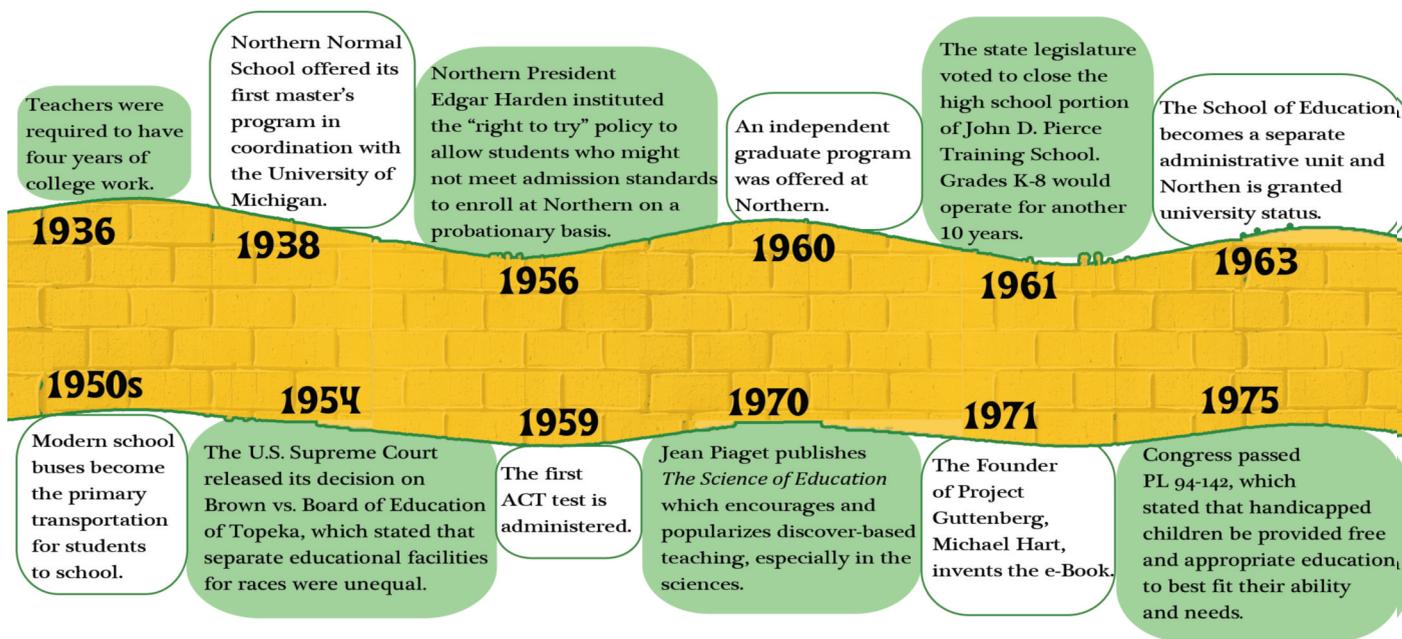
Today, when an educator says we need more resources, legislators always assume that means money for salaries or benefits, but I'm struggling to find a way to buy up-to-date textbooks. More resources means providing the tools that enable teachers to

teach well.

If you look for a silver lining for the situation of what's happening to our local schools today, it's that it has forced teachers,



administrations, business leaders and parents to come together. In areas like the Upper Peninsula, the local school is not only the education center of the community, but it's the gathering point, the community center—the place where everybody has common ground. These tough times have caused people to come together to say, "This school is important to us and we need to save it," and that's caused us to work together to figure out what has to be done and even how to make some things better.



**Mike Maino '73 BS,
Superintendent of Gwinn Area
Schools**

The budget issues are probably the most serious thing facing schools today. In Michigan, it's not a situation of overspending, but simply one of not having enough resources. We are at a point now where we've cut and cut and cut and we're now cutting nearly every extra program that we have. We have cut in a way that does not hurt the core programs, but there is not much left to cut without impacting the core. We're at the mercy of the state legislators to find a way to provide schools more revenue so they can do what they are expected and being held accountable to do.

Our number one issue beyond the budget is parental involvement. When a student starts failing or not showing up for class, it's very difficult to get the parents involved to help work on the problems and improve them.

Still, we've done a lot of great things in our school district, things to be really proud of. We have made

great advances in technology. We have the latest computers and software. This fall we're implementing a program similar to Northern's technology program and we're handing out the first 200 netbooks to our 7th and 8th graders. They will no longer get textbooks (that cost \$100, \$200 each); we'll no longer have computer labs. In four years, all of our 7th through 12th grade students will have this technology.

"Our number one issue beyond the budget is parental involvement."

Some people are saying that the U.S. education system is broken, but I don't agree. Here, we educate all students. In other countries, many portions of the school-age population don't go to school. Countries around the globe still want to send their young people to the U.S. to receive a college education. Here in Gwinn, we have a Chinese student in our district this year whose parents are paying something like \$8,000 a year to have their child educated here, in



America, rather than in China. So, we must be doing something right.

