

Professional Development Report  
2009 – 2010  
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CRITERION 2: SCHOLARLY RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

INTRODUCTION

The IFO contract states that: “Evidence of scholarly/creative activity/research may include but is not limited to, consideration of the faculty member’s publication record, works in progress, unpublished reports, professional assistance to other scholars, papers delivered at meetings of professional societies, computer software and other technologically delivered academic products, awards, invited lectures and participation in panels and symposia, participation in policy analysis, grants received, editorial or advisory roles with professional journals, participation on evaluation panels for research funding, participation in juried shows, musical or theatrical performances, consultantships, research projects, and contribution to the scholarly growth of peers.”

This section includes discussion of evidence related to Criterion 2: Scholarly Research and Creative Activity. The goals, documentation, and reflections demonstrate my ability to contribute to my professional field of knowledge through scholarly or creative achievement or research.

GOALS AND DOCUMENTATION (Summary)

Goal 1: Contribute to the quality and quantity of faculty research and scholarship in the department, with conference proposals and presentations.

1. “Train-the-Trainer Workshop for ACEI’s Global Guidelines Assessment,” for the Brighter Future for Children: Strengthening School, Family, and Community Connections, the 2010 annual conference and exhibition of the Association for Childhood Education International, April 28 – May 1, 2010 in Phoenix, AZ.
2. “Pilot test of a quality rating and improvement system in early education programs in Magadan, Russian Federation and in Minnesota, USA,” annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, November, 2009, Canberra City, ACT, Australia.

Goal 2: Contribute to the quality and quantity of faculty research and scholarship in the department, including chapters in books and articles in peer-reviewed articles.

1. Sandell, E. J., Hardin, B. J., and Wortham, S. C. 2009. *Using the ACEI’s Global Guidelines Assessment for improving early education throughout the world. Childhood Education, 86, 157 – 160.*
2. Sandell, E. J. and O. V. Klypa. [In Press] Kindergarten in Russia’s Far East: The Effect of Climate. In S. Wortham (Ed.). *Global Perspectives in Early Childhood*

*Education: Common Characteristics and Unique Qualities in Preschool Programs.* New York, NY: Springer Publishing Co.

Goal 3: Contribute to the quality of the undergraduate programs offered by the department.

1. COE representative to MSU's Task Force on Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Works.
2. COE representative to MSU's 2009 and 2010 Undergraduate Research Conference Steering Committee, documented by meeting minutes and materials submitted for Criterion 5, service to university.
3. Co-authored white paper, "The Value of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity in the Tenure and Promotion Process at Minnesota State University, Mankato, Prepared October, 2009 by Anne Blackhurst, Ph. D., Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Research, Gina Wenger, Ph. D., Associate Professor, College of Arts and Humanities, and Elizabeth Sandell, Ph. D., Assistant Professor, College of Education, documented with electronic and hard-copy version.
4. Established position description for Undergraduate Student Research Assistant (unpaid), documented with job description in electronic and hard-copy format.
5. Mentor for 2 undergraduates on research team, who presented at the 2010 Undergraduate Research Conference, documented by conference program, letter from GRS Dean, and photo of undergraduate students on research team.
6. Mentor for 2 undergraduates on research team, who published an article in the 2010 Journal of