Piloting classroom practice teaching with avatars PAGE 6
The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee serves more students who are veterans than any other campus in Wisconsin. SOE alumnus Jacob Probst came from a family of teachers and served in the Army before earning his education degree. He appreciated the veteran-friendly campus.

“As an older student and a veteran you’ve had different experiences than the 18- and 19-year-olds in your class. Sometimes it’s nice to just have coffee and talk with another veteran.”

2005-Present
served in the U.S. Army

May 2013
graduated with his bachelor’s degree and certification in exceptional education

2013
began teaching at Pilgrim Park Middle School in Elm Grove
daughter Emerblee was born

2013
still active in the reserves as a combat engineer/senior small arms instructor

uwm.edu/soe
Honoring teaching in all its forms

The first-ever Celebration of Teaching, an event organized by the Education Deans of Greater Milwaukee (EDGM) this past fall, honored the work of urban teachers. The stories of the UWM graduates among those chosen for awards reflect the passion for teaching typified by all those selected. One of the teachers honored at the celebration expressed astonishment at the idea he would ever consider another career. That is the type of commitment shown by the present, future and former teachers highlighted in this issue. After reading their stories, I’m sure you’ll agree that the future of teaching is in good hands.

Katharine Hudson chose teaching after she fell in love with the work in a volunteer classroom assignment she took on to buff up her law school application.

Jacob Probst served in the army, then moved on to helping young people in the classroom, partly to encourage other students like himself who faced learning challenges.

Dr. Kristopher ‘Thomas’ passion for learning is being put to work in a corporate setting.

Billy Heu, a nontraditional student, now teaching in Brown Deer, was inspired by a teacher who made a difference in his life.

Celina Echeveste is taking what she learned at UWM to her work at Forest Home Elementary School, helping Spanish-speaking families deal with autism spectrum disorders.

In this issue we also honor some School of Education alumni who made a difference in both schools and their community before their deaths this year.

With a co-author, SOE alumnus Louis Romano turned the tale of Gertie the Duck into a children’s book that has sold more than a million copies.

Filiberto Murguia, who earned both his bachelor’s and master’s degree in the Department of Educational Policy and Community Studies, was the executive director of the Council for the Spanish Speaking (Centro Hispano) of Milwaukee for 33 years.

Alumnus and long-time educator Earl Henry celebrated his 99th birthday at an April 2013 Brewers game, part of a fundraiser organized by his granddaughter to support the SOE’s Earl and Kathryn Henry Scholarship. Although Earl died in August, his legacy and that of his wife, also an alum and long-time educator, live on through this scholarship fund.

In addition to preparing teachers, the School continues to research new and innovative ways of looking at education and the world. Our cover story on Craig Berg’s use of avatars in teacher preparation is an illustration of new methods of giving potential teachers classroom experience. The story about SOE research on the Chapter 220 program by three faculty members from Educational Policy and Community Studies gives insight into the impact and struggles of Milwaukee’s voluntary integration program. Nadya Fouad of Educational Psychology is leading national efforts to help older workers with the psychological impact of unemployment.

We hope you enjoy reading these and other stories about the contributions our UWM School of Education is making to the field of education and to our community.
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SOE alum who wrote Gertie the Duck died recently
Radmanovic and Jones, both University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and SOE alumni, were among the teachers honored Oct. 17, 2013, at a Celebration of Teachers and Teaching. Both educators won Advanced Career awards. Another SOE alum, Craig Machut of Rufus King International High School, received an honorable mention.

The Celebration was organized by the Education Deans of Greater Milwaukee (EDGM), a collaboration involving the deans of nine area higher education institutions, including UWM. The event was held at the Great Lakes Distillery, 616 W. Virginia Street. Proceeds will benefit a fund to promote professional development for teachers and advance the reputation of teaching.

“We wanted to organize a truly collaborative event involving all the area Schools and Colleges of Education,” says Carol Colbeck, former SOE Dean, now Provost’s Designee for Special Projects on Teaching, Research, and Community Engagement and professor of administrative leadership. She was instrumental in organizing the event. “We were very aware that teachers were feeling disrespected, and felt it was important that we organize a very public celebration to honor the work of teachers.”

“This event gives us the opportunity to spotlight the work that teachers do,” says Barbara Daley, interim dean of the SOE. “It is a way of honoring all teachers for the energy and enthusiasm and skills they bring to their work.”

Daley adds: “Melba Marquez-Greene, the mother of one of the children who died at Sandy Hook School, wrote in Education Week that the only letter of the 15,000 she received that she keeps at her bedside is one from her own high school English teacher: ‘Real heroes don’t wear capes,’ she wrote. ‘They work in America’s schools.’”

Radmanovic got into teaching in a roundabout way. He’d earned his undergraduate degree in criminology from Marquette University and was working in the safety
department in Milwaukee Public Schools. He
became interested in the challenges special
education students faced and began
volunteering on his lunch hours to work with
students with behavior and emotional issues.
He went into a post-baccalaureate teaching
program at UWM through MTEC (Milwaukee
Teacher Education Center), founded by the
late Martin Haberman, a UWM distinguished
professor of education.

He decided to work in special education,
and has taught in MPS since 1990. "I liked to
focus on a student's strengths, as a way to help
them reach their potential."

The parent of a student who made "huge
gains" in math skills wrote in a nominating
letter: "Children have an innate sense of when
someone truly believes in them, and (our
child) knew that Mr. R. did."

Radmanovic was nominated for the
award by his former principal at A.E. Burdick
Elementary School, Robert Schleck, who also
encouraged him to build on his leadership
skills and move up to the assistant principal
position.

Jones, a second-grade teacher at Samuel
clemens Elementary School in MPS, has five
years of teaching experience. She was part of
the 2002-2003 cohort of UWM’s Metropolitan
Multicultural Teacher Education Pre-service
Program, which prepared paraprofessionals to
become certified teachers. Her principal,
Jacqueline Richardson, said in her nomination
letter that “Ms. Jones demonstrates an
uncommon commitment to providing quality
instruction based on each student’s develop-
mental level and learning style.”

Both credited their experiences with
UWM and the SOE with helping them become
excellent teachers.

The Milwaukee Mathematics Project
(MMP), led by SOE’s DeAnn Huinker, helped
Radmanovic develop his mathematics teaching
skills. "I can’t say enough about the classes I
took with Kevin McLeod. (Mathematics
associate professor McLeod was a member of
the MMP team.) They were so impactful, and
really helped me grow stronger as a teacher. As
an assistant principal, those are skills he’s now
sharing with teachers at Vieau."

Radmanovic also took part in the
Emerging Leaders program with SOE
professors Latish Reed and Leigh Wallace.
"Without that program, I don’t think I’d have
been recommended and accepted for the
assistant principal position.”

Both Radmanovic and Jones talk about
the importance of helping students begin to see
the relationships among the materials they’re
encountering. Students need to see not only
those relationships, but the relevance to their
own lives, both teachers agree. Every success
builds confidence for the next steps in learning.

That, says Jones, is a key reason she is a
teacher. "I really love those ‘ah-ha’ moments, and
I’m getting to see quite a few of them."

Other Milwaukee-area teachers honored on Oct. 17:

Lauren Boyd, a second-grade teacher at Milwaukee College Preparatory School and a
graduate of Mount Mary, who won the Early Career Award.

Stacey Lange, a teacher at Walker Elementary School in West Allis and an Alverno
graduate, who won an Advanced Career Award.

Michelle Young, who teaches science at Rufus King International Middle School and
graduated from Alverno, received an Advanced Career award.

Craig Machut, a UWM alum who teaches at Rufus King International High School,
received an honorable mention for the Advanced Career Award.

Sonya Wasielewski, a founding faculty member of Carmen High School of Science and
Technology and an Alverno graduate. She received an Advanced Career Award.

In addition to Machut, honorable mentions went to Naquisha Mann of the Young Leaders
Academy, Dawn Liriano of St. Adalbert’s Elementary School and Jane Savage of Seeds of
Health-Windlake.
If the TeachLive program had a motto, that might be it.

TeachLive is an interactive computer- and human-facilitated simulation of a classroom with five avatars who behave as typical middle or high school students. The goal is to help potential teachers learn how to improve their skills, and to better prepare them to teach real students in a real classroom.
Basically, says Craig Berg, professor of education, the program lets beginning education teachers try out their lesson plans in a controlled environment – with a limited number of simulated students, who respond to a teacher's questions, ask the teacher questions, make comments to the teacher and fellow students, and also display various levels of misbehavior.

The program isn't meant to replace clinical experiences in real classrooms, says Berg, but to help students develop basic skills and techniques early in their education, in a controlled, less chaotic, less complex, environment.

One key element of TeachLive is the ability to program the virtual students to act up in various ways and at various levels. Student teachers leading their first online sessions agreed that dealing with "Sean," one of the more disruptive avatars, was pretty challenging.

"Many novices are overwhelmed when they first begin teaching in a real classroom of 24–30–45 students," says Berg. "While they may have good intentions and a suitable lesson plan, they can be quickly derailed by student misbehaviors."

The TeachLive classroom provides a realistic-looking classroom and five virtual students who can act out and challenge the teacher's authority in a variety of ways.

Since discipline issues are what teachers struggle with the most, says Berg, developing proactive and reactive classroom management strategies and skills is a crucial aspect of teachers' success. That's especially true during the first few years of teaching when many new teachers drop out of the profession due to frustration and lack of success, he adds.

The simulation doesn't just focus on student misbehaviors, Berg says, but also helps students improve their teaching, even if no one in the class misbehaves.