Consolidating resources is definitely being emphasized and it should be. There is room to consolidate services among school districts. The way we operate today on the business side of things will change.

Michigan has more public school districts than any other state. That means there will be some consolidation of schools in the future, but even more likely is the consolidation of services. Unfortunately, that means some more local people losing jobs. The area superintendents meet regularly and we're talking about what we can try to consolidate to be more cost efficient, and in some cases, we are working on actual plans for service consolidation. ■

1963-1966 Wilbert Berg was head of the School of Education, and under him the school received its first accreditation and developed graduate programs.

1966-1978 Elmer Schacht was head of the School of Education and increased the size of the faculty.

1970s The state provided the Native American Tuition Waiver to one-quarter Native Americans who are members of federally recognized tribes.

1990's Northern chartered three schools: Nah Tah Wahsh Public School Academy, Bahweting Anishnabe Academy, and North Star Academy. More charter schools followed.

1981 *Teach Your Own: A Hopeful Path for Education* by John Holt is published and fuels the homeschooling movement.

1994 Whiteboards begin to replace blackboards in classrooms.

1999 The shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., by two students leaves 15 dead and 23 wounded.

2001 The No Child Left Behind Act is approved by Congress, which requires student testing, places emphasis on student performance and penalizes schools that do not make certain progress toward meeting goals.

2010 The state of the economy results in layoffs in schools across the country as most states face budget deficits and make cuts in education.

2011 Northern Michigan University's School of Education offers many degrees, including an educational specialist degree, a master's degree, bachelor degree majors and minors, certifications, and professional and personal development programs.

Lucy Hough and Rachel Krohn

Nurturing future teachers

Two Michigan Teachers of the Year continue to inspire

By Kristi Evans



Sue Szczepanski

Northern education students are benefiting from the highly qualified expertise of two former Michigan Teachers of the Year. After retiring from their jobs with Marquette Area Public Schools (MAPS) in 2002, both **Sharon Green '71 BME, '80 MME** and **Sue Szczepanski '81 MAE** joined the NMU faculty and found a renewed professional purpose: training future teachers to become—like them—effective and inspirational leaders in the classroom.

The women made Marquette the first district to boast back-to-back recipients of the state's top teaching award. Green, who taught choral music and guitar at Graveraet Middle

"We need to step back and realize kids are not cars on an assembly line. They're human beings of all different levels, strengths and challenges."

School, won it in 1995-96. She was also the first honoree from the Upper Peninsula, a fact that became glaringly obvious to her at the state recognition ceremony. When presented with the traditional wooden clock carved in the shape of Michigan, Green stood in disbelief, staring at an

embarrassing design flaw. The award depicted only the Lower Peninsula; the Upper Peninsula was missing.

"Despite that oversight, the whole experience was just wonderful," she says. "I was able to network with other state teachers of the year and attend Space Camp with them in Huntsville, Ala. We also attended meetings with the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C., and I got to meet President Clinton and Secretary of Education Richard Riley. It was a thrill to be honored."

Szczepanski won the following year while teaching 2nd grade at Whitman Elementary School, which was later shut down and became an NMU facility that houses the School of Education. During an interview in her office, she addressed the irony of working in the same building for a different employer and in a different capacity. But she credits the teaching award for creating new opportunities.

"It was life-changing in many ways," she says. "I feel it was meant to be that I'm coming full circle and contributing to the profession by nurturing future teachers. I'm still in a classroom every day, only now it is with my methods and reading classes. My students are all field-based. MAPS is very welcoming. The district teachers help us by modeling effective instruction, and they benefit from our students' help in the classroom."

As an elementary teacher in grades 1-5, Szczepanski spent 18 years at Silver Creek School and the final 12 years at Whitman. After the

schools closed due to consolidation, she was hired by NMU's School of Education.

Green had spent 31 years in middle school education, but opted out with an approaching reconfiguration that would guarantee her a teaching job, but not necessarily in choral music. "I never would have left otherwise because I still loved it. When I did retire, I handed in my keys and bawled for a week straight. My heart seemed empty, sort of like the feeling after a death in the family. I didn't know if I could handle it or how I would fill that void."

A year later, an adjunct instructor opening in the music department brought Green to Northern. She is now in her sixth year of full-time teaching. Her courses include music

schools hovers outside the high-pressure fray of test scores and requirements. "The arts may not be necessary, but they do encourage you to be more human." Unfortunately, they are among the first casualties when districts cut budgets, as demonstrated in nearby Ishpeming, where she says visual arts are not being offered in the curriculum this year.

"Everyone's looking for the magic silver bullet to solve the problems in education," says Green.

"The arts may not be necessary, but they do encourage you to be more human."



