

# The NERA Researcher

## The President's Message



John Young

Dear NERA Colleagues,

I am honored to serve as your President for 2014, and expect that next year will be an exciting and eventful one as we build on the achievements of the past several years. I look forward to meeting and working with each and every one of you during my term in office. I am impressed by the degree of engagement of so many NERA members as conference participants, committee members and chairs, and as leaders of the organization. NERA is successful because of the contributions of knowledge, skills and energy from our members. There is always room for improvement, but NERA is healthy, strong and confident because of our collective talents and collaborative efforts.

My major goal for the upcoming year is to identify and implement ways to add year-round value to your NERA membership. One of my initiatives is to hold occasional webinars throughout the year on topics of interest to members. By the time you read this, the first one will have taken place, focusing on applying for summer internships for graduate students. Look for information, via e-mail and on the NERA website, on additional topics in 2014. In addition, I want to strengthen the mentoring and professional development components of your membership. I plan to accomplish this through the use of a NERA discussion board (so that members can exchange questions and answers) and the implementation of a mentoring database (so that members can identify and connect with possible mentors/mentees). As these initiatives develop further, I'll be sending out additional information.

With the leadership of Past President Darlene Perner, NERA has had many notable accomplishments during 2013. The committees are staffed with hard-working volunteers who have worked effectively to carry out their charge. The NERA leadership, including the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors, has worked diligently to lead and improve the organization. The 2013 conference was a resounding success (!) under the direction and guidance of the conference co-chairs, Steven Holtzman and Jennifer Randall. In fact, the conference drew nearly 200 submissions and over 300 participants. The Sheraton Hartford South Hotel provided excellent service throughout the event. The Rocky Hill property has served as the location for seven consecutive NERA conferences; however, starting next year (and through at least 2016), the NERA conference will be held at the Marriott Hotel in Trumbull, Connecticut. This hotel is larger, in terms of both guest and meeting rooms, and was recently renovated. We look forward to working with the staff there in hosting future conferences.

Recently, a number of important changes in NERA leadership roles has occurred. April Zenisky now serves as the President Elect; congratulations to April and I look forward to working with her. Craig Wells was elected and Javarro Russell was re-elected to the Board of Directors; congratulations to both of them and I welcome their involvement and wisdom. Kristen Smith is now the Chair of the Graduate Student Issues Committee; we have had a

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## The NERA Researcher

The NERA Researcher is the official newsletter for members of the Northeastern Educational Research Association.

### Message from the Editors

Hello NERA Members! We hope you enjoyed the 44<sup>th</sup> annual conference. By all accounts, it was a resounding success! We hope you enjoy reading this issue which contains memorable highlights from the conference including Darlene Perner's Presidential Address, a recap of the conference proceedings and GSIC activities, and recognition of award winners. You will also find an early preview of what is already being planned for the 2014 conference and John Young's first President's message where he explains the goals for his term and recent changes in the NERA leadership.

We would also like to update you on an upcoming change to the editorship of *The NERA Researcher*. Beginning with the Spring 2014 issue, Maureen's term as co-editor ends. We are thrilled to announce that Haifa Matos-Elfonte will serve as co-editor along with Bo Bashkov. On a personal note, I have very much enjoyed my experience as co-editor and the opportunity to work first with Christine Harnes and then Bo as well as so many other dedicated NERA members.

As always, if you have ideas for *The NERA Researcher* including ideas for special articles please contact us at [NERAResearcher@nera-education.org](mailto:NERAResearcher@nera-education.org).

Bo Bashkov & Maureen Ewing  
The Editors

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number of e-mail exchanges during the past several months and I'm pleased to be working with Kristen in developing and carrying out ideas that benefit the NERA graduate student members. I have also appointed Steven Holtzman to serve as my Presidential Advisor on Special Projects. He will be assisting me in carrying out my initiatives as well as helping to think about future directions for NERA. Given his close involvement over the past several years, NERA will benefit greatly from his knowledge and expertise.

I have every expectation that the 2014 conference, "Equity and Excellence in an Era of Accountability", will be truly memorable. Under the direction of my very capable conference co-chairs, Pamela Kaliski, Ross Markle and Javarro Russell, the program will feature Jonathan Alger, the President of James Madison University, as the keynote speaker. He is a nationally recognized scholar and speaker on higher education policy and law, and has presented on a range of topics including access and opportunity, diversity, intellectual property, and academic freedom. While at the University of Michigan, he played a key leadership role in the university's efforts in two landmark Supreme Court cases on diversity in undergraduate and professional school admissions. In addition, Andrew Ho, from Harvard University, and Michael Kane, from the Educational Testing Service, have agreed to be invited speakers at the conference.

I'd like to publicly thank Darlene Perner and Lynn Shelley for their mentorship during the past year. They are difficult acts to follow, but I feel well-prepared after watching and learning from them. The NERA Executive Committee and the Board of Directors will be holding its Winter meeting at the Trumbull Marriott during January 24-25, 2014. I invite you to share with me your thoughts and ideas about improving NERA; you can e-mail me at [jwyong@ets.org](mailto:jwyong@ets.org). I also encourage you to consider volunteering and serving NERA as a committee member or in some other capacity.

Lastly, two free drinks (on me) at next year's conference to the first person who can correctly identify the location of my vacation photo in early November!