Novice teachers sometimes plan and deliver lessons, without trying them out on students, he explains, so they don't get any interaction or feedback.

"They don't know if students are developing an understanding of the material or whether they're completely befuddled."

"The teacher is mostly talking and proceeding, while students are passively and sometimes politely sitting in their seats. The teacher is forging ahead as planned, oblivious to what we know about effective teaching practices – much like a college lecture."

Sometimes a single student question – like "Why do we have to know this stuff?" – quickly derails the teacher.

"It is priceless to watch teachers' expressions when they have developed a whole lesson, but haven't thought about why their students should learn that specific content, or when a student asks a question that causes the teacher to think, and realize that their own understanding of the content is not what they thought it was, nor what it should be to teach it effectively."

A University of Central Florida team (including Lisa Dieker who used to be a faculty member in UWM's School of Education) developed the TeachLive program, and Berg and UWM are among the 22 university partners involved in testing it.

"I was worried before I tried it," says Robin McGuigan, a junior in education, after her second session with the TeachLive program. "It's a little like a video game, but the object is to get your students engaged in the lesson."

"The first time around, it was kind of creepy," says Trevor Derksen, also a junior in education, after her second session with the TeachLive program. "It's a little like a video game, but the object is to get your students engaged in the lesson."

"The teacher is mostly talking and proceeding, while students are passively and sometimes politely sitting in their seats. The teacher is forging ahead as planned, oblivious to what we know about effective teaching practices – much like a college lecture."

Sometimes a single student question – like "Why do we have to know this stuff?" – quickly derails the teacher.

"Teaching is an extremely complex task, especially if the lesson is an effective one and all students are engaged to the max," says Berg.

"Research tells us very clearly that to have the most impact on learning, we need to think of a class of students as 30 individual learners, finding out what they know or think and getting them all connected and deeply engaged in the lesson."

"To create this type of learning environment is a very complex task, so we place future teachers in a controlled setting – TeachLive – and begin with five students, with some of the confounding factors removed, lessening the difficulty."

"Then we can increase the challenge as they develop and refine their teaching skills and elevate their level of confidence," he says.

It is rare to see anyone teach at even a mediocre level when they first go in front of a real classroom or the TeachLive simulator, says Berg. "That reinforces the need for highly effective teacher preparation programs like MACSTEP (Milwaukee Area Collaborative Science and Mathematics Teacher Education Program) which use research-based strategies for developing teachers, and the use of powerful tools like TeachLive to help."
Open enrollment programs are destroying a successful voluntary integration program in Milwaukee.”

That’s one of the contentions in a newly published case study of Milwaukee’s 220 program by SOE faculty members Michael Bonds, Marie Sandy and Raquel Farmer-Hinton. Bonds is also president of the Milwaukee School Board. The study was published in the journal Education and Urban Society in fall 2013.
Milwaukee’s 40-year-old Chapter 220 program is the oldest voluntary public school integration transportation program in the country.

“It was set up by the state legislature to alleviate hyper-segregation,” says Bonds, allowing students in Milwaukee Public Schools, which are predominantly black, to attend one of 23 suburban schools, most of which are predominantly white. The program also allows suburban students to choose MPS schools.

“Unlike many voluntary, choice-oriented desegregation transportation plans that were created under court order, the Chapter 220 program was created as a voluntary school integration program by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1975 with the goal of promoting cultural and racial integration in education on a voluntary basis without cost to local taxpayers,” the authors write.

In its early years, Bonds adds, the 220 program was a model for other areas on how to work toward integration. Most of the students participating were African American students who attended schools in predominantly white suburban districts.

“Milwaukee is recognized as one of the most comprehensive public school voluntary student transfer programs in the country,” the authors write.

But the program’s success has been eroded by state policies, such as open enrollment, and changes in funding structures and transportation districts. These types of changes “that appear to be race neutral on the surface can contribute to undermining race specific programs designed to integrate schools,” Bonds and his co-authors contend.

Open Enrollment, approved by the legislature in 1998, allowed parents to enroll their children in any public school district in Wisconsin outside of their residence district. Unlike Chapter 220, however, the program has no integration goals and, more importantly, parents rather than school districts provide the transportation in most cases. As a result, according to Bonds’ study, the program attracts more white students fleeing city schools than minority students, whose parents often don’t have the time or money to drive them to outlying suburbs.

At the same time, suburbs have financial incentives to accept more Open Enrollment students rather than Chapter 220 students, according to Bonds. Open Enrollment reimburses the school districts the same year as students are accepted into the program, while 220 doesn’t reimburse them until the next year.

MPS’ adoption of transportation regions in 2001-2002 also contributed to the decline in the numbers of 220 students, the researchers say. Students can now only apply to suburban districts that align with the transportation region where they live.

As a result, says Bonds and his co-authors, enrollment in Chapter 220 has dropped while Open Enrollment numbers continue to increase. As of 2011, more than twice as many students were in Open Enrollment as in Chapter 220. And, Chapter 220 numbers had dropped from a high of more than 5,900 students in 1993-94 to just 2,025 in 2011-12.

At the same time, Bonds and his fellow researchers point out, the program’s racial makeups are drastically different.

More than 60 percent of students in the Open Enrollment program are white, with 24 percent African American and 10 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian and 1.2 percent Native Americans. In contrast, the majority of students in the 220 program are people of color: 60 percent African American, 20 percent Asian, 20 percent Hispanic, one percent Native American and none are white.

“Milwaukee had a model program, and we are looking at how that essentially became imperfect over time,” Bonds says. And, he adds, the policy decisions that led to the decline in Chapter 220 and setbacks to integration were deliberate. “No, it didn’t happen by chance,” he says bluntly when asked about that issue.

The changes are part of what Bonds sees as a general retreat from affirmative action and setbacks to race relations in general, even during the Obama administration. Perhaps because Obama was elected as the first black president, he says, “people think the issues don’t exist anymore, but they do. We are years away from true equality.”

The researchers conclude that additional financial support and transportation are needed to keep the 220 program viable. “It appears that the implementation of free choice again privileges the self-interest of white students and parents over those of students and families of color. Changing this picture will require changing our collective will to do something about it, and to support programs such as the 220 program.” That program, they write, “has not ended segregation, but has improved the racial composition of schools to increase the likelihood that all students receive an equal education.”
SOE students help pilot ESL program for parents

The students come quietly, walking over on a cold night from home or jobs, eagerly knocking on the locked door.

Behind that door is a school library and a brighter hope for the future for these adults who are determined to learn the English language.

This free English-as-a-Second-Language pilot program, which started in fall 2013, is a partnership between the SOE and St. Anthony’s School on Milwaukee’s south side. Two UWM education students teach the classes to 20 adults twice a week.
“We had discussed the work Dr. (Javier) Tapia is doing with the community in class,” says teacher Marleisa Quiles, a senior in Educational Policy and Community Studies (EPCS). “We saw how this work was able to make a difference and I was excited to be part of it.” Quiles is working on a Community Education and Engagement degree.

The class for parents and other adults in the community grew out of collaborations Tapia, associate professor in EPCS, had developed with St. Anthony’s, the largest Catholic Hispanic high school in the U.S. In working with the school, he found many of the parents of students wanted to improve their English. However, between working and raising families, they often couldn’t find the time or the money to take formal classes.

A grant from Hispanics for Free Choice made it possible to provide a small stipend for the two teachers as well as supplies for the class, says Tapia.

These English language learners face other challenges besides finding time and money to take classes.

“Many of the adults haven’t had to learn English because Milwaukee is so segregated that they’re not exposed to English, and could get along well interacting with just the Latino community,” says Quiles.

Besides, adds Lillian Lara, the other teacher for the class, “the reception outside the community isn’t always welcoming to immigrants so they don’t try to speak English.” Lara is in the second year of the SOE’s Cultural Foundations of Education master’s degree program.

Quiles grew up not far from St. Anthony’s and Lara grew up in a Spanish-speaking home. Both are fluent in Spanish.

“We’re from the community and they feel comfortable with us.” One student told them she had been trying for 10 years to learn English, and having the evening program right in the community encouraged her to try again.

The students are motivated to learn for a number of reasons, say Tapia and the teachers. With immigration reform under discussion, many in the community believe that knowledge of English will be helpful in applying for citizenship, says Tapia.

Helping their children with homework is another reason many parents give for wanting to learn English.

And, for many, learning English can help them find better jobs or move up in their current careers, says Tapia.

For the UWM students, working in the community allows them to practice what they’ve been learning in the classroom.

“It gives them an opportunity to use some of their knowledge and skills from their classes in a practical application,” says Tapia.

The students agree. “It’s a chance to expand on what we’re learning in the classroom,” says Quiles.

For both, it’s also an opportunity to serve. “Both of them are hardworking and committed to giving back to the community,” says Tapia.

“Many of the adults haven’t had to learn English because Milwaukee is so segregated that they’re not exposed to English, and could get along well interacting with just the Latino community.”

MARLEISA QUILES
Helping OLDER WORKERS deal with the psychological impact of JOB HUNTING

The older you are, the harder it is to get a job if you’re unemployed. During 2013, the average length of unemployment for workers over the age of 50 was 53 weeks, compared to 10 weeks for teenagers, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Helping older people who lose their jobs deal with that reality is a challenge for mental health professionals, says Nadya Fouad, distinguished professor and department chair in educational psychology. Counselors need to find a balance between encouraging people to continue their job searches and accepting the reality that their future may not include a fulfilling, well-paid position, she says.

Fouad, who was quoted in a New York Times story on the psychological issues facing older, unemployed workers, says the response was “absolutely heartbreaking,” as many elders shared their own stories of fruitless searches and subtle age discrimination.