Sharon Green

and society, music for elementary teachers, voice, guitar and methods. She also directs the Lake Effect Show Choir, whose mix of vocals and choreography allows Green to continue her forte of staging themed concerts. This year's theme is "Green and Gold." The choir performs 10-12 times per year for various events and groups.

Green says music in public

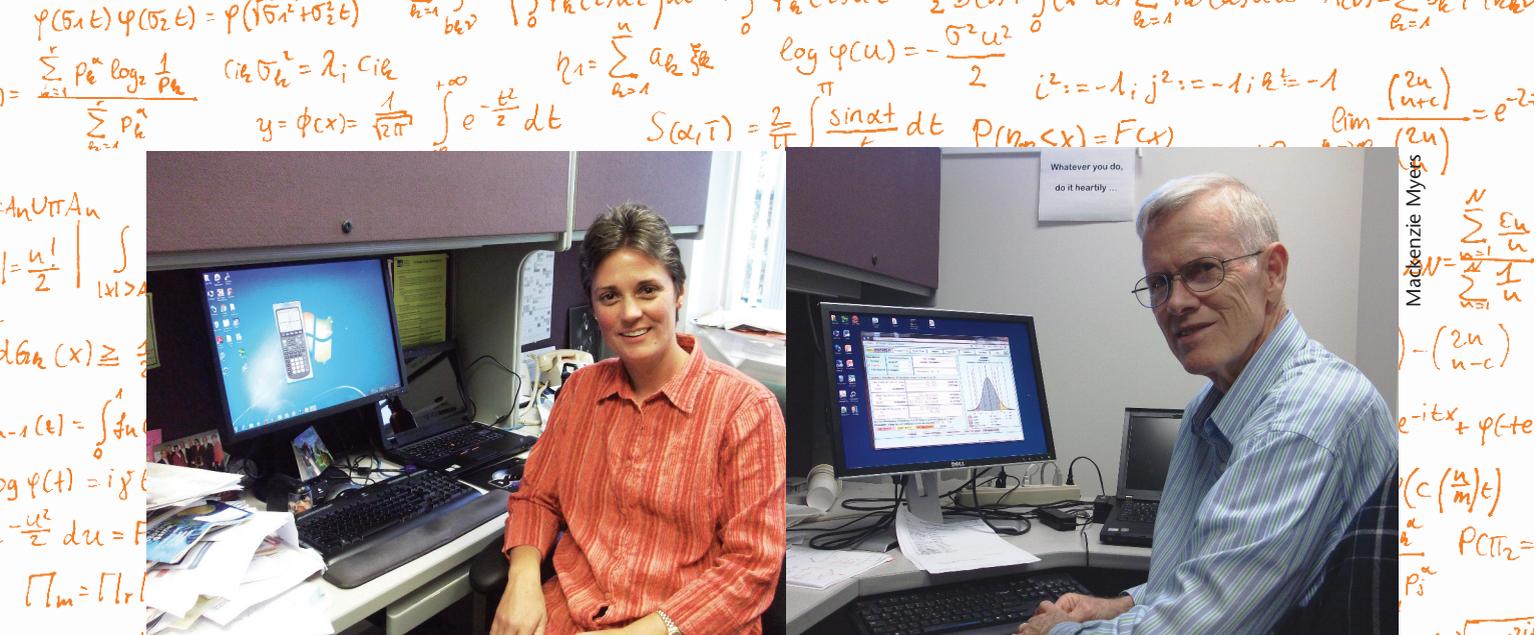
"There simply isn't one. The cookie-cutter approach of a detailed required curriculum for all often does not address the strengths, talents, needs and learning styles of individual students. It is important to provide a solid education in core subjects. It is equally important that students have the opportunity to learn and excel in areas that match their interests and talents."

When asked for her views on the state of education today, Szczepanski said, "Funding is the big issue. That's what drives the bus. Accountability is so big it's almost becoming a monster. Teachers need to be politically aware of what policymakers are deciding and take an active stand on what's important to children. I didn't think about politics when I was teaching, but it's critical now. We need to step back and realize kids are not cars on an assembly line. They're human beings of all different levels, strengths and challenges."

Both faculty members have followed a similar cycle. They attended Northern as students, taught in the public schools while also supervising NMU student teachers and returned to their alma mater to play a role in preparing others pursuing the same career.

"I always said that one day I hope to teach teachers," says Green. "It's a natural progression. I continually seek out ways to become a better and more effective teacher. I attend two or more conferences every summer because professional development is a must. It is the highest privilege to teach and have the opportunity to make a difference in students' lives."

Szczepanski adds, "Teachers hold the future and have the power to guide children down the path to success. You get a positive feeling building a sense of community where children feel safe and inspired to learn. It's like a calling, not a job. You live it 24/7, but it's the most rewarding profession on earth. I love hearing from former NMU students who are teaching and tell me how they're implementing things they learned here. Or from principals who request that we continue to send grads their way. All of that serves as a great testament to the strength of our program and I feel privileged to be part of it." ■



Mackenzie Myers



New Math

Using technology to increase understanding

By Mackenzie Myers

Ironically, when Northern Michigan University professors Ken Culp and Carol Bell each stepped into the post-college world, they were in places far removed from education. They were business professionals. Culp wrote his own software and sold it to dental companies, after working 11 years for Texas Instruments. Bell was a programmer at IBM for three years.