## Institutional Membership

The number of Institutional Members continues to grow each year. The support of our Institutional Members is vital to our organization. Institutional Members join at three main sponsorship levels: Platinum (\$1000), Gold (\$750), and Silver (\$500), and we are also fortunate to have received in-kind donations from Westfield State University for their printing of all of the conference programs and Bloomsburg University for printing of the convenient mini-programs. Educational Testing Service also donated an additional \$150 for the Graduate Student Issues Committee's social event. We appreciate the support of the following 2013 Institutional Members:

| Institution  | Level      | Amount        |
|--|------------|---------------|
| Westfield State University                                 | Platinum + |               |
| Educational Testing Service                                | Platinum + | 1,000         |
| edCount, LLC   | Platinum   | 1,000         |
| Johnson & Wales University                                 | Platinum   | 1,000         |
| James Madison University                                   | Platinum   | 1,000         |
| University of Connecticut                                  | Platinum   | 1,000         |
| University of Massachusetts Amherst                        | Platinum   | 1,000         |
| Bloomsburg University                                      | Gold +     | 750           |
| University of Hartford                                     | Gold       | 750           |
| Buros Center for Testing, University of Nebraska-Lincoln   | Silver     | 500           |
| Fordham University   | Silver     | 500           |
| Pace University School of Education                        | Silver     | 500           |
| Pacific Metrics Corporation                                | Silver     | 500           |
| School of Education, Southern Connecticut State University | Silver     | 500           |
| William Paterson University                                | Silver     | 500           |
| <b>Total received</b>                                      |            | <b>10,500</b> |

## Member News

In 2010, President Kathryn Nottis invited NERA members **Sharon Cramer** and **Jan Stivers** to offer a session that related to her conference theme of "Collaboration." As a result of the success of the session, the authors developed an article, which appears in the fall issue of *The Journal of Faculty Development*: Stivers, J. & Cramer, S. F. (Fall 2013). Academic Writing Partnerships: The DIY Version. *The Journal of Faculty Development*, 27(3), 30-35. It will also be a chapter in a book on Academic Scholarship, to be published by New Forums Press.

**Fred Cline** and **John W. Young** (both of ETS) were co-authors of the paper chosen as the best article published in volume 27 of the *Journal of Career and Technical Education*: Yettick, H., Cline, F., and Young, J. W. (2012). Dual goals: The academic achievement of college prep students with career majors. *Journal of Career and Technical Education*, 27, 120-142.

**Nicholas Hartlep** published the following:

Hartlep, N. D., & Morgan, G. B. (2013). An exploratory study of the restricted-use ELS:2002 dataset: Using finite mixture modeling as a way to problematize the "model minority stereotype." *International Journal of Research in Education Methodology*, 3(3), 295-304.

Hartlep, N. D. (2013). Assimilation without Acculturation. In J. Ainsworth (Ed.), *Sociology of Education: An A-to-Z Guide* (pp. 50-51). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452276151>

Hartlep, N. D. (2013). Asian American categorization. In C. E. Cortés (Ed.), *Multicultural America: A multimedia encyclopedia* (pp. 20-25). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452276274>

Hayes, C., & Hartlep, N. D. (Eds.). (2013). *Unhooking from Whiteness: The Key to Dismantling Racism in the United States*. Boston, MA: Sense Publishers.

Hartlep, N. D., & Eckrich, L. T. (2013). Ivory tower graduates in the red: The role of debt in higher education. *Workplace*, 22, 82-97. Retrieved from <http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/workplace/article/view/184428/184114>

# NERA Presidential Address: My Historical Journey Toward Fairness

Darlene Perner, Ed.D.  
*Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania*

I believe that every Presidential Address involves a speech about what is most passionate to the President of the day. In their Addresses, these Past Presidents set the stage for their topic and presented their argument. No matter what my thoughts are about assessment, research partnerships, NERA's history, or brain development, I am always impressed and motivated by their arguments. So I will present my case. I am passionate about Fairness and Special Education! I hope you too will be convinced that fairness in special education is evolving even though sometimes at a painfully slow rate. Therefore to begin my reasoning, I would like to take you on my personal journey of awareness in the growth and development of fairness in special education. It has not been a steady progression toward equality, nor can I see the blissful end. There are still bumps in the road but there have been substantial changes over time. My journey consists of influences that positively affected me, as a special educator, and clearly affected how students with disabilities are treated, educated and valued today. Each moment in history, was a movement toward equality often lead by a humanitarian, philosopher, theoretician, researcher, or advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. I would like to share my journey.

The first person who influenced me was Elizabeth Farrell. Elizabeth was born in 1870 and years later became a teacher. Soon thereafter she left her roots to teach in what was referred to as "the slums of New York City." Due to the state of schools which, at that time, focused on punishment and the "mechanical-drudgery of memorizing 'cut-and-dried facts'" (Rice as cited in Kode, 2002, p. 25), Elizabeth had the opportunity to experiment and develop her own curriculum. Her first class with her new curriculum was a multiage group of boys, most of whom had an intellectual disability. Elizabeth's curriculum focused on learning subjects using themes and real-life experiences. For example, her pupils from Manhattan were taken to a farm to get soil to grow their own seeds, and then during writing time, they wrote reflections about their experience (Kode, 2002, p. 28). Over the years, Elizabeth studied other school systems including Great Britain's special education classes that were separate programs and housed in separate schools. She came to the realization that the "...ungraded pupils have the best of both worlds: 'the opportunity for individual instruction while it presents to him, when he is able to grasp it, the chance of doing class work'" (Kode, 2002, p. 42). Elizabeth's beliefs were a precursor to "the landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board*

*of Education of Topeka* (1954), which prohibited the idea of 'separate but equal'" (Kode, 2002, p. 98). Besides promoting special classes in public schools so that students with an intellectual disability could also attend general education classes, she refuted Goddard's intelligence testing as the sole basis for identifying students for placement in special education classes (Kode, 2002, p. 98). Elizabeth believed that ungraded students had a right to be identified and educated based on their individual needs determined by multiple measures.