“Thirty years ago you chose something you were interested in and matched it to a career and there you were for the rest of your life.” With globalization, recession, technology and downsizing, that’s not true anymore.

“The social contract has changed,” she says. Older workers felt if they were loyal to their employer, the employer would be loyal to them. However, today’s younger workers no longer expect to stay in a job until they get their gold watch, she adds.

In addition to having different expectations, older workers may find it harder to get back into the job market, she adds. Employers may see older workers as overqualified and expensive or not worth investing training time in because they may retire. “Age discrimination isn’t legal, but it still occurs in subtle ways.”

However, even with these changes, very few psychologists think it’s important to integrate work-related issues into their practice, says Fouad.

Fouad did a presentation on the topic of unemployment and mental health at the 2013 American Psychological Association (APA) national conference, and she worked with colleagues to draw up proposed APA guidelines to help psychotherapists better deal with workplace issues and unemployment. She’s also starting research into the factors that influence career decisions in mid-life.

She is advocating strongly to get psychological counselors better trained to deal with job-related issues, particularly among older workers.

“In America, we identify with work.” Losing a job can be shattering, akin to getting a divorce, she adds. “If psychologists don’t understand the link between unemployment and mental health, they’re not going to be able to help their clients. We need to be much more aware of these issues that impact people’s lives.”

Nadya Fouad
The deadline for the Wisconsin teacher candidates to successfully complete the edTPA may have changed, but the SOE’s preparation has only increased.

The educative Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) was scheduled to become necessary for teacher candidates’ certifications after August 2015; now it’s August 31, 2016. However, students graduating in fall 2015 and spring 2016 will still take the tests and pay the $300 fee. The tests will not be “consequential” for students at those times – they will not be required for initial licensure – but the results will be of consequence for schools of education, such as the SOE.

Those results will be carefully noted and used by teacher education programs within the SOE to make sure those programs include all the elements that will make their graduates successful. And that’s been the intention of both Stanford and Pearson Education, the education materials company that will train the scorers nationally and coordinate submissions from student teachers around the country.

The SOE has not been content to simply prepare students for the assessments. Faculty and staff have been working to integrate results of three pilot assessment and evaluation projects with SOE curriculum content and pedagogy.

Two of these pilot programs have been completed and the results assessed: one in spring 2013 and another in fall 2013. Currently, some 60 SOE students are involved in a third pilot project, across all teacher education programs.

“I think we succeeded in our core goals, which were to understand the evaluation process and how to help our programs get a handle on how they need to prepare for the edTPA’s full implementation,” says Belskie.

Adds Hessel, “The school’s curriculum mapping (based on students’ test assessments) will never stop. Data from edTPA results will always be brought back into our programs. We don’t control what programs do to adjust to this information, because that’s their expertise.”

To better understand the edTPA’s requirements, faculty from SOE and Peck School of the Arts underwent training to learn how to score the edTPA assessment. “We want to make sure we are in alignment with the eventual scoring by Pearson-trained evaluators,” says Hessel.

Hessel: What will Wisconsin choose as the passing scores for the state’s teacher candidates? After Stanford released results of early field test data in late 2013, it indicated that a passing scoring range of 37 to 42 would be appropriate. Of course, the higher the range, the fewer candidates would be expected to pass the first time.

All teacher candidates can re-take the edTPA, and it is their responsibility to pay for a second attempt.
AUTISM in another language inspires alumna
Growing interest in teaching and a desire to help Milwaukee’s Spanish-speaking community started Celina Echeveste on her career path. But it was the memory of a trip to her parents’ native Mexico that helped lead her to research Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and to create a guidebook that would help them identify the disorders early on.

The 2012 School of Education graduate, now a special education teacher at Forest Home Avenue School in Milwaukee, recalled her unease at seeing how children with special needs were sometimes treated in Mexico.

“I saw parents who were ashamed of these children, and they weren’t getting the help they needed. I did not want parents here to feel that way about their children just because they didn’t understand or know enough about autism,” Echeveste says. “I wanted to design something I could give to families who were new to the concept of autism and what it is. Many families in the Hispanic community don’t understand what autism is and what it may mean to their children.”

Her original research was in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a UWM master of science degree in exceptional education, and the full title was a mouthful: “A Guide for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families and Their Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: From Diagnosis to Education.”

In Echeveste’s special education bilingual K3 classroom at Forest Home Avenue School, it’s more down-to-earth. The guidebook – printed and assembled with help from Echeveste’s family – covers the characteristics and initial warning signs of ASD, and includes school and community resources. It contains additional pamphlets printed in Spanish, and Echeveste hopes to have the entire guidebook translated.

The students in Echeveste’s K3 classroom spend each morning working on their fine motor skills and “pre-academics,” such as learning names of colors and listening to stories. The class is conducted in Spanish, and Echeveste and her assistant teacher often play upbeat Spanish songs on a computer. In the afternoon, Echeveste is a resource teacher in a K5 classroom, working with children who need her help, but who remain in their own classroom during the school day.

Echeveste, whose parents immigrated to Milwaukee, is fluent in Spanish, which enhances communication with her young students.

“Some of the K3 students have some English, some no language at all; they are just beginning to say sounds,” Echeveste says. “All K3 instruction is categorical: we have a little bit of everything, including Significant Developmental Delay (SDD). Here they start learning basics so they can catch up to their peers.”

When students turn 6 years old, they may be tested to determine if they have ASD or another disorder.

It’s at this time that Echeveste’s guidebook proves most useful for families because early evaluation and treatment can make significant improvements in children’s lives.

“Children in Spanish-speaking families and African American children tend to be diagnosed less often than others. Maybe they don’t have the resources, or they don’t understand what autism is. I have a lot of parents come in and they wish they had the resources earlier because earlier diagnosis means children with ASD can get help earlier,” Echeveste says.

Echeveste started at Forest Home Avenue School three years ago as part of an internship program with the SOE and Milwaukee Public Schools. She did not set out to be a teacher, although she enjoyed teaching religious education when she was younger.

She studied nursing for three years before earning a degree in psychology and doing internships in mental health therapy. She realized how much she loved working with young children, as well as how many of them may have been missing early diagnosis of ASD. She came to UWM to earn her teaching certification in exceptional education and finished her master’s degree in the SOE in 2012.

Says Maureen Keyes, associate professor of exceptional education in the School of Education, and Echeveste’s graduate adviser: “It was a big change for me coming from a smaller college, but I had a great experience in the area of ASD and took the chance that we could work together. I was impressed with her tenacity, intelligence and commitment from that first meeting, feelings that grew and deepened with every subsequent meeting. The breadth of her commitment and willingness to work hard was invigorating. Teachers love to teach – especially when given the gift of a student that is so willing to learn and work hard – that is what keeps us committed.”

“I recall the first time that I met Celina. She heard that I had experience in the area of ASD and took the chance that we could work together. I was impressed with her tenacity, intelligence and commitment from that first meeting, feelings that grew and deepened with every subsequent meeting. The breadth of her commitment and willingness to work hard was invigorating. Teachers love to teach – especially when given the gift of a student that is so willing to learn and work hard – that is what keeps us committed.”

Children in Spanish-speaking families and African American children tend to be diagnosed [with ASD] less often than others.
Welcome new SOE faculty

MICHAEL D. STEELE is an associate professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. He has worked with preservice secondary mathematics teachers at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Michigan State University, with mathematics education doctoral students at Michigan State University, and with practicing teachers and administrators across the Midwest.

Steele’s work focuses on supporting secondary math teachers in developing mathematical knowledge for teaching, integrating content and pedagogy through teacher preparation and professional development. He is the co-principal investigator of the NSF-funded Mathematics Discourse in Secondary Classrooms (MDISC) project that is creating practice-based professional development materials to support teachers in learning productive and powerful discourse practices to support students’ engagement in rich thinking and reasoning. He also studies the influence of curriculum as co-PI of the Mathematical Practices Implementation (MPI) study and Algebra I policy as co-PI of the Learning About New Demands in Schools: Considering Algebra Policy Environments (LANDSCAPE) project.

He is a member of the Professional Development Committee of the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators, a regular presenter at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Research Conference, and served on the editorial board of Review of Educational Research.

CANDANCE DOERR-STEVENS is assistant professor of reading in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. She teaches courses on content area reading and writing and digital literacies. She received a Ph.D. in critical literacy and English education from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Before pursuing graduate studies, she taught elementary and secondary literacy courses. Her current research focuses on the emergent literacy practices involved in digital media production, in particular the rhetorical affordances and identity work involved in the multimodal composition processes of digital storytelling and documentary filmmaking.

DELAURIOUS O. STEWART, assistant professor in the Department of Exceptional Education, has spent more than 15 years working in the fields of K-12 education, higher education, public policy and communications as a teacher, counselor, school psychologist, lobbyist, senior administrator, communications generalist, journalist, consultant and college professor. He earned a bachelor’s in journalism and a master’s in counseling at Southern University and A&M College. He earned a specialist degree in special education and the doctorate in early childhood education, with a cognate in psychometrics at Jackson State University. He also earned a specialist in school psychology at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. He is a certified K-12 educator, a licensed professional counselor, a national certified school psychologist and a national certified counselor.

ANTONIETA AVILA is an assistant professor in the Second Language Education Program. She received her Ph.D. in Bilingual/Bicultural Education from the University of Texas at Austin. She has been an educator for more than 20 years, and taught in Mexico City, Los Angeles and Austin. Her research interests focus on exploring the intersections of science learning, literacy, and bilingual education with a focus in elementary classrooms. She is a member of the National Association for Research in Science Teaching (NARST), American Educational Research Association (AERA), and Literacy Research Association (LRA).