However, like many career journeys, their initial plans changed. “I really didn’t like working in industry,” Bell says. “I thought about teaching. When I worked for IBM in Rochester, Minnesota, I actually had the opportunity to teach a class at the local community college.” Today she’s a mathematics professor at Northern. Culp decided to give teaching a try as well. “At age 55, I discovered I have a passion for teaching. There’s nothing I’d rather be doing and they’re paying me to have fun,” he says. Culp teaches computer science.

But the professors didn’t completely leave their programming backgrounds behind. They took on innovative new projects to help students in the classroom and beyond. Both professors received NMU’s Technology Innovation Award last December for their work.

Bell became involved as a facilitator for “Algebra for All,” which is a state program for high school math teachers originally supported by former Gov. Jennifer Granholm. Demonstrated through training sessions, the program shows educators how to visualize the mathematical functions they are teaching. “As a facilitator for the training sessions,” Bell says, “our workshops are offered through the Seaborg Center. I coach school teachers through class observations and after-school meetings. We get a good view of how they use the technology because

the teachers create their own lessons by using the program and then show us.” Algebra for All is in its third year, and has shown positive results. “There

have been improvements in students taking algebra who have used the program.” In fact, if funding goes through, the Algebra for All program may be extended to the middle-school level. “NMU Stat-Help” is Culp’s award-winning program. “I love to write programs, and I saw that the existing tools were not ideal for teaching,” he says. “So I undertook writing something that I could use as a teaching tool and something the students could use also.” His program allows statistics students to type in data and generate a clear, colorful graph that explains the problem at hand. In addition to providing visual clarifications to homework problems, Stat-Help is widely available to students for other uses. Since it is free, downloadable and on the web, students have access to it any time they want to incorporate a graph on a lab report or project.

“I’ve discovered that in teaching, you can’t just teach the topic at hand,” Culp says. “You have to teach the person how to learn. Therefore, teaching is not just the importation of knowledge but it’s also the importation of excitement and enjoyment of the material, as well as building those learning skills that are necessary to retain it.” Providing innovative solutions to help students succeed in the ever-expanding fields of math and technology is something that excites Bell as well. “I love working with students and seeing them grow in their education. I’ll see my students in higher courses, and seeing how much they’ve grown is amazing. If you’re in education, that’s the kind of thing you want to see.” ■

Equity and opportunity for all

By Rebecca Tavernini '11 MA

A deep belief in the potential of all children” is what drives **Abby Cameron-Standerford '99 BS, '06 MAE** in her role as a middle school special education teacher. “I enjoy teaching kids that just because they may not learn in the same way as another student, it does not mean that they can't learn. I see my job as helping each student, whether he or she is eligible for special education or not, to unlock the path that will allow them to be successful.”

As part of a co-teaching team at Negaunee Middle School, Cameron-Standerford works together with a general education teacher in a shared classroom. She says that model has been very effective, not only in meeting the needs of students with special needs, but also those who are at-risk. “In addition, my relationships with the general education teachers and students makes the idea of special education transparent and helps to humanize the needs of students with special needs.”

That makes having a learning disability, health impairment or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, which affects many of her students, less of a stigma.

An education plan is created for each student by a team of education professionals and the student's family. The student is often involved in its creation as well. The plan identifies a student's strengths and needs and what accommodations are needed in order for the student to learn and progress. Cameron-Standerford has other ways, too, that she customizes



learning on a day-to-day basis. “The two most common ways I support students are simplifying the concept before laddering into the grade-level expectation,” she says, “and identifying and using the student's learning style—whether that be auditory, visual or kinesthetic—in both instruction and assessment processes.”

She adds that she is “working toward those subtle moments when the glimmer of confidence flashes across my student's face or a connec-

tion is made.” As a 7th and 8th grade teacher, she also enjoys seeing the emotional and social development that can occur as her students grow.

She stresses that tailoring education is important to all students, not just those with special needs.

“Teaching and learning is a complex process that requires relationships to be developed, trust established and continual reflection. Our students come to us from such diversity that a one-size-fits-all approach will certainly not contribute to the students' success.”

More local control of educational decisions is also needed, she believes, pointing to the detrimental effects she's seen in her own school of state mandates, budget cuts and government policies made without input from teachers and administrators. “Our nation was built on the ideal of public education as a basis for equity and opportunity. Some of the current 'educational reform' measures will do nothing to perpetuate this,” she adds.

“Teaching cannot be reduced to the actions taken in preparation for a test,” she says. “Teaching is a lifestyle.”