Without doubt, Elizabeth Farrell was the first person who influenced me as a special educator. Prior to studying special education, I was a general education teacher having taught students in sixth grade and high school in what was referred to as "inner city schools" in Chicago. I could easily relate to many of Elizabeth's beliefs. Her views were only strengthened when I began teaching in a separate setting, an institution in New York State. Here students were identified solely by intelligence testing and taught separate programs in separate settings with curriculum that was based on a developmental approach no matter what the age of the student. Elizabeth taught me the importance of teaching my students relevant skills, real-life skills so that they may have the opportunity to leave the institution. Like her, I saw day by day the inadequacies of separate but equal.

Next on my journey of fairness, I will jump from the 1920s to the 1950s. In 1954, the Supreme Court decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that children cannot be segregated in public schools based on their race. They have the same right to equal educational opportunities that other children have. Even though, at the time, I was too young to realize the impact of *Brown v. Board of Education*, it had an immediate and long term impact on parents of children with an intellectual disability who were being excluded from school. Although it took almost 20 years, the *Brown* case provided the impetus for parents to come together to fight for the right to an education for their children with disabilities. Two cases that were brought to the courts were *PARC v the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971) and *Mills v Board of Education of District of Columbia* (1972). The *PARC v Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* litigation was based on the State Statutes "...which allows an indefinite postponement of admission to public school of any child who has not attained a mental age of five years" and "...which relieves the State Board of Education from any obligation to educate a child whom a public school psychologist certifies as uneducable

and untrainable" (1972, p. 1). The *PARC* case was settled under a consent decree and along with the *Mills* case had a profound effect on education rights for children with an intellectual disability and other disabilities. In the *PARC* case, it was ruled that students with an intellectual disability could not be denied access to a free public program of education and training.

As a graduate student living in New York State, I was fortunate to be able to listen to the proceedings of the *PARC* case. This was the first time I became aware that students with disabilities were not being served in public education. I was inspired by the testimony. I celebrated the outcome of this case with a sense of moral empowerment. I was ecstatic with the realization that children with disabilities at least had a chance for receiving a free public school education appropriate to their needs. It was a turning point for me in making the decision to become a special education teacher.

This is not the end of that journey of fairness! Many other lawsuits followed and "by 1973, more than 30 federal court decisions had upheld the principles of *PARC* and *Mills*" (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996, p. 28). Congress felt the pressure of these litigations. It finally responded in 1975 with the passage of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act which legislated free and appropriate public education for all students with disabilities and the funding to support special education services (Martin et al., 1996, p. 29).

It was right after the *PARC* and *Mills* cases that I found myself teaching students with severe disabilities in a New York State institution, ironically, but well-meaningly, called a developmental center. My first special education class consisted of ten students, ages 6-17, all of whom resided in Ward X and had never attended school. It was amazing for me to be confronted with this teaching experience and realize that Tommy, my 17 year old, had lived on Ward X for most of his life and I was his first teacher, all because of two class action suits! As a result of these two court case rulings, life changed for my children on Ward X and for me! My students now had a right to education. They no longer sat all day in a ward of the institution. And, I was fortunate to be able to provide for their education. I celebrated the first day in school as *a day in their journey toward fairness!*

I have gotten ahead of myself in my journey and will need to retrace steps back in time. Although two renowned individuals influenced me in the 1970s when I was teaching at the state institution, they came to the forefront in the late 1960s. Both, Wolf Wolfensberger and Burton Blatt were researchers and advocates for persons with severe disabilities. In 1969, a Swedish philosopher, Bengt Nirje introduced the Normalization Principle defined as "...making available to the mentally retarded patterns and conditions of everyday life which are as close as possible to the norms and patterns of the mainstream of society" (p. 181). Wolfensberger took Nirje's theoretical position and "extended the influence to

the United States" (Mann & van Kraayenoord, 2011, p. 204). At this point in time, Wolfensberger was an advocate for the rights of persons with an intellectual disability. Being young to the field, Wolfensberger (2011) quickly came to the realization that even the leaders in the field of special education felt that persons with an intellectual disability were "hopeless" and should be institutionalized. His thinking was that these researchers had never seen people with an intellectual disability in a positive light, one where families and teachers held positive attitudes and worked to develop their children's skills (Wolfensberger, 2011). Wolfensberger had seen positive experiences and knew that persons with an intellectual disability were capable of being in a developmental program. As a result of his beliefs, Wolfensberger took the Normalization Principle and saw it as a way to help our society to see that children with an intellectual disability need not be institutionalized and those already institutionalized need not be *there!* His work focused on deinstitutionalization while applying the Normalization Principle.

With the shift to deinstitutionalization and seeing people with an intellectual disability over next 30 years sharing their lives with others led Wolfensberger to write in 1991:

One important thing that we should note about positive changes is that a remarkably small proportion were the result of significant research, scientific or technological developments. The overwhelming bulk of the improvements all derived from two states of mind that are available anytime anywhere to anybody: imagination and humane attitude. (Wolfensberger, 2011, p. 449)

For me, teaching in an institutional setting, the impact of the Normalization Principle and Wolfensberger's theoretical writings and presentations greatly influenced my thinking and my teaching. My students, living in an institution or what was officially called a developmental center, were given the right to an education in 1973. With that right, came the implementation of the curriculum of the day, the developmental program. Their curriculum consisted of my assessment of their "weaknesses" using a developmental skills inventory. It was my job to teach to those "deficits." The skills being assessed through this inventory were fairly appropriate for students who were younger than the students in my class. Even though my students were chronologically older than the age for which the developmental inventory was developed, it was deemed appropriate for this class because of their clinically identified mental ages. According to the professionals of the day, my students fit this curriculum. Over the next year, and through Elizabeth Farrell's and Wolfensberger's influences, I realized that learning how to skip, walk a balance beam, and drink from a straw were not the most relevant skills to learn for 6-17 year old students living in an institution. In fact, let me ask: "How many of you skip to work?" "How many of you, in your free time or at the gym,

walk a balance beam?" I started thinking is this "normal" for a 17 year old to be skipping, walking a balance beam or trying to drink from a straw? Drinking from a straw would not have been such a bad idea if the students did use straws to drink with but they did not! Still it would not have been such an inappropriate skill to learn except in the institution, what was a "normal" setting? It was a large day room with a water fountain. Therefore, while in the institution, my students needed to learn skills that they could apply in that setting. If they wanted a drink of water they needed to learn how to use the water fountain in their own day room, not learn how to use a straw. And, if my students had a chance of being deinstitutionalized then they needed to learn more relevant skills instead of the developmental skills of skipping or walking a balance beam. I applied that Normalization Principle every chance I could and like Wolf Wolfensberger and Burton Blatt, I realized that segregated environments lead to lower expectations and a devaluing of a class—in this case, persons with an intellectual disability.