LEANNE M. EVANS, assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, teaches courses in early childhood education, specializing in literacy and language development. Her teaching and research interests include literacy development, second language acquisition, and dual language programming in urban education environments. She has extensive experience teaching in a dual language elementary education program as a literacy and reading specialist.

Evans earned her B.S. in elementary education from the University of North Texas. She completed her M.Ed. at Carthage College and her Ph.D. in Urban Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
SIMONE CONCEIÇÃO has been promoted to the position of full professor in the Department of Administrative Leadership. She teaches courses that include distance education, instructional design, adult learning, and use of technology with adult learners. Her research interests include second language acquisition, bilingual education, first language maintenance, Latino identity, urban education, and multicultural education.

Joseph is also serving as District 6 director on the Milwaukee Public Schools Board of Directors.

In addition to teaching, she is highly involved in service both in and outside of the university. At UWM, she is currently involved with various programs to strengthen the community. Outside of the university, she is committed to maintaining and strengthening her community. She volunteers her time coordinating various community events with different organizations. She also assists neighborhood youth with pre-college advising, and is an active participant in her neighborhood association.

TATIANA JOSEPH, a new assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, has been been involved in education for a number of years: as an educator, an educational researcher and as a mentor. Her research interests include second language acquisition, bilingual education, first language maintenance, Latino identity, urban education, and multicultural education.

In addition to teaching, she is highly involved in service both in and outside of the university. At UWM, she is currently involved with various programs to strengthen the community. Outside of the university, she is committed to maintaining and strengthening her community. She volunteers her time coordinating various community events with different organizations. She also assists neighborhood youth with pre-college advising, and is an active participant in her neighborhood association.

DAVID A. KLINGBEIL, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, recently earned his doctoral degree from the University of Minnesota. In 2013, he was a school psychologist in New Orleans. Klingbeil earned his undergraduate degree in psychology from UWM. His research interests include designing, modifying, and transporting evidence-based practices into urban schools. He is currently teaching graduate classes in School Psychology including practicum supervision for students in MPS and surrounding districts.

SHANNON CHAVEZ-KORELL has been promoted to associate professor with tenure. She teaches classes in group counseling, multicultural counseling, and clinical supervision. Chavez-Korell’s areas of clinical interests include group dynamics, identity development, and depression. Her research interests vary from cultural adaptations of mental health interventions, to racial and ethnic identity attitudes and their relationship to social behavior and health outcomes.

Chavez-Korell obtained her M.A. in Community Counseling from St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas. She earned her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Pennsylvania State University in University Park, Pennsylvania.

Chavez-Korell’s other areas of professional service include serving as the Student and Professional Development Coordinator for the Executive Committee of the National Latina/o Psychological Association. Locally she serves on the Board of Directors for Spotted Eagle Inc., and is a member of the Community Relations Council at the Milwaukee Job Corps Center.

MARKEDA NEWELL was named associate professor with tenure. Newell teaches courses in the multicultural context of schooling, developmental psychopathology, and school psychology. Her research interests include using computer-simulated environments to analyze discursive practices in multiracial contexts. Newell earned her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2007.

SOE faculty promotions

The University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents approved the promotion of three School of Education faculty members at its June 2013 meeting.
Spend even a few minutes with Delarious Stewart, the SOE’s new assistant professor in Exceptional Education, and it’s easy to catch his enthusiasm. It may be partly due to his first career(s) in journalism, communications, lobbying, public policy and administration (among others) – but it’s clear that his dedication to special education, school counseling and school psychology is genuine and infectious.

A native of Louisiana, Stewart came to the SOE for an opportunity to use his varied experience in programs in which the SOE excels.

“As a child, I was aware of the difficulties faced by people who have learning disabilities, so I decided to pursue a career in special education,” he says. “Here I can use my academic background and my professional experience.”

Stewart has a bachelor’s degree in journalism and a master’s in counseling from Southern University and A&M College; a specialist degree in special education and a Ph.D. in early childhood education with a cognate in psychometrics from Jackson State University; and a specialist in school psychology from the University of Louisiana-Monroe.

He’s also served as the communications director for Elijah Cummings, U.S. Representative for Maryland’s 7th congressional district since 1996 – the self-described “special education” congressman in Washington.

That experience may have opened his eyes to issues surrounding special education and behavioral problems in K-12 education, but it was a chance meeting one day back in Louisiana that started him on his current path.

“At 32 I still felt I was missing something, I felt I needed to be fulfilled. One day I was standing on a corner back home in Louisiana when I met a young man whom I heard was a great high school football player. I learned he had used up his football eligibility and had dropped out of school. He was reading at a second-grade level.”

Based on his circumstances, Stewart feared the young man’s future was depressingly clear, and it came to pass: a 40-year prison sentence for shooting a policeman during a drug arrest.

“At that point, my career direction crystallized; I saw what was happening, particularly for African American males, in K-12. I felt it was my duty to do something about it,” he says.

That moment resulted in years of research and real-life practice concentrating on why young people misbehave in classrooms and how teachers, administrators and parents can help these students stay in school and prosper academically – and avoid a potential future like that of the young man in Louisiana.

Delarious Stewart brings a variety of experiences to exceptional education

Other new lecturers, staff

Left to right:
LINDA TIEZZI-WALDERA, co-director of the Office of Clinical Experience
DEBORAH BLANKS, lecturer, Educational Policy and Community Studies
CHRISTIANE WOOD, lecturer, Curriculum and Instruction
SHELLI DAIGLE, lecturer, Curriculum and Instruction

New staff not pictured: ERIN WIGGINS, clinical instructor for American Sign Language
CHRISTINE ANDERSON, co-director, Office of Clinical Experience
MICHAEL STEELE: Connecting numbers to everyday life

If you spent more time in high school algebra 2 doodling in your notebook than paying attention – try to listen.

The new director for the SOE’s secondary mathematics education program – associate professor Michael Steele – wants people like you (us) to understand the importance of mathematics in your everyday life.

As an example, he uses statistics and quantitative literacy:

“How often do we pick up a newspaper and see statistics used and abused? In careers such as journalism, understanding how to use statistics is very important. From a social justice perspective, many UWM students are the first in their families to attend college, and we want them to have a strong sense of quantitative literacy,” Steele says.

High school students – everyone, Steele thinks – should know at least the basics of how to make sense of the numbers they encounter in their daily lives. How does a credit card company arrive at the APR? What will a 15-year mortgage mean compared to a 30-year mortgage?

Steele brings a strong background in mathematics education to the SOE, and he will concentrate on the SOE’s secondary mathematics education program.

After enrolling as engineering major at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, N.Y., Steele switched to mathematics education, seeking what he calls “a more service-oriented career path.” He earned his master’s degree in natural sciences from RPI, and his Ph.D. in mathematics education in 2006 from the University of Pittsburgh. He also taught mathematics and physics in a small public school district on Maryland’s eastern shore, where he held leadership positions in the Maryland Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Steele spent the last seven years as the director of the secondary mathematics education preparation program at Michigan State University, working with preservice and practicing teachers, master’s and doctoral students.

He was drawn to the SOE, Steele says, because of the school’s strong partnerships – particularly in mathematics education – with Milwaukee Public Schools and other public school districts.

“Working with teachers in developing sound, research-based practices and finding good analyses for teaching practices is at the heart of what I do as a teacher and a researcher,” Steele says.

He will concentrate on teacher candidates’ preparation in the secondary math program and MACSTEP. He and Professor DeAnn Huinker have already started to “re-conceptualize and re-launch” the school’s master’s and doctoral programs in mathematics education. This includes a recently approved Mathematics Specialization in the Urban Education Doctoral Program, and a new certificate program in Mathematics Education Leadership.

Huinker is director of the Center for Mathematics and Science Education Research (CMSER).

DeAnn Huinker has worked with local mathematics teachers and leaders to prepare for Common Core standards.

As STEM subjects become more important, UWM offers teachers opportunities to learn more about the topics and teaching techniques. Here teachers at a summer program take part in a forensic science exercise.
Christian Akiwowo has two homes in his heart – the Midwestern United States and Nigeria.

Akiwowo, a clinical psychologist working with abused and neglected adolescents in Chicago, earned his master’s degree in Educational Psychology from the School of Education in 1976. He has returned to UWM several times in the past year to take part in official visits from the former president of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo.

Akiwowo, who is a member of the Wisconsin Adult Soccer Association (WASA) Hall of Fame, made the transition from the warm climate of Nigeria to the frozen tundra of Wisconsin via his love for soccer. A top soccer player in Nigeria, he wanted to continue playing soccer while pursuing his education here.

“I came to Chicago to go to school and was in college there for one semester,” says Akiwowo. “A colleague in Nigeria recommended I go to UW-Green Bay. I went up to Green Bay, and they found me worthy to be given a soccer scholarship.”

“Soccer is a big hobby of mine,” he says, in a modest understatement.

Akiwowo had an outstanding soccer career at UW-Green Bay, where he was an NAIA All-American all three years and an NSCAA All-American in 1972-73. He was inducted into the UW-Green Bay Phoenix Soccer Hall of Fame in 1994. He also encouraged his brother, Olatunji, to attend UWM, where he was an outstanding soccer player.

Akiwowo played for the Milwaukee Brewers LC soccer team and the Milwaukee Kickers while living here (1971-78). In Chicago, he played for the Gazelle Soccer Club for many years (The Gazelle Soccer Team is the current champion of the Chicago Metropolitan Soccer League, Akiwowo notes). He is still active in coaching and administration for the Gazelles and the World Soccer League.