It's a lifestyle shared by her husband, **Chris '97 BS, '08 MS** a K-12 teacher; her mother-in-law, Suzanne, a professor in NMU's School of Education; and her own parents—her mother just retired from teaching after 28 years. “I suppose it is not surprising that the love of learning be passed down to the next generation,” she says. Helping all children succeed runs in her blood. ■



Abby Cameron-Standerford (left) receiving the 2010 Educator of the Year Award from Karin Hansard '76 BS of the Special Education Parent Advisory Committee of the Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service Agency.

When a picture paints a thousand words, imagine what a children's picture book can do

NMU Professor Sandra Imdieke chairs the prestigious Caldecott Award Committee

By Rebecca Tavernini '11 MA



Sandy Imdieke in her office at NMU. *A Wrinkle in Time* was her favorite book while growing up.

Who knew that choosing the best children's picture book would be a lot like the TV show "Survivor"? That's how Caldecott Award Selection Committee Chair Sandra Imdieke describes it.

All of the elements are there: Fifteen people sequestered together in a hotel conference room for nearly two days straight, largely shut off from the outside world. A locked, camouflaged trunk contains dozens of books—the contestants—which are each laid out on the table and remain there until getting voted off. There are impassioned speeches, heated discussions, tender emotions. Then elation, when a lone book remains, and committee members gather together to phone the winning illustrator as day breaks.

"It's an amazing experience," says Imdieke, an NMU education professor who served on the selection committee in 2000 and was appointed chair for the 2013 award, marking Caldecott's 75th year. "It's a major commitment, but a labor of love," she says. After all, she and other committee members read 600 to 700 books in less than a year before the finalists are selected.

The Caldecott Medal is awarded to the artist of the “most distinguished American picture book for children” published the preceding year. As a picture book can be intended for children from birth to age 14 (as defined by the Caldecott Award criteria), they can vary greatly, and include text or not. But overall, they are a visual experience. Most importantly, Imdieke says, “children are the audience.” That is what she keeps foremost in mind as she is swept into the characters, plot, setting, mood and artistic technique emanating from the pages.

While the award goes to a book’s illustrator, the author, if there is a separate one, also benefits, as Caldecott winners—and Caldecott honor books—will likely have increased sales from the resulting prestige and publicity, and will always be in print because libraries will want to stock them. Unlike “Survivor,” there is no monetary award, just a medal and a great distinction.

Before that final conference-room showdown, committee members work independently, evaluating the titles entered by publishers, and anonymously submitting their suggestions to the committee for serious contenders. But they are not working in a bubble by any means. There are informal email and phone discussions among the members. Many are librarians who “field test” books and share their young patrons’ opinions. Imdieke has had her student teachers take books to their classrooms to get feedback and developed a one-credit workshop at NMU on evaluating and sharing books with children. She has blogged to a children’s literature class while she was involved in selecting the Batchelder Award winner for best international children’s book. (She has also served on the Newbery committee for best children’s book of literature. These awards are all sponsored by the Association for Library Service to Children.)

A few weeks before the committee is cloistered, each member nominates his or her top seven titles, with one paragraph as to why it should win, or be honored.

As chair, Imdieke will get to advocate for her choices, but her main role will be to make sure everyone’s voice is heard—in a way that’s respectful. A timer is often used to help the process along. “Although you come to the table with favorites,” she says, “your personal preferences and opinions of the books will change as you listen and learn from each other.”

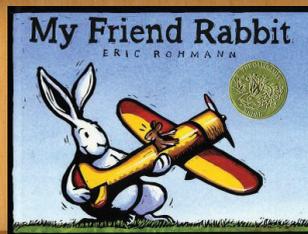
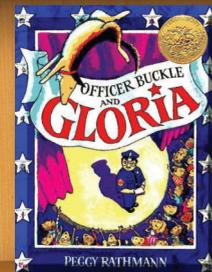
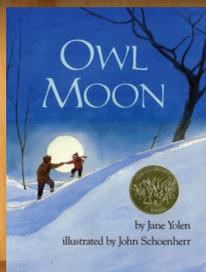
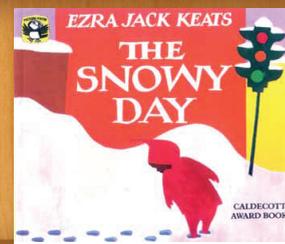
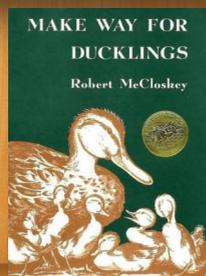
Nevertheless, the winning book must receive eight of 15 votes for 1st place. Imdieke stresses that the Caldecott honor books are often equally worthy of attention. “They had to fight to stay in the running, and may have received many 1st place votes, too.”

Despite the sore eyes, lack of pay (it’s all volunteer)

and tense discussions, Imdieke says, “I cannot even tell you how much fun this is.” At the same time, she adds that the committee members take the process very seriously. “We become experts on the books because we know them so well.”