Like Wolf Wolfensberger, Burton Blatt was also an advocate for deinstitutionalization. In the fall of 1965, United States Senator Robert Kennedy toured a number of institutions that housed people with an intellectual disability. Senator Kennedy revealed the conditions he saw during his visits. Administrators and public officials were furious with Senator Kennedy's account (Blatt & Kaplan, 1966). More fuel was added to the fire when Burton Blatt and Fred Kaplan soon thereafter visited five institutions and co-authored, *Christmas in Purgatory: A Photographic Essay on Mental Retardation* (1966). Indeed, they called these institutions an inferno, shocking the world with their horrific visual and written accounts of the degradation of persons with an intellectual disability living there (Blatt & Kaplan, 1966). Only a few photos showed residents having a "good thing." In time, their exposé led to a fairer treatment of individuals with an intellectual disability living in institutions and to the deinstitutionalization movement. While a teacher at the developmental center, I had the privilege of hearing Burton Blatt give a keynote address. His beliefs then and thereafter became part of my beliefs. Perhaps this best summarizes my impression of him and the impact he had on me. In 1985, Blatt stated that "...we have to ask different things of ourselves" (p. 309). One of these is:

All our professional philosophies must include the belief that, as human beings, all people are equally valuable, all human life is equally sacred, and all individuals deserve an equal opportunity to learn to grow and to succeed. (p. 309)

It is fortunate that Blatt's and Wolfensberger's work did not stop in the late 60s but continued for many decades thereafter. They influenced not only me but also society in moving toward a more fair treatment of people with an intellectual disability and advocating for their equal and fair rights. This included promoting inclusion of persons with an

intellectual disability into communities, public schools and inclusive settings.

In the late 60s and 70s, Marc Gold also was influenced by the Normalization Principle. He was a special education teacher and believed his students with the most severe intellectual disabilities were more capable than what was thought of them. Gold also believed that all students could learn if we, as teachers, found a way to teach them (<http://mn.gov/mnddc/extra/marc-gold2.html>). His beliefs lead to developing a systematic training system now known as "systematic instruction." He used the principles of task analysis. Task analysis was highly used in industry but not readily applied in education. To teach his students, Gold broke real-life skills down into minute steps. In this way students could be taught to perform each step of the skill in its simplest form. By putting all the steps together, students were able to complete the task or skill he was teaching. His impetus was that students needed to learn a skill that could lead to a job. Therefore he created these tasks in a simulated setting within his classroom. One of the first skills Marc shared was assembling a bike. Over time, he marketed his instruction and called it "Try Another Way." His training explicitly taught teachers how to teach using his "Try Another Way" program. Marc respected and valued his students and by his modeling influenced many others working inside and outside of institutions. I met Marc Gold at a national conference in the mid-seventies and what was admirable was, Marc's (using Wolfensberger's words) "imagination and humane attitude." What Marc believed in was his students' capabilities at a time when others focused on students' deficits. His principles were shared across the country and led to students with an intellectual disability performing not only job-related skills but other life skills by using a step-by-step approach through systematic training. Even though I was not trained with the Try Another Way program, at the institution my school psychologist and I used Gold's strategies of task analysis and data collection. Foster grandparents, therapy aides and I used this new method of systematic training to teach my students life skills such as dressing and washing hands in their own living area. In fact, here I was able to teach Annie how to walk up and down the stairs using systematic instruction. Annie was one of my students who was fortunate enough to be adopted. In order to make her transition to a family home and public school feasible for her she had to learn to walk up and down stairs. This was quite a challenge for Annie as she not only had an intellectual disability but also cerebral palsy. Systematic instruction worked for Annie as it did for all my students! My students were finally having an opportunity to learn skills that other students without disabilities were learning or had learned! They were capable of learning these skills and so many more. It was only fair to TRY ANOTHER WAY!

Now I will move on to the 80s and a road that took me to Canada. Here I had the opportunity to experience the

Normalization Principle being implemented in many schools and communities, providing students with opportunities to learn meaningful skills and perform meaningful jobs. People who opposed the deinstitutionalization and inclusion of students with an intellectual disability interpreted the meaning of the Normalization Principle as making persons with an intellectual disability “normal.” Wolfensberger, realizing this misinterpretation, proposed a new term which he based on empirical social research. He called this, social role valorization (SRV) which gave new meaning to how we can help others to value persons with an intellectual disability. Simply stated by Osburn (2006) “...the major goal of SVR is to create or support socially valued roles for people in society, because if a person holds valued social roles, that person is highly likely to receive from society those good things in life that are available to that society...” (p. 4). During the deinstitutionalization movement, I was fortunate enough to be part of team to assist in closing the largest institution in New Brunswick, Canada. Here, we used the theory of social role valorization and parent advocates to ensure that the students with severe disabilities would be seen not as a burden to families and the school districts but as contributing members of their school and community. We were guided by Drs. Wolfensberger, Blatt and Gold.