Akiwowo earned his bachelor’s degree in managerial systems at UW-Green Bay, but his experiences as one of the few blacks on campus and in the city led to an interest in psychology.

“I came from Africa all the way up to Green Bay. At the time the population was about 65,000, with few black folks up there. There were less than 10 of us on the UWGB campus.”

Dealing with the academic and social challenges of being an African and a foreign student, he became interested in the mental health and psychological issues involved in being an outsider. That led him to UWM’s educational psychology program. “There is a feeling of shame in having an emotional problem, but these are the adjustment challenges any human being would have in a foreign environment.”

He and his family – he and his wife have four children – did develop lasting friendships in both Green Bay and Milwaukee. He remembers a UW-Green Bay co-worker, the late Robert “Bob” Sweeney, who drove through a 1972 snowstorm on his four-wheel drive to bring Akiwowo’s family four gallons of milk when they could not get out to a grocery store to pick up milk for their baby. Another professor, retired UWGB Chancellor William Kuepper, served as godfather to one of his children, and the late Milwaukee judge Ted Wedermeyer was a long-time friend.

“We had the opportunity to meet a lot of good people who accepted us and were very helpful in minimizing the adjustment challenges we faced during that time.”

After earning his doctorate at Loyola University in Chicago, he was employed as director of Behavioral Sciences at Chicago Mount Sinai Hospital Pediatric Department for 10 years, and simultaneously held an adjunct faculty position at National-Louis University. In 1994, he founded two nonprofit organizations, Alajobi Rehabilitative Services and Ibukun Comprehensive Community Services in Chicago. He serves as president and CEO of the organizations, and has conducted research on child maltreatment and created successful therapeutic approaches to preventing child abuse.

His organization works particularly with African American young people, ages 14-18, who are in foster care or under state guardianship. “We try to mitigate the negative emotional consequences, the anxiety and feelings of loss of family associated with separation resulting from outside intervention.”

His counselors and case workers work hard to reintegrate the young people with family members. “If we can fix the kid and fix the family, that should be the ideal goal. Everybody needs to belong to some kind of family.”

Akiwowo, shown in his playing days at left, visited UWM recently for a presentation by former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo.
It's a familiar story among education students – and one that transcends cultures.

December 2013 SOE graduate Billy Heu grew up in a Hmong family in a Paris suburb, where he attended schools he describes as “not always the best.”

“I wasn’t always the best student either, and a lot of the teachers were burned out already. But one year, one teacher made a difference in me. I realized that one person can make a difference, even if the environment is not that great,” Heu says.

Like so many other students who seek to become teachers, that experience of being inspired by a teacher eventually led Heu to the SOE and a bachelor’s degree in education, with concentrations in English as a Second Language (ESL) and French.

“That’s what pushed me into education. You see teachers more than you see your parents sometimes; as a teacher you want to be that person students can come to if they need to vent,” says Heu, who is married with three young children.

Heu, 31, received his associate’s degree from MATC and took advantage of the reciprocal agreement between that school and UWM to enroll as an education major four years ago. He took classes at night, while he worked as an ESL teacher’s aide and tennis coach in the Brown Deer School District.

He completed student teaching assignments at Fox Point-Bayside Middle School (French) and at Albert Story School in Milwaukee (ESL) prior to his graduation.

Heu credits his wife, Shelly, for helping him pursue his dream. She watched their children and held her own job so that he could attend classes and study. Now she may consider her own career in education.

Almost as important as Shelly’s help was the bond Heu found with his professors and advisers in the SOE. It was like the bond between him and his teacher in Paris. Because of his work schedule and family obligations, he sometimes missed classes despite his best intentions. Faculty members were always supportive, Heu says.

“My father died two years ago and that’s when I really appreciated my professors. I had to be gone for three weeks, and they were all very understanding of the situation. They told me not to worry, that they would give me time to complete the work. Good professors can make it all worthwhile,” Heu says.

He adds that he came to think that SOE’s base, Enderis Hall, “felt like home” on those many long nights of class and study. “Everyone knew me. Coming to a place where you know your questions are going to be answered pushes you to succeed.”

SOE alumna Delome Greenwald-Schmitt has spent the past 40 years far from Milwaukee, but still has fond memories of the city, the school system and the UWM School of Education.

Greenwald-Schmitt earned her master’s degree in Education in 1971 after completing a Fine Arts degree in Dance in 1969. She also earned doctorates as an education specialist and in Leadership and Supervision from the University of Virginia.

For the past 40 years, she’s taught for the Department of Defense Dependent Schools in Bamberg, Germany. Using her dance background, she and her husband have also taught ballet at the Bamberg Performing Arts Club for military and civilian families.

In recent years, she has begun creating a series of bronzes, with a focus on Americans who were discriminated against and went on to accomplish great things. One of her subjects was President Barack Obama. In her spare time, she also enjoys painting on porcelain.

“I am across the ocean, far from Milwaukee, but I am a product of the Milwaukee Public Schools system as well as a UWM alum, artist and educator. I am very grateful to have grown up in Milwaukee.”

Bronze Greenwald-Schmitt created of President Obama.
Katharine Hudson had her future all planned out – she was going to be a lawyer.

But then she signed up to do some volunteer teaching in Honduras to beef up her resume for law school. “And I just fell in love with teaching,” she says simply. That experience led to a complete change in career plans.

When she began looking for a way to become a teacher without redoing her entire undergraduate experience, she found UWM’s School of Education. The focus on urban education also fit the profile of what she was looking for.

Hudson completed the MCEA (Middle Childhood Early Adolescence) certification as a post-baccalaureate student in January 2013, and her master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction in May 2013. She’s currently working for the New Berlin School District.

Teaching in Honduras and later in Puerto Rico gave her a chance to immerse herself in the Spanish language. “I’d never been to a country where Spanish was spoken. It was really scary and really rewarding.”

Both learning the language better and going through the process of learning it have helped her as she worked with English Language Learners in Milwaukee and West Allis. “It really gives you patience and understanding of the experience of learning a new language.”

When Karen Rigoni, associate professor and director of the MCEA program, was looking for volunteers to complete a field placement in a bilingual school, Hudson stepped up. “She not only volunteered, but garnered praise from her cooperating teacher for application of strategies and practices that enhanced the learning of the students in the class,” says Rigoni.

Her academic performance and willingness to go above and beyond expectations also earned Hudson a nomination for one of five paid internships for her student teaching. Even as she student-taught at an all-boys classroom in West Allis, she volunteered for another teaching-related experience. She was one of five student teachers who participated in a pilot project for the edTPA (Teacher Performance Assessment), a new student teacher performance assessment based on national standards. (See story in the 2013 EdLine, www.uwm.edu/soe.)

And, her involvement in that pilot project carried over into her master’s degree work as she researched the development of the edTPA and its implications for future student teachers. “Her dedication to this project has enhanced faculty understanding of the edTPA in ways we are only just beginning to understand,” says Rigoni.

After participating in the pilot project, then researching edTPA, Hudson has a unique view of the coming changes. “It’s given me a new perspective. It’s been this weird journey looking at it from the inside and the outside.”

While she appreciates the factors driving the new TPA assessments, she has concerns about how it will impact students who choose to do their student teaching in urban settings. “There’s a uniqueness to students in an urban context.” She’s glad she had the opportunity to take part in the pilot project and made an effort to convey her concerns. “They really valued our feedback,” she says.

Even as she was under the microscope as part of the pilot project, she enjoyed her student teaching, says Hudson. “It was really fantastic getting to see the students growing up, to see their change and development every day. I was proud to be part of it. That’s why teachers teach.”
It's a big step from instructing soldiers heading to Iraq and Afghanistan how to handle their weapons to teaching middle-school students to unravel the complexities of algebra, but the learning principles are similar. Jacob Probst, who graduated in May 2013 with his bachelor's degree and certification in exceptional education through the SOE, says his experiences as an army instructor and his SOE courses have both helped develop his teaching skills.

Probst, 27, served nine years in the Army, including one year in Iraq looking for bombs, before coming to UWM to earn his education degree. He is still active in the reserves as a combat engineer/senior small arms instructor.

Choosing special education as a career grew out of the same values that led him to enlist in the army. “I’ve been blessed with a lot of opportunity, and felt a need to contribute and make a difference.”

Probst is from a family of teachers. His wife, Kirsten, is an early childhood special education teacher in West Allis, and his mother, mother-in-law and sister are also special education teachers.

“I’ve always been around teachers; it’s just something I was naturally drawn to.”

Probst brings special empathy to his teaching because of his own experiences. “I had some struggles in middle school and high school, but I always had someone to mentor me through all that. Special education is challenging, but I really like the transition aspect, getting kids ready for life after high school.”

He’s developed his own learning techniques to overcome areas where he felt his skills fell short – public speaking and rifle marksmanship. He’s now comfortable in front of a classroom and ranked number three in the State Rifle Championships.

“So when students are struggling, or don’t understand how they’ll ever use some knowledge in ‘real life,’ I can help them figure out a way to learn,” says Probst.

Probst also occasionally shares his own “teachable moment” – blowing up the family kitchen an hour after high school graduation. Since he wasn’t an underage drinker, he decided to bring entertainment – in the form of a giant, homemade smoke bomb to a graduation party. Unfortunately, he was distracted by some drunken visitors (not related to his graduation) who showed up unexpectedly at his house. He thought he’d pulled the simmering smoke bomb off the burner before going to check out the situation, but not so. Boom!

He’s enjoyed his years at UWM. Faculty members and his student teaching supervisor continually encouraged him to challenge himself. “It can be difficult, but I can see how it’s preparing me to be an exceptional teacher.” He also appreciated the opportunities to take some fascinating courses outside his major such as Native American studies, winter survival, scuba diving and negotiation.