She’s especially looking forward to that early Monday morning in January 2013, after the weekend’s long deliberations, when the committee will gather around to phone the medal winner and share the life-changing good news. Then let the celebrations begin. ■

Sandy Imdieke’s 7 all-time favorite Caldecott winners



The Lion & the Mouse





By Kristi Evans

A room of one's own

One-room schoolhouses keeping pace with the times

Most of us have little familiarity with one-room schoolhouses beyond museum recreations or nostalgic depictions in movies and Laura Ingalls Wilder novels. These humble places of learning once dotted the rural American landscape. According to *TIME magazine*, there were more than 190,000 in 1918, which represented 70 percent of U.S. public grade schools. But the number dwindled significantly through population shifts, increased mobility/busing and consolidation. Some of the vacant buildings still stand by virtue of historic

preservation efforts, but recent estimates indicate only about 400 one-room schools remain in operation. Michigan's oldest, which opened in 1859 and is led by an NMU alumna, is at the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula.

Diane Trudgeon '78 BS is the principal and only teacher at Copper Harbor School. She had spent childhood summers and holidays in the area with her parents, who both taught downstate, and eagerly applied for an opening at the school a year after graduating from NMU. After three decades in a one-room, multi-age environment, Trudgeon is highly

qualified to address its unique challenges and rewards.

"I enjoy teaching a broad range of material to all the different grades, but it does require a tremendous amount of preparation the night before," she said. "You have to make the necessary copies, which might be six different spelling sheets instead of just one. And you need to plan out everything for every level so you can give the information, review it with students at one grade level and move on to the next.

"The goal is to keep everyone busy. When you're talking to some students, others can be completing

worksheets on their own. The students work independently a lot. It's still a challenge to make sure everyone is engaged and learning everything required. Every year, the standards get more rigorous. But we are fortunate that we have a chance to work on a one-on-one basis because of the lower number of students. We're able to fit the curriculum to them rather than fit them to the curriculum. Each child has individualized instruction, even if there are others in the same grade."

Copper Harbor School has six K-8 students and five preschoolers. The student-teacher ratio is ideal and Trudgeon says having mixed ages together promotes team spirit, with older children stepping up to help the younger students in the classroom and having no qualms about spending recess together on the playground. Younger students also benefit from their exposure to more advanced material, allowing some to accelerate their learning when they are ready. The preschool level is a recent addition at the school and required Trudgeon to spend three summers at NMU working toward her early-childhood endorsement.

"In this type of rural community, we've got children who hardly ever see other children. We wanted to provide an opportunity for them to come to school and participate in activities with their peers. They're in the room part-time with the other students, doing different things but feeling like they're 'big' kids. Then we have a kitchen/library area where an aide takes them for Spanish lessons, academic and play activities."

Mike Aubin '00 BS began his career in a K-6 classroom at Elm River School in Toivola, also in the

Keweenaw Peninsula. Built during the area's mining heyday, the school once accommodated K-12 students, who occupied all three floors. The top two stories are now closed off. Aubin was the only teacher at the school for his first three years. A part-time position was added to lead a second classroom when enrollment increased. Even though numbers are down again, the staffing and structure—K-3 in one room and grades 4-6 in another—remains the same.

"I have three students in my K-3 class, which is the smallest group I've ever had," said Aubin. "The benefits for the kids are phenomenal. I have time to work individually with those



At left, Mike Aubin with his entire kindergarten through 3rd grade class at Elm River School. Above, the Copper Harbor School sits at the furthest point north in Michigan. Diane Trudgeon, the school's sole teacher and principal, has taught there for more than 30 years.

who may be struggling and I know exactly where every student is and what every student needs. The one-on-one time is the biggest benefit. And once a week on Fridays, we have Buddy Day, where an older student is paired with a younger child and becomes the teacher, reviewing what they learned. We started that a few years ago and it works really well."

Aubin may no longer teach the full K-6 range himself, but he relies on the same strategies and preparation.

"After 12 years here, even if I taught 25 kids in one grade, I would

still approach it as different levels because students learn in different ways and at different rates. I start with the older students because they're more self-sufficient and can get to work right after I give them instruction. That frees up my time to work at a table with a younger group. Children learn to be patient.

"Staying organized with different levels is always a challenge. I have a good handle on lesson planning now, but when I started, that was tough to get under control. I would go home to my wife and two young children with two milk crates full of books. The first few years were rough, but then I got the rhythm down. I have also come to enjoy my own freedom as lead teacher. There's no principal, so I can work independently to make sure students get what they need and that state standards are met."

With their small class sizes, teachers in rural schools such as Copper Harbor and Elm River are able to have more frequent and meaningful interactions with students and guide their transition through several grades. It is difficult in this "family-like" atmosphere not to become emotionally connected.