While all this was occurring, parents of students with an intellectual disability brought Lou Brown, a special education researcher at the University of Wisconsin to New Brunswick, Canada where I was a consultant with the Department of Education. Brown provided workshops refuting the developmental or ‘bottom-up’ approach to teaching students with an intellectual disability. He introduced the ecological or “top-down” approach which consisted of identifying meaningful skills in the environment that adults use independently. And, instead of an arts and crafts curriculum or a chronologically-age inappropriate curriculum (e.g., a developmental program), students were being taught meaningful skills for independence and for work in inclusive job settings. Lou Brown left us with the question: “If the student does not learn to perform a particular activity, will someone else have to do it for him or her?” And, if someone does not have to do it for him or her it is not a meaningful task or skill. For example, if I had Tommy, my 17 year old, putting pegs in a peg board and he didn’t do it or complete it, would you have to do it for him? Of course not! But, if Annie did not learn to walk up and down the stairs independently, would you have to assist her? Students with an intellectual disability have a right to have opportunities where they are socially valued and less dependent on others for meaningful skills and tasks, and for real jobs in their community!

Perhaps the most influential person I met in the 90s was Marsha Forest. Marsha brought many philosophies to the parents and teachers in New Brunswick. Her vision of inclusion inspired me and others or perhaps it was her tenacity and relentlessness that left us in awe! After teaching in an

institution and helping to close another one, I was already an avid advocate of inclusion. Being segregated was not equal and was not fair; I experienced that firsthand. But, what Marsha could do to inspire others was amazing! Marsha taught me that I had to be creative in providing opportunities for students with an intellectual disability to be able to experience the same things as others students do! More importantly, Marsha taught me the importance of taking risks, standing up for what I believe in and showing my passion about the rights of children and the right for them to be there, there with others their own age!

As the years go by in my journey there have been many other researchers and advocates who have influenced me. In this presentation I have only been able to share with you some of my “best people,” by no means an exhaustive list. These are people who have had an outstanding and long lasting impact on my life and on the lives of the students I taught or advocated for; these persons continue to influence me.

What the future will bring and the rapidity with which it comes in moving closer toward full equality for students with an intellectual disability, is the timeless question. I would like to end by sharing another quote from Burton Blatt. He eloquently summarizes my thoughts:

Lots of our ‘best people’ are around. Lots more are on our way.

Lots are undiscovered. Possibly even you can be one of our ‘best people.’ (Blatt, 1985, p. 309)

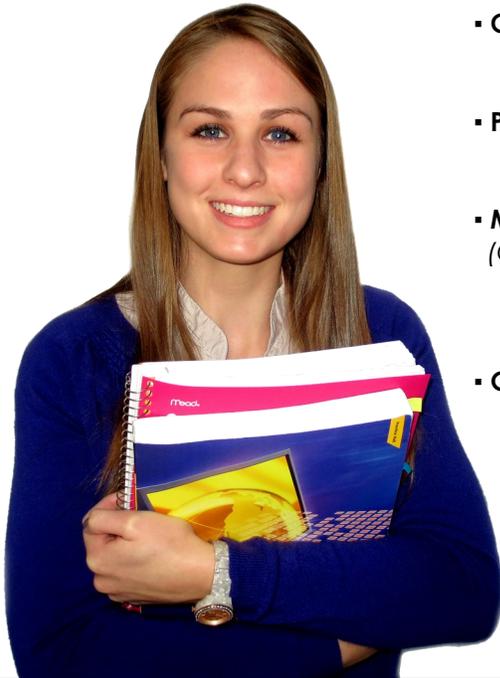
*Note:* The developmental center where I taught Tommy and Annie closed in 2011.

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JWU alum **KARIN EDWARDS**

has worked at public and private two- and four-year institutions for the majority of her career in education.

Edwards has served in several leadership positions including nine years as senior student affairs administrator and nine years as a senior-level administrator outside of student affairs.

She currently serves as the dean of student development at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich, Conn.

## Conference Highlights

### 44th Annual Conference, October 23-25, 2013

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the 2013 NERA Conference. Conference participants attended from all across the northeast as well as other regions of the United States, to share their research, learn from one another, chair or organize sessions, facilitate discussions within sessions and volunteer in a multitude of ways to help make this year's conference a success. The program included 2 pre-conference workshops, 5 in-conference workshops, 19 individual paper presentations and 4 paper discussion sessions, 16 symposia, 38 research posters, 3 working group sessions, 7 invited sessions, 2 GSIC sponsored sessions, a keynote speaker and a keynote panel.

We were fortunate to have three entertaining, educational and inspiring talks at the conference. We were privileged to have Charlotte Danielson, internationally-recognized expert in teacher effectiveness, as our keynote speaker and a keynote panel on fairness with Stephen Sireci, Barbara Helms, Kristen Huff, Thomas Levine, David Moss and Thanos Patelis. Their talks were thought provoking and well received. In addition, Thursday night's dinner was followed by an equally informative and entertaining Presidential Address given by Darlene Perner. We would like to thank all of the speakers for their part in making the NERA conference a success.

There were 7 workshops conducted at the NERA conference, 2 pre-conference and 5 in-conference. The pre-conference workshops were led by Jonathan Weeks (Psychometrics in R) and Charles Starkey and Barbara Wilson (Strategies for Differentiating Instruction in Higher Education Classrooms). The five in-conference workshops were led by Felice Billups (Taking the Mystery Out of Qualitative Data Analysis), Lisa Keller and Joseph Rios (Generalizability Theory and Applications), Deborah Bandalos and Jerusha Gerstner (SEM Methods for Assessing Measurement Invariance), Rebecca Woodland (Social Network Analysis and the Diffusion of Innovation in K-12 Education), and John Young and Bjorn Nordtveit (Scientific Peer Review: Roles and Responsibilities). Rebecca Woodland also led an energizing Zumba session for conference participants amid their busy professional activities. We also had 7 invited sessions that provided insightful dialogue on a variety of topics covering school safety, international teacher education, new national standards and many aspects of fairness. The workshops and special sessions were all well attended and each received positive feedback.

The Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC), chaired by Jerusha Gerstner, successfully organized two special sessions. We would like to thank Whitney and the other members on the committee: Rochelle Fisher, Oksana Naumento, Sarah Newton, Kristen Smith, Xi Wang and Whitney Zimmerman.

We continued NERA's reputation of having fun entertainment via the band Branded (Anthony Edley and Danielle Greenwood) on Wednesday. On Thursday night, we hosted the NERA "Work Fair, Play Fair" Game Show, followed by music and karaoke by DJ Charley. We would like to thank Peter Swerzewski for emceeding the game show, as well as all of our contestants for taking part in it. All attendees seemed to enjoy both receptions and found them to be a good chance to network with other NERA members.

In addition to acknowledging all of the contributors to the program, we would also like to thank the many volunteers, without whom, the NERA organization and conference would not exist. We thank the 92 NERA members who reviewed conference proposals as the reviews were informative and helped maintain the high quality of the NERA conference proceedings; the session and poster discussants, who provided valuable feedback to presenters and informative ideas to all those who attended the sessions; the session chairs, who made sure the sessions were coordinated and run on time; and the graduate students who helped manage the registration desk. In addition, we offer a special thanks to Kim Colvin, Fen Fan and Emily Pichette for their administrative support. We are especially indebted to the 2013 NERA President, Darlene Perner; our NERA Treasurer, Elizabeth Stone; our NERA Communications Committee Chair, Jonathan Steinberg; our GSIC Chair, Jerusha Gerstner and the 2012 NERA Conference Co-chairs, Gil Andrada, Tia Sukin, and Craig Wells. Each of them provided invaluable guidance and we are grateful for their assistance.

We would also like to thank all of the conference sponsors, as the conference wouldn't have been possible without their help. Many of the sponsors also provided projectors for the conference and we are thankful for their support in ensuring NERA's technological needs. Additionally, we are grateful to Jenny and Bill at Palisades Conference Management and the wonderful staff of the Sheraton Hartford South Hotel, led by Ha-kyung, Karen, Robert and Wilfredo, for ensuring that everything went smoothly throughout the NERA conference.

Lastly, we would like to thank each and every one of you for helping to make the NERA 2013 conference successful. At each NERA conference, the NERA members all help make the conference special for educational researchers and, as conference co-chairs, it makes our work worthwhile.

We look forward to the exciting program that the 2014 NERA conference co-chairs, Pamela Kaliski, Ross Markle and Javarro Russell, are planning with John Young, the 2014 NERA president and, of course, seeing all of you next year at the 2014 conference.

Steven Holtzman and Jennifer Randall  
2013 NERA Conference Co-Chairs

## Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring



**Thanos Patelis**, Senior Associate at The National Center for the Improvement of Education Assessment, is the 2013 Thomas F. Donlon Mentoring Award recipient. Thanos currently also has an appointment as a research scholar at Fordham University and was Vice President of Research and Analysis in the Research and Development Department at The College Board working there from 1998 to 2013. The nomination letters written in support of Thanos described a professional justly deserving of this recognition. Thanos is revered as someone who is highly supportive of young professionals, knowledgeable of his field, and always willing to go above and beyond for his students and colleagues in terms of bringing them into the professional and research community. Excerpts from the nomination letters best reflect his impact on so many:

"Thanos' depth and breadth of knowledge and skills are impressive, as is the fact that he is always very willing to share that knowledge with his colleagues, to mentor and guide them. He is always willing to provide service to others needing his expertise, regularly keeping a ridiculously tight schedule to do so."

"As a professor, he was extremely passionate and dedicated to not only having his students complete quality work, but also ensure that they had the ability to learn and apply content learned in the classroom. He made himself readily available, outside of designated office hours, to assist with any methodological or statistical problems I, or any other student, encountered while completing our residency and dissertation."

"I often hear colleagues comment on Thanos' selflessness, his willingness to share skills, knowledge, and expertise, as well as his positive attitude and enthusiasm in the field. However, what has always struck me the most about Thanos has been his emotional intelligence. It is apparent that Thanos invests personally in those he is mentoring. He has always taken a personal interest in my well-being, satisfaction and professional fulfillment. It has been these qualities that have made me feel valued and motivated me professionally."

Anyone who has the opportunity to be mentored by Thanos can certainly look forward to a positive experience that will leave a lasting impact both personally and professionally."

"Over the years I've come to know Thanos as an academic and professional mentor, a supervisor and a colleague, but most importantly as a friend. There have been many times where I needed guidance or just someone to vent (and even cry) to, and Thanos has been able to take off his 'professional hat' and provided me with very honest advice and guidance."

"Thanos truly is a wonderful role model, not just for me but to everyone who works with him. He has helped me develop an identity as a professional, and although I am still early in my career, I know his impact on my personal and professional growth will be long lasting. He is an incredibly warm person, who always has an encouraging smile to share. He genuinely cares about the people he works with and is enthusiastic and passionate about helping people develop. He has become more than a colleague to me, and I feel fortunate to call him my mentor and my friend."



"Thanos has touched the professional lives of many people he mentored, making substantive impacts on their careers while building lasting friendships given his kindness, thoughtfulness, and generosity of time and support. In all his work, Thanos consistently strives to support his colleagues in their professional development by providing opportunities to work on new and challenging projects, by providing honest and constructive feedback about expectations and ways to improve, and by encouraging people to commit themselves to goals that were personally meaningful to them. In all things, Thanos is fair, honest, and equitable as a great mentor should be."

Congratulations to Thanos for a job well done and for your commitment to mentoring young scholars and researchers!

## Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award for Outstanding Leadership and Service

We are pleased to honor **Dr. Kristen Huff** as the 2013 recipient of the prestigious Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award. The Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award is presented to a longstanding NERA member who exemplifies the qualities that Leo Doherty brought to NERA, his colleagues, and students over his career. The award, instituted by the NERA Board of Directors in 1981, honors the memory of Leo Doherty as he was instrumental in the development and growth of NERA as a professional association for educational research. His leadership qualities, both ethical and compassionate, encouraged others to pursue and achieve their goals. Thus, this award is presented to a NERA member who has exhibited outstanding leadership and service to our organization.



Dr. Huff earned her doctorate in the Measurement, Research, and Evaluation Methods Program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is presently a Senior Fellow for the Regents Research Fund at the University of the State of New York where she is the primary advisor on assessment design, educational measurement, and research and evaluation for the New York State Department of Education. Her focus has been on the design of a comprehensive assessment system to measure college and career student readiness. Dr. Huff previously served as a Senior Research Scientist in research and development for The College Board. Prior to that appointment she worked with such organizations as the Educational Testing Service, Association of American Medical Colleges, and the Center for Educational Research and Evaluation at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Kristen is an effectual leader by any standard, and she has applied her leadership skills to help NERA thrive as a research organization. Her initial service to NERA was as Co-Editor of the *NERA Researcher*. Recognizing the important role that NERA plays for graduate students, it was under Kristen's leadership as the Co-Editor of the *Researcher* that the Graduate Student Issues Column was first added to this publication.



She went on to serve as Conference Program Co-Chair, Board Member, and President, holding key offices in the NERA leadership throughout her career. During these service opportunities, Kristen continued to seek innovative ways to help NERA flourish. Once again considering graduate students and young professionals, Kristen led the development of the Graduate Student Issues Committee and ensured that graduate students, who are such a vital part of NERA today, not only have a voice but also have an opportunity themselves to give back to NERA.

Dr. Huff has been a long-time supporter of NERA members, serving as a mentor to developing professionals. Dr. Maureen Ewing, Senior Director at The College Board, noted the following regarding Kristen in her nomination letter for this recognition:

I first noticed her loyalty to NERA during my graduate school days when she encouraged me to attend my very first NERA conference, at which time she truly took me under her wings like she does with so many other people. She made sure to introduce me to colleagues and supported me as I made first scholarly presentation. This support involved co-authoring a paper with me, listening to me rehearse my presentation countless times, and then finally sitting in the audience nodding approvingly as I officially delivered it.

Kristen remains heavily involved in NERA today by serving on our strategic planning committee, presenting, discussing, reviewing papers, and serving on countless invited panels. Her enthusiasm for NERA is contagious, and she is as committed to NERA today as she was early on in her career. NERA is fortunate to have Kristen as a leader and an advocate, and Drs. David M. Moss, Barbara Helms and Sharon Cramer, previous award recipients and past-Presidents who served on the Leo D. Doherty Award Committee for 2013 unanimously recommended the bestowment of this significant honor.



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## Teacher-as-Researcher Award Recipient

The 2013 Teacher-as-Researcher award recipient, **Kristen Miller**, is a special education teacher in an elementary school in northern New Jersey. She conducted her award-winning research as a part of her master's degree work in literacy at William Paterson University. The title of her paper was "Self-Regulated Self-Development (SRSD) Mnemonic Strategies to Benefit Learning Disabled Students' Writing." Her research questions and research design grew out of her experiences working with special needs students.

Kristen's interest in student writing began while working with 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in collaborative settings and resource room. Her students consistently struggled to construct a response to a given prompt. Kristen believed that this was an important skill for her students to learn, as the requirement to respond to prompts was an expectation in all academic areas.

Kristen explored this problem through action research using three of her 4th grade struggling writers. Each student completed a pre-assessment that was used as baseline data in order to construct the intervention to support the students in the writing process. The specific intervention was chosen with attention to students with learning disabilities. Self-Regulated Self-Development (SRSD) mnemonic strategies for writing supports students in completing writing tasks through explicit instruction and making the process of writing simpler for composing narrative, expository and persuasive essays.



With the implementation of the SRSD mnemonic strategies for struggling writers, two of the three students that were included in Kristen's action research showed significant growth in responding to prompts. The mnemonic strategy provided students with a visual and/or verbal reminder to construct a response to a speculative or expository prompt. Using the mnemonics strategies has become a valuable tool for these students in the classroom and they will continue to utilize them in the future.



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Bob Gable chairing the invited panel entitled *Keeping Schools Safe: Critical Components to a Comprehensive Approach*. Panel members (left to right) included: State Senator Kevin Witkos, West Hartford Assistant Superintendent, Thomas Moore; RI Critical Incident Stress Management Team Member, Holly Susi; State Representative and Old Lyme School Psychologist, Marilyn Giuliano; and school safety discussant, David Alba.



Ct State Senator Kevin Witkos, Deputy Minority Leader Pro Tempore and member of the Public Safety and Security Committee, discussing "Statewide Legislative Policy on School Safety: Proactive or Reactive?" at the in invited panel entitled *Keeping Schools Safe: Critical Components to a Comprehensive Approach*.



Student discussing the *Learn 2 Teach, Teach 2 Learn (L2T2L)* project (see p. 16)



Some members of the Membership Committee



One of many well attended sessions at the 2013 conference

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## Engaging Urban Youth to Catalyze Cultural Change in their Communities through a Community-based STEM Program in Boston

Jae-Eun Joo  
*University of Connecticut*

Susan Klimczak  
*South End Technology Center*

Thanks to the generosity of the 2013 NERA Conference Co-chairs, Steven Holtzman and Jennifer Randall, two college mentors and two high school youth teachers were able to participate in a poster session entitled "Evaluative inquiry into engaging urban youth in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) to catalyze cultural change in their communities."