Probst found the presence of other veterans at UWM, and the campus veteran’s center and organizations, a bonus. “As an older student and a veteran you’ve had different experiences than the 18- and 19-year-olds in your class. Sometimes it’s nice to just have coffee and talk with another veteran.”

A few weeks before Probst graduated, he was offered a job teaching middle school special education at Pilgrim Park Middle School in Elm Grove. The week he graduated, he and his wife bought a house in Waukesha.

In mid-September their daughter Emberlee was born.

“Taking rigorous courses at UWM required self-discipline, time management, and prioritization. Those skills have carried over to life after college and allow me to live life to the fullest.”
He keeps his guitar next to his desk for a stress reliever – he says his guitar skills greatly improved while he was a doctoral student.

Having a high school chemistry teacher for a father, Kris Thomas knew he wanted to follow in those footsteps. But he also knew his path would be a little different.

“I really wanted to teach adults,” he explains. “Adults are very purposeful in their learning, which makes it very direct and impactful. Most adults are really engaged. And for those who aren’t, it’s a fun challenge to figure out how to draw them in.”

After receiving his undergrad in English and Secondary Education, Thomas, who is from Port Washington, found a career in which he could achieve his goal of teaching adults – human resources. For the next 13 years, he served in many different HR and training roles. Not wanting to neglect his own education, he also completed his MBA during this time.

And then, he had a revelation.

“I didn’t want to be a jack of all trades, master of none,” Thomas explains. “I wanted to focus on the one thing that I like the most, which is developing people.” Recognizing the correlation between his education degree and experience in the workforce, he saw a clear path ahead.

“I had always wanted my Ph.D.,” he says. “I even told my wife on our first date that at some point I’d be going back to get a Ph.D.” Though his next steps shocked many colleagues, it was all part of the master plan for Thomas.

He walked away from his successful job to pursue his Doctorate in Human Resource Development at UWM.

He spent the first year focusing full-time on his studies. In the second year, he earned a graduate assistantship in the Department of Administrative Leadership, writing, researching and helping professors deliver online courses in D2L.

In 2010, he traveled to Shanghai for an Academy of Human Resource Development conference. “That experience opened my eyes to the possibilities in the academic world,” he says. “We all came from very different places, but we all faced the same issues.”

Throughout his diverse experiences at UWM, one thing struck Thomas the most.

“The degree of selflessness of the faculty,” he says. “They help people get to where they want to go, and that’s what they did for me. I want to pay it forward by doing the same for others.”

Before successfully defending his dissertation in the fall of 2013, Thomas was already putting his doctoral degree to use as a leadership development manager at MillerCoors – a perfect fit for him.

“MillerCoors is heavily invested in learning and development,” he explains. “In my role, I focus specifically on senior leadership. These are people running multimillion-dollar businesses – their training needs are different. I’m using what I learned through my graduate assistantship to create online courses that they can complete in a way that works for them.”

While many people would be content after achieving such success, Thomas isn’t done yet.

“I want to be a scholar practitioner,” he explains. “I love the corporate world, and I also want to keep a toe in the academic waters.”

One day, Thomas hopes to teach as an adjunct and make an impact in the academic world. And while education may be his way of paying it forward, it will certainly pay off big for all those he educates.
One final celebration of BASEBALL and EDUCATION

Earl Henry loved baseball, education and parties.

That’s why his family cooked up a special start to his 100th year. Henry celebrated his 99th birthday at the April 18, 2013, Brewers game as part of a fundraiser his granddaughter, Jill Finlayson of San Francisco, organized to help raise money for the SOE’s Earl and Kathryn Henry Scholarship. In addition to having his name in lights on the scoreboard, Henry was honored at special reception at the game. Fans in his section sang “Happy Birthday” to him, and a youngster presented him with a signed baseball. Brewers Jonathan Lucroy and Chris Narveson sent him happy birthday tweets, as did Tom Haudricourt, who covers the Brewers for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Henry died Aug. 9, 2013. His granddaughter said the baseball game was one of the highlights of his final months.

Earl and Kathryn Henry met at Milwaukee State Teachers College, one of UWM’s predecessor institutions. They graduated in 1935, were married 70 years and contributed a combined 55 years of service to the Milwaukee Public Schools. Kathryn, who died in 2007, was a kindergarten teacher and Earl a teacher and administrator. Their daughter, Pat, and son, Thomas, both graduated from UWM.

In 2003, their family surprised Earl and Kathryn by setting up a scholarship fund for SOE students in their honor, and has been adding to it over the years.

Jill Finlayson says she felt adding to the fund was a good way to celebrate her grandfather’s birthday. And, since he loved baseball and the Brewers, she wanted to take him to a game as close to his birthday as possible.

The SOE posted about the event on its Facebook page, aiming to collect 99 “likes” for Earl’s birthday and money for the scholarship fund. The family matched donations up to $1,000. So far the scholarship fund has benefited nine students at the SOE.

The Brewers marketing blog mentioned his birthday event, noting he’d been following the team since the Brewers were in the minor leagues and playing at Borchert Field. Earl Henry also showed that his wit was still sharp.

“I read in the paper that one of the (Racing) Sausages was stolen,” he told the Brewers blogger.

“Yes,” she said, “We are glad he’s back.”

“I suppose that’s not the wurst thing that could happen,” he replied with a chuckle.

In Memoriam

Earl Henry at the Brewers game in April of 2013. He was accompanied by Lyn Hildenbrand of UWM (at left) and his granddaughter Jill Finlayson.
Before the internet and social media, the fame of Milwaukee’s Gertie the Duck spread worldwide in 1945, often competing with news about World War II.

Twenty years later, two distinguished graduates of the Milwaukee State Teachers College (the SOE’s predecessor) immortalized Gertie in a children’s book that has sold more than a million copies and was translated into languages including French, Danish and Spanish. Louis Romano died Sept. 30, 2013. His co-author Nicholas Georgiady died in 2010.

Gertie’s saga began in the spring of 1945, as World War II was coming to an end, when she endeared herself to Milwaukee by building a nest on a wooden piling in the Milwaukee River near the former Gimbel’s department store.

Gertie had chosen to make her nest near the southwest corner of the Wisconsin Avenue Bridge, described as the busiest bridge in Wisconsin. Milwaukee – and then a war-weary world – followed the fate of the mallard hen and nine eggs for more than a month. An estimated 87,000 people and 8,000 vehicles crossed the bridge each day, many of whom checked on Gertie’s progress. On Mother’s Day, Gertie received cards, poetry, flowers, duck feed and – oddly – diapers.

For a time, Gertie and her brood competed for front-page space with other notable events, such as the fall of Berlin and the surrender of Germany on V-E Day. GIs, including Romano and Georgiady, kept track of her through military newspapers, radio networks and Life magazine. A Wisconsin Humane Society officer was stationed to watch the brood which eventually produced six ducklings.

Gertie and her offspring were transferred to Gimbel’s store windows, where thousands watched the babies grow. Eventually, the feathered family was taken to the Juneau Park lagoon, where they presumably lived happily ever after as many ducks do.

Stories and books were written about Gertie. Romano and Georgiady, Milwaukee-area teachers, wrote the enduring version, “Gertie the Duck.” The book was re-released in 1988.

Romano and Georgiady grew up in the same Brady Street neighborhood. They become two of nine students admitted to an experimental program at Milwaukee State Teachers College in which they were student teachers all four years while carrying a full-credit load. They graduated in 1943.

While they were completing their PhDs at UW-Madison in 1955, the two childhood friends entered a children’s story-writing contest. “Gertie the Duck” won second place and just kept on selling. In 1959, “Gertie the Duck” was included in Follett’s Beginning-to-Read series.

The pair eventually wrote more than 100 children’s books, filmstrips and texts on middle school education. Their “Exploring Wisconsin” was a classic for fourth and fifth graders studying state history.

Romano and Georgiady each received the Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1999 from UWM. Before he became a professor at Michigan State University, Romano was a teacher, director of instructional services and assistant superintendent of Shorewood Public Schools.

Georgiady was a teacher and principal in Whitefish Bay schools. He later was assistant state superintendent of education in Michigan and taught at Miami University.

The Romano family is considering establishing a fund to support scholarships for SOE students.

In Memoriam

A sculpture of Gertie and her ducklings was installed on the northwest side of the Wisconsin Avenue Bridge in 1997, near the site of the traffic-stopping nest that Gertie built – a gift from Eppstein Uhen Architects.
Filiberto Murguia: His daughter, Carmen, carries on his mission of urban education

Filiberto Murguia – a distinguished SOE graduate who exemplified the school’s mission of urban education and social justice – died Aug. 21, 2013, at age 82.

Murguia came to the SOE in his 40s, and earned a bachelor’s degree in Educational Policy and Community Studies as well as a master’s in Urban Education. He was also the first Latino to earn an Honorary Doctorate for Community Service from UWM, according to his daughter, Carmen Murguia.

The degrees he earned here were an important part of Murguia’s legacy, but only a part. He spent much of his childhood being educated in a seminary in Mexico because his migrant farmworker parents could not afford to give him – one of their 13 children – the care they wanted to. He rose to become a transcendent figure in Milwaukee’s Latino community, serving as executive director of the Council for the Spanish Speaking (Centro Hispano of Milwaukee) for 33 years. Centro Hispano was the first Latino-serving nonprofit community organization in Milwaukee. Under his leadership, it grew to annually serve more than 12,000 individuals, including children, at-risk youth, working families, adult learners and the elderly.