"There's a closeness we have at the school between the students and myself," says Trudgeon. "It's fun to see them as they change and develop through the years. It's rewarding because everyone is so helpful to each other."

Aubin adds, "Next year the student who was in kindergarten when I started will be graduating from high school. It's neat to see how well he's doing and how well all students do when they leave for a bigger school. It makes your heart proud to know you've prepared them well." ■



GUATEMALA

TEACHING IN DIF

For NMU education majors, student teaching is the capstone of their academic experience. It is their chance to put theory into practice, work cooperatively with master teachers and test their ability to lead an active classroom before they seek full-time employment. Assignments are available at K-12 schools across the Midwest. But some NMU students deliberately seek placements beyond U.S. borders to further their own education as they begin teaching others.

Salem (Watts) Prince '11 BA wanted to improve her Spanish-language skills and experience education in a different culture. Both are important to her goal of someday teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). Through NMU partner Educators Abroad, she spent a semester in Antigua, Guatemala.

“The educational system is very different than in the United States,” says Prince. “Only private schools teach English, so families need to have money in order to learn English. There are also no national or state standards for education. My school is just starting to come out with standards for each grade, but right now teachers are given a textbook to teach out of and we have to supplement the textbook in any way we can.”

“Schools in Guatemala also have no teacher unions,

contracts or benefits. Teachers can give a day's notice and leave with no consequence. It's sad to see because at my school last year, some classes had four or five teachers in one year and that is hard on students.”

Prince taught children ages 5-7 in *Preparatoria*, which is similar to U.S. kindergarten. The school is bilingual, each day split evenly between Spanish and English instruction.

“The first few weeks were very stressful; I felt like I was getting nowhere,” she says. “But my cooperating teacher was helpful and supportive. She assured me that my students were learning and I would see big changes in them in the next few weeks. By the end of the three months, many of my students were speaking in full sentences. It was a really rewarding experience to see how far they had come.”

Prince left Guatemala in April, but was asked to return this summer to teach the same class for the remainder of the academic year (Guatemalan schools are in session from January through October). Her husband, **Loren '10 BS**, is a part-time teacher at the school. He helps older students prepare for the TOEFL test, which measures English-language proficiency among international students planning to attend American universities.

CHINA



DIFFERENT WORLDS

By Kristi Evans

After spending the winter holidays with family, the couple would like to return to Guatemala for another school year. Salem said she hopes to move to a higher grade level and teach more conversation skills. Loren would like to land a full-time position.

Negaunee native **Don Barr '10 BS** is a self-proclaimed free spirit who had traveled to other countries and was eager for a teaching assignment that would set him apart from other job seekers down the road. He found it at an international private school in Chengdu, located in China's Sichuan Province.

"It was unlike any other country I've ever visited and the first one where English wasn't spoken within a reasonable radius of where I stayed," says Barr. "The first month was culture shock, adjusting to the population density and just trying to navigate my way around. Language was a barrier because every province has its own, but I took Chinese language lessons from teachers at my school and learned quite a bit in four months. It was incredible to see a different way of life. I went into it with an open mind because if you're not flexible, you'll have issues. It was challenging, but I wouldn't trade it for the world."

Barr's responsibilities were "all over the board." He taught K-1 and 3rd grade English and math, 8th grade

math, 8th and 11th-grade American culture and 11th-grade conversational English. It did not take him long to pick up on cultural differences in classroom protocol.

"The Chinese education system is teacher-centric," he says. "The teacher says something and the students repeat it. They learn mainly by rote. In America, it's student-centric and teachers encourage discussion. I would ask a question and the students didn't know what to do. Other [expatriate] teachers there said they confronted the same thing. My general perception is that the students' higher-level thinking skills were under-developed because they're not asked to think; they learn."

Barr also discovered that a test administered to 8th-grade Chinese students determines which high school they will attend, which in turn dictates their post-secondary options. "Their fate is determined very early as to whether they can go to a four-year university, two-year college or vocational school. Those kinds of things were eye-opening."

Now back at NMU as a graduate assistant working toward his master's in educational administration and supervision, Barr would like to continue toward a doctorate in educational media and technology, with the goal of teaching at a university. ■



Professor Martin Reinhardt meeting with students in the Center for Native American Studies

New paths for Native American Education

By Kristi Evans

An NMU master's degree in education administration with an American Indian emphasis has been endorsed by the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA). The program includes two courses offered through the NMU Center for Native American Studies: American Indian education and American Indian educational law and leadership. It also includes an internship at a tribal school or department of education, a school with Title VII programs or a school where at least 25 percent of the student body is American Indian. The research seminar or thesis will require an American Indian education focus.

TEDNA was established as a non-profit in 2003 with support from the Native American Rights Fund and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Indian Education.