Our research project is a participatory inquiry supported by a 2013 AERA Community Service Award. With the assistance of scholars, college mentors and teenage youth teachers, we are systematically analyzing the unique qualities of Learn 2 Teach, Teach 2 Learn (L2TT2L) that go beyond individual STEM subject mastery in addressing the educational needs of youth of color and young women. These "technologies of the heart" being investigated include self-efficacy, relationship to risk-taking and failure, and making contribution to communities through STEM.

For all of our youth, this was their very first research experience and first presentation at a professional education conference. One of the college mentors wrote the following

reflection on his NERA experience: "It was a very good experience, and especially influential and helpful to have the presence of [two high school youth teachers] to tell the NERA audience about their experiences and the learning opportunities that they had through the research team and the program itself." Our research team members even had twitter exchanges with our poster session discussant, Dr. Nkemjika Ofofile from Howard University, after the NERA conference!

Adeola Adeniyi of Urban Science Academy, Elias Joseph of Cambridge School of Weston, Beckett Dunning of Boston University and Alex Hartley of UMass Boston were youth teacher and college mentor representatives from our research team, which is being led by Dr. Jae-Eun Joo at the Neag School of Education of the University of Connecticut and Dr. Susan Klimczak who is the Education Director of L2TT2L.

We hope to bring our participatory research team to next year's NERA conference to present a paper on our final results which we believe will help other educators attract and retain underrepresented youth in Science, Technology Engineering and Math.

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## Membership Highlights

### Message from the 2014 Conference Co-Chairs

The three of us have recently had the honor and privilege of being asked to serve as co-chairs for the 2014 NERA Conference. We are both proud and happy to serve in this capacity so that we can do our part to contribute to NERA and give back to the organization that has given us so much.

Each of us has been involved with NERA for several years, beginning as graduate students and continuing as new professionals. Throughout this time, we – like many of you – have engaged with and benefited from participation in NERA. This organization has grounded us in the field of educational research. NERA has provided us with opportunities to develop and present our research to a room full of colleagues with shared interest. It has allowed us to network and forge professional relationships that may otherwise be unattainable. These benefits of our NERA participation have allowed us to gain valuable experience as members of this field. For this, we are more than happy to give back. As we work to plan next year's conference – which, we will emphasize once more, is moving to Trumbull, CT – there are a few tenets that we hope to emphasize.

First and foremost, we look to continue NERA's focus on quality. One of our main tasks is to organize keynote and featured speakers, and we are fortunate to have identified several leading experts in the field to provide us with rich and engaging experiences during next year's conference. These speakers include President Jonathan Alger from James Madison University, Andrew Ho from Harvard University, Michael Kane from Educational Testing Service, and Wayne Camera from ACT. If you've heard any of these presenters speak before, you know that they provide valuable insights into our field, its state of the art, and its future. For those of you who have not, you are in for a treat.

Also, we will continue NERA's tradition of working hard to meet the needs of its members and conference attendees. We are looking to feature new ways to help attendees best present their research while engaging with colleagues and receiving valuable feedback. From personal experience, we know that mentorship and development opportunities are important parts of the NERA experience. Therefore, we are working to enhance these experiences throughout next year's conference. Most importantly, we are currently scouring the results of the recent conference evaluations to determine what experiences attendees thought were most effective, which ones can improve, and which ones might be added.

Overall, we recognize that previous co-chairs have done excellent work and created tough acts for us to follow. We will do our best to make sure that the 2014 NERA Conference continues that tradition of excellence.

Sincerely,

Pamela Kaliski  
Ross Markle  
Javarro Russell

This year we had 346 people join or renew their membership in NERA, with 322 members attending our conference. These are excellent numbers that show increased interest in NERA and great work by the conference team to promote their excellent conference. The attendance of graduate students remained strong at 113.

## Membership Committee Update

We have a winner of the contest to bring the most new NERA members to the 2013 conference—Dr. Robert Gable of Johnson & Wales! Congrats to him and thanks so much to everyone who participated!



## The Graduate Lounge

Kristen Smith  
*James Madison University*

At this year's conference, the Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) hosted several exciting events. The first was the graduate student social. Thanks to a generous donation from ETS attendees at the student social enjoyed delicious appetizers. In addition, the first 20 graduate students to register for and attend the GSIC student social received \$50!



The Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) held two sessions for graduate students at the conference this year. The first session, *Navigating the Publication Process*, featured four professionals that provided advice on the publication process. The GSIC would like to thank the four panelists who participated in this session: Deborah Bandalos, James Madison University; Robert Gale, Johnson & Wales University; David Moss, University of Connecticut; and Steve Sireci, University of Massachusetts Amherst. Our second session was an invited panel entitled *Where is the Field Going and How Do I Get There*. The panel featured professionals from the fields of educational research, assessment, and academia. The GSIC would like to thank the panelists who participated in this session: Jeanne Horst,

James Madison University; Kristen Huff, USNY Regents Research Fund; Thanos Patelis, The National Center for the Improvement of Education Assessment; and John Young, Educational Testing Service. Also, the GSIC would like to thank all of the graduate students that attended and participated in these sessions.

The GSIC will continue working on our mission of supporting NERA graduate students through conference sessions targeting graduate students, the Graduate Student Social, and the Best Paper by a Graduate Student Award. The winner of this year's Best Paper by a Graduate Student Award will be announced in the spring. The GSIC is still accepting applications to serve on the GSIC for next year. Serving on the GSIC is a great way to build relationships with graduate students outside of your university and get involved with NERA! Applying to be a GSIC member is easy. Simply submit a short statement of intent (150 words maximum) and your CV to [neragraduatestudents@gmail.com](mailto:neragraduatestudents@gmail.com).

One GSIC member completed their service this year: Oksana Naumenko, University of North Carolina Greensboro. We would also like to thank Whitney Zimmerman of Pennsylvania State University for serving with the GSIC as the Past-Chair. Thank you all for your service and contributions to the GSIC!



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