“My dad had a huge impact on many communities, including the Latino community in Milwaukee,” says Carmen Murguia. “But because he worked in housing, education, and children’s and adult basic education, he had friends in many of the city’s ethnic communities. He could talk with anyone.”

Carmen Murguia – one of five siblings – is following in her father’s footsteps. She is scheduled to receive her SOE degree in Educational Policy and Community Studies in December 2014.

“All of his children have been involved in community service in one way or another. One of the reasons I came to UWM is because I received credit for my life experiences,” Carmen Murguia says. She hopes to use her education to eventually pursue the fields of diversity and inclusivity in a Fortune 500 corporation.

Filiberto Murguia’s life was an example of how a good heart, hard work and love of education can have a profound effect on others, his daughter says. As a teenager, he worked on a cotton farm in Texas, but was sent back to Mexico. He later came to Milwaukee using the papers of a brother who was a U.S. citizen. When that brother ended up being drafted, Murguia went in his place, spending 16 months in the U.S. Army in Korea.

As a father, he was active in the Head Start program in which his children were enrolled at Centro Hispano. From there, he went on to become the organization’s executive director.

“Dad was the best teacher I could have had in terms of life,” Carmen says. “We couldn’t afford trips or much else, so he took us on Sunday drives around the city, pointing out the sights. He was always an adventurer.”
Educational Psychology’s multicultural efforts win major APA award

The SOE’s Educational Psychology program is one of three in the U.S. to win a major new award from the American Psychological Association (APA). The Bersoff Presidential Award to Multicultural Programs, which was presented at APA’s 2013 annual convention on Aug. 3, is designed to honor graduate programs/departments for successfully recruiting and graduating students who are U.S.-born ethnic minorities, as well as residents born outside the U.S. in regions such as the Middle East, Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America.

Donald Bersoff, president of the APA, established the award as a way for programs to learn from each other about how to attract and retain students from other countries and ethnic minority groups.

In notifying Nadya Fouad and the department of the award, Bersoff praised the department for its diversity among faculty and students, commitment to infusing multicultural competence into coursework, providing a supportive climate through such groups as the Multicultural Advisory Board, and offering internships and practicums with diverse populations.

“Your efforts will positively impact the profession of psychology for many years to come,” Bersoff said.

Julie Kailin honored with Outstanding Teaching Award

Julie Kailin, associate professor in Educational Policy and Community Studies, received the UWM Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching Award at the October UWM Alumni Awards ceremony.

“More often than not, I find myself quietly researching issues that I wasn’t aware of, something that Dr. Kailin introduced the class to,” wrote former student William Smith in a letter supporting her nomination. Smith is now a graduate student in Cultural Foundations of Education.

Kailin teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in the history of American education, race relations in education, multicultural education, cultural foundations of education, and urban education. She is the author of “Anti-Racist Education: From Theory to Practice.”

One student said: “Dr. Kailin’s courses challenged me to take responsibility to fight racism. She exposes the systemic underlying racism that exists institutionally, and how to counteract it.”

Rev. Lawrence J. McGuin, pastor of Kenwood United Methodist Church, who has taken several of her courses, wrote: “She is strategically placed in the School of Education to mentor and empower present and future educators and community leaders to aspire to pursue truthful historical disclosure concerning the development of American culture and to promote just and fair treatment for students and personnel in education.”

Mesut Akdere, associate professor of administrative leadership, and Barb Daley, interim dean of the SOE, sign certificates for a Human Resource Management non-credit certificate program. As part of SOE’s initiative for internationalization, Akdere developed and obtained this service grant to deliver the program for Antalya International University (AIU) in Turkey twice a year. He delivered the first round of the program during Winter break. The 32-hour certificate program was offered through UWM’s Education Outreach as part of a collaboration agreement set up between the SOE and the Turkish university. The SOE and AIU are also working to develop additional collaborative workshops and programs, some of which will bring students from Turkey to Milwaukee.
Student teachers at UWM are learning new ways to help manage conflict and build classroom communities through a unique partnership between the SOE and the Peace Learning Center of Milwaukee.

“If our student teachers really struggle with anything, it’s with classroom management,” says Angel Hessel, director of student teachers in the Middle Childhood through Early Adolescence Program (MCEA).

Since there was no ready-made course or software to help teachers work with children on nonviolent conflict resolution, healthy communications and building classroom communities, says Hessel, the student teaching program turned to the Peace Learning Center two years ago. The Center was co-founded in 2002 by Ian Harris, now a professor emeritus in SOE and an internationally known expert in peace education.

The teacher training program introduced two sessions of workshops at the Peace Learning Center, just across the Milwaukee River in Riverwest, into the teacher training curriculum in 2012 and continued it this year. The workshops use a series of role-playing activities and games to help the student teachers learn how to help students resolve conflicts and develop positive classroom communities.

“We put this in the course because we want to try to put the focus on how teachers can build a positive learning environment in their classrooms rather than suspending students or sending them to the principal,” says Linda Post, associate professor of curriculum and instruction and chair of the Council on Professional Education (CPE).

“A teacher who builds a supportive emotional environment doesn’t have to do that.”

Sometimes the training works in unexpected ways. A student teacher who tried a technique called “peace breathing” to help calm down a student, was taken aback when the student burst out laughing at her demonstration. That wasn’t exactly the way it was supposed to go, but it worked, defusing a tense confrontation.

Arts, Education collaboration

 Faculty members from the SOE are collaborating with the Peck School of the Arts to develop an Arts Education/Community Ecosystem (ArtsECO), a sustainable network of support for new and veteran teachers who are committed to teaching through art.

ArtsECO will develop teachers as change-makers backed by a strong and sustainable community of arts organizations, nonprofits and K-16 school partnerships.

The initiative will address three interrelated problems:

- The place of arts education in schools
- The standing of teacher education
- The cost of teacher education in a time of diminishing resources

A core team from the Peck School of the Arts, the SOE, and representatives from key school and community partners will work to develop an implementation plan. Focus groups and interviews with preservice, new and veteran educators, school leaders, community organization representatives, and arts advocates will also be part of the planning. This development project is made possible in part by a grant from Margaret A. Cargill Foundation.

“Having the time and resources to thoroughly consider and research how we will develop this program is a tremendous opportunity,” says Peck School Associate Dean and ArtsECO project director Kim Cosier.

“For decades, the Peck School of the Arts together with the UWM School of Education has worked with our school and community partners to prepare K-12 educators who teach in schools throughout the state and country. This grant will enable us to deepen our impact and if we are successful in obtaining an implementation grant for ArtsECO, we will be able to build an incredibly powerful ecosystem of support throughout the region for teachers and their students and the arts organizations who wish to help them. We are extremely honored that the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation has invited us to engage in this process and eager to work with our colleagues in the School of Education.”

In addition to faculty and staff from PSOA and community members, SOE Associate Dean Hope Longwell-Grice, Associate Professor Karen Rigoni, and Assistant Professor Candance Doerr-Stevens are part of the planning team.
In the 2013-2014 academic year, the SOE awarded $231,700 in scholarship money to 109 students who received scholarships averaging $2,200 a student.

UWM held its annual Scholarship Reception in the Union Ballroom on Nov. 14, 2013, honoring our outstanding scholarship recipients, and recognizing the generosity of our many donors. The SOE was well represented, along with the Peck School of the Arts, the Lubar School of Business, the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, the College of Health Sciences, the School of Freshwater Sciences, the College of Nursing, the Zilber School of Public Health, and the UWM Alumni Association.

As the cost of college continues to rise, and students take on increasing levels of debt to fund their education, the SOE is sincerely grateful for the support of our donors, including:

JEAN HOFFMANN (pictured with 2013 scholarship recipient Megan Prudom): Jean was an early childhood educator who taught in the Milwaukee Public Schools for 35 years. She is a 1960 SOE alumna who also earned her graduate degree from the SOE in 1979. Thanks to Jean's support, students in early childhood education receive financial support during their crucial student teaching, a time when they are unable to work due to their heavy course load.

HENRY KEPNER, JR. (pictured with 2013 recipient Amy Baer): Henry served on the SOE faculty in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction from 1972 until his retirement in 2011. He served as the President of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and is internationally recognized for his contributions to the fields of mathematics and math education. An outstanding teacher, Henry's scholarship helps support students seeking certification in mathematics education in the middle and high school grades.

ALFONZO THURMAN (pictured with 2013 recipient Darrell Finch): Alfonzo served as Dean of the SOE from 2001 to 2011. In that position, Alfonzo helped diversify the faculty and students and brought a passion to his work that continues to be felt in the SOE today. Leaders at the U.S. Bank were instrumental in raising funds to recognize his legacy. This scholarship provides funding for Milwaukee high school graduates who are pursuing careers in education at UWM.

To all of our generous donors, as well as their families and friends, we say “thank you.” The impact of your generosity will be felt by our students for years to come.
SOE scholarship winners, their families, donors, advisers and professors were honored at the annual Scholarship Dinner in the fall of 2013. Here are photos of some of those attending:

1. Jennifer Filz
2. Cheryl Bledsoe, Destiny Bledsoe, Kandi Bledsoe
3. Rob Longwell-Grice, SOE scholarship coordinator, with Christine Ricks
4. Elyse Heinnch
5. Tanisha Schowalter
6. Connie Eller with Judy Winn
7. DeShaune Turner, Rob Longwell-Grice, Ryan Hurley and donor Barbara Michaels
8. Michelle Quiles, Marleisa Quiles
9. Sarah Reynolds
10. Dunya Khouny
11. Dylan Jordan, George Jordan and Tasha Jordan
12. Elizabeth Balge
13. Elizabeth Dean
The Institute for Urban Education (IUE) is sharing the urban focus of UWM’s School of Education with student teachers from all over the University of Wisconsin system.