"It is the only national organization representing tribal sovereignty in education," says Martin Reinhardt, professor in the Center for Native

American Studies (CNAS). "It advocates for tribal education agencies at the government level, hosting legislative summits in Washington, D.C., and other regional meetings. For a long time, outside agencies and well-wishers controlled American Indian education. TEDNA is stepping up as

the voice of tribes in the system to endorse programs that benefit graduates and the tribes themselves.

"Northern's program is unique because it focuses on American Indian education in a broad context, not just on Indian students or content. I think we have a lot to offer because there's an emphasis on capacity-building, which is required for good representation for tribal citizens and effective leadership in Indian education. It will help administrators

and teachers structure budgets, incorporate standards and do a better job integrating Indian education into the general curriculum."

There is room for improvement, according to Reinhardt, because American Indian content in public schools is typically relegated to history classes and stereotypes, and inaccuracies persist, adversely impacting the perception of all students.

"Nationally, there are movements afoot to develop region- and tribal-specific education standards," he says. "The Rosebud Sioux in South Dakota were the first to have their own. Similar efforts were initiated in Alaska and a few other states, but many standards are applicable beyond those borders. Tribes are more in control of their own destinies and with federal funding and gaming revenues, some have more resources to devote to education and social services."

April Lindala '97 BS, '03 MA, '06 MFA, director of the CNAS, said legislation recently passed in Michigan does not require certification for instructors of indigenous languages such as Anishinaabe, which

"For a long time, outside agencies and well-wishers controlled American Indian education... Tribes are [now] more in control of their own destinies and with federal funding and gaming revenues, some have more resources to devote to education and social services."

NMU offers, provided they have a community endorsement.

"Northern students who are aggressive in taking language courses through the center could find themselves able to teach beginning classes at public schools," she says. "We haven't had anyone reach that point yet, but we're close."

Reinhardt says, "The underlying philosophy of education, from the traditional Indian perspective, is 'The Earth will show us the way.' There's a

divergence from mainstream education in terms of methodology and content, but you can't ignore either one. The painful history of Indian education, with the boarding schools, it's a lot to heal from. But the question now is how do we use the education systems, both Indian and non-Indian, to do the most good in a community?" ■



A Year of Milestones

The NMU Center for Native American Studies is celebrating some significant milestones this academic year related to the history of American Indian students on campus.

- 40 years ago: First issue of *The Nishnawbe News*. It is now called *Anishinaabe News* and is produced by Northern's Native American Students Association.
- 40 years ago: Indian Awareness Week first recognized. Now Native American Heritage Month is celebrated nationally in November.
- 20th anniversary of NMU's Native American studies academic minor.
- 20th annual "Learning to Walk Together" pow wow. The first pow wow was organized by NMU's student group, the American Indian Science and Engineering Society.
- 15 years ago: The NMU Center for Native American Studies established. The center hosts the U.P. Indian Education Conference, Indigenous Earth Issues Summit and two youth educational programs.

Another choice: NMU's charter schools

By Cindy Paavola '84 BS

Bill Pistulka '87 MAE, NMU's charter school officer, does not have to think long when asked what's the most important thing for the public to understand about charter schools. "That they are public schools and they must meet the same standards as any school in the state," he says quickly and emphatically.

"They are known as PSAs or public school academies. They don't charge tuition; they receive the same per-pupil funding as any traditional public school in the state. Most are in urban parts of the state and many located where there is a diverse population, and often a poor population. Many of the charter schools have themes that highlight a particular educational area of study, such as the arts or a culture," Pistulka says.

Northern Michigan University is the authorizing institution for five public school academies. Two of the schools have a focus on Native American culture: Bahweting Anishnabe and Nah Tah Wahsh. North Star Academy focuses on academic service learning. NMU's two Lower Peninsula schools, Burton Glen and Walton, are operated by National Heritage Academies, which has a four-pillar philosophy: academic excellence, moral focus, parental partnership and student responsibility.

Charter schools became part of Michigan's educational system in the mid-1990s, at the same time as per-pupil funding. Two points of difference between traditional public schools and charter academies—and things that cause some of the opposition to charters—are that the

teachers are not unionized and most are not vested in retirement plans.

Pistulka believes there is a role for charter schools in Michigan. "These schools represent choice and competition. If they are doing well by the students, they are sought after and thrive," he says. "There is the concern that school management companies are in it for the right reasons, but it's important for the public to know that charter schools have been closed for non-performance, and that's not the case for very many traditional schools."

NMU's responsibilities as an authorizer of charter schools include oversight that each academy is meeting all state and federal laws and regulations and appointing academy school board members. The university does not have any authority relating to the day-to-day operations of the school. Charter school authorizers receive a three percent management fee for each academy. Pistulka says that while some authorizing institutions may be in the charter school business for the revenue potential, that is not the case for NMU. "More importantly, it provides opportunities where NMU education majors can get hands-on experience in diverse learning environments with diverse populations. It also helps the charter students to consider NMU for their college education. We're really starting to see the results of our work with these schools turn into enrollment at NMU, and that's something we want to continue to grow." ■