The IUE, now housed at UWM on the fifth floor of Enderis Hall, gives student teachers from all UW System Schools and Colleges of Education the opportunity to experience teaching in urban schools.

“I was looking for something that was a little more challenging with more diversity,” says Amber Eide, who came from UW-La Crosse to student teach at Townsend School for the fall semester. “Every assignment I had (before) was much the same, except for the grade level.”

The focus of the IUE program is to give student teachers the opportunity to experience and understand urban education and its diversity. Under the leadership of new director Tracey Nix, the Institute also plans to eventually provide professional development opportunities for those interested in urban education and increase and improve collaborative research efforts on urban education among UW System schools.

The move of the Institute to Milwaukee from Madison, which took place over the summer of 2013, makes sense, says Linda Post. Post, an associate professor in UWM’s School of Education, has long been a liaison for UWM, MPS and the System’s IUE. That’s because the mission of preparing teachers for urban schools guides SOE’s teacher preparation programs, and that approach is infused in all of its methods and content courses.

The potential teachers are being placed in MPS, according to Sandra Ivers, the associate director. She notes the program has been growing rapidly, from 29 students last year to the 41 students enrolled for fall semester this year.

Many of the students in the program came from predominantly white suburban communities, but said they felt their own universities and the IUE programs prepared them for teaching in an urban setting. They also met regularly with each other and the IUE leaders during the semester to compare experiences and share ideas.
“I felt the (IUE) seminars really benefitted me,” says Chelsea Schmidt of UW-La Crosse. “I felt prepared.”
Still, they found some surprises. One was the lack of resources. “I was really surprised by the lack of art and music in school. One school I was at hadn’t had a gym teacher for five years,” says Kassandra Braun of UW-Eau Claire. “They had a library, but hadn’t had a librarian for 20 years.”
Another surprise was the lack of diversity of the students in MPS, which has become a “majority minority” school system.
“I wanted diversity, but the only diversity is among the teachers,” noted Julia Herrmann of UW-Madison, wryly.
The students did find cultural differences that were sometimes challenging. Brian Jurchisin from UW-River Falls, who student taught at Bradley Tech, occasionally had difficulty when he didn’t seem to be able to communicate about some issues with African American students.
“I wasn’t sure whether it was culturally based, or because I was white or just because I wasn’t from Milwaukee.” However, he adds, “it’s surprising how well humor can play a role.
I told a stupid math joke and got an unexpected laugh. I think they didn’t think they could have fun in math class.”
The student teachers agreed they tried to approach their classrooms without preconceived ideas about what an urban classroom or community was like, and often found media stereotypes were not true.
“There are some fantastic teachers who are doing a great job,” says Braun.
“I was a little scared the students would be disrespectful, but I’m at a really good school,” notes Schmidt.
Herrmann found that, contrary to some media stories, the parents of her students were very supportive and involved.
All those student teachers interviewed said they felt their experiences helped them broaden their repertoire of teaching skills. They also shared in the joy of working with their cooperating teachers to help their students.
“The students in the special education program have been put down so much by society in general,” says Braun. “Just to help them find some success and gain confidence in themselves was so meaningful.”

In addition to teaching, SOE faculty members are involved in research and community work throughout the year.

For a complete list of publications, presentations and projects for the academic year 2012-2013, please visit http://www.uwm.edu/soe/about/news.cfm.

Here are just a few examples:
Barbara Bales, Latish Reed, Raji Swaminathan, Decoteau Irby, Gail Schneider and Thandeka Chapman of the Departments of Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Policy and Community Studies and Administrative Leadership worked with Milwaukee Public Schools on the “Aspiring Principals Project” through June 30, 2013, to encourage and support school principals in the district.

Mesut Akdere of Educational Administration did a presentation titled Exploring Human Resource Development in the Middle East: Implications for Research and Practice. The paper was published in the Refereed Proceedings of the 11th Knowledge, Economy and Management Congress held in Valetta, Malta.

Elise Frattura of Exceptional Education and a colleague published an article on Barriers and Supports to Integrated Services for All Students: Examining Roles, Structures and Processes in One Urban District.

Nadya Fouad of Educational Psychology and a colleague did a presentation at the 2012 American Psychological Association Annual Conference, titled “Consultation and Implementation of Social Justice with a Community-Based Organization.”

Numerous faculty members are also involved in community service.
Many thanks to the School of Education donors who help make our work possible and support our students through scholarships. Donors for this past fiscal year include:

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Greetings!

I recently joined UWM’s School of Education as the director of development. This means I will be partnering with YOU to advance our time-honored mission of preparing teachers and other education leaders for the challenges and opportunities that come with a multicultural urban society.

Together, we will work to spread the message far and wide that people should be paying close attention to our School, distinguished for providing one of the best teacher education preparation programs and widely celebrated for offering the only doctoral program in urban education.

Because we work so hard to ensure that this exceptional educational opportunity is accessible to all who have the desire to succeed, we continue to attract students who might not otherwise be able to follow their dreams. Many hail from compromised homes and neighborhoods. They are tenacious in their academic pursuits, but outside stressors can be particularly daunting for these students. They need only a few champions in their corner so they can stay the course and graduate. Because of donor support, they will soon be a tremendous inspiration to those who will learn alongside them.

By blending accessibility with excellence demonstrated through research, inventive programming and partnerships and impactful field experiences, we have made tremendous strides toward changing the landscape of education.

We continue to prepare the largest number of teachers for MPS, many serving areas in desperate need of compassionate and committed educators. The leadership we have provided to charter schools through our Office of Charter Schools has assured families that those dozen schools we’ve worked with are trustworthy and innovative.

Of course, none of these initiatives could happen without the support of friends like you, people who believe so strongly in the mission and want to make sure UWM is thriving for generations to come. In addition to the loyal generosity of many donors, and the sometimes magnificent gifts to launch important programs, the UWM Foundation manages many endowed scholarship funds. These “forever funds” will continue to grow and produce scholarships long after we are all gone. You would be pleasantly surprised to learn about the many ways you can provide for your loved ones as well as the causes that mean so much to you.

I hope you are inspired by this edition of EdLine to invest in the “UWM teacher” and the countless students whose lives will be impacted by their passion to make a difference. For more information on how to leave a legacy, please visit giftplanning.uwm.edu or contact planning@uwm.edu. Or, simply give me a call at 414-229-3080. I would love to hear from you!

Your gift to the UWM School of Education will help ensure that Milwaukee continues to be a leader in urban education for years to come.

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University researchers and a team of intermediate school students are working together on a project to build a hand mobility device for seniors with disabilities.

The unusual partnership grew from a newspaper article and a phone call.

Peter Graven and his robotics club at Deer Creek Intermediate School in St. Francis were preparing a project for the First Lego League challenge. The theme for that year’s competition was Senior Solutions, helping find devices that would help with health problems specific to senior citizens.

First Lego League introduces younger students to real-world engineering challenges by having them build LEGO-based robots to complete tasks. Each challenge has a theme, and the students work with adult coaches. The goal is to discover career possibilities and make positive contributions to society.

After reading an article in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel about research in UWM’s Hand Rehabilitation Lab, Graven contacted Na Jin Seo, director of UWM’s Hand Rehabilitation Lab, for advice on evaluating their efforts.

That initial contact in 2012 has blossomed into an ongoing collaboration between the 7th and 8th graders and university researchers.

Graven, who mentors the robotics club, is an 8th-grade science teacher who started the STEM (Science, Technology, Education and Mathematics) program for the St. Francis School District. Deer Creek is located near the St. Ann’s Center for older adults, and students became aware through contacts with the center of the many mobility needs of older adults, says Graven.

One of the focuses of UWM hand rehabilitation lab is developing and testing devices to help stroke survivors regain use of their hands. She gravitated toward robotics, because “I’ve always been interested in how to use engineering to benefit human beings,” says Seo, an assistant professor of industrial and mechanical engineering.

A grant from UWM’s Cultures and Communities has allowed the intermediate school and the university researchers to continue their collaboration. Pilwon Hur, a post-doctoral researcher in UWM’s engineering program visits the school to discuss challenges and offer advice. The students also visit the UWM lab regularly to compare what they’ve accomplished with efforts of researchers on campus.

“They have been extremely receptive and welcoming,” says Graven of the UWM researchers. “They’ve been patient with the kids and respect their school schedules.”

Watching Hur studying the device and asking and answering questions from Deer Creek students Nik and Colton during a visit to the school, there is little sense of an age difference. This day, the students are wrestling with how to build a finger rest that will allow researchers to test sensitivity, but still be comfortable for the users. Hur gives thoughtful attention to the students’ ideas, and the whole group exchanges ideas and possible solutions. These are curious engineers attacking a problem together.

“These kids are really bright,” says Seo, “and they love to talk about engineering and programming.”

Members of the school’s robotics club have moved on to other projects, but a core group has stayed focused on the hand project, says Graven. The formal program involves 10 Deer Creek students and 11 UWM engineering students.

The overall goals of both the UWM project and the Deer Creek project are to develop an assistive device for the elders to feel the touch sensation in the hand better.

But in addition to building a robotic device, Graven and Seo stress other benefits of the collaborative program:

- Showing university students and middle school students can work together on scientific research to benefit the elderly;
- Encouraging university students to develop their teaching and mentoring skills as well as connections with the community;
- Inspiring the university and middle school students to develop and use engineering skills to help people in the community.

“It’s allowed us to help students understand the connection between the STEM fields and the real world,” says Graven.
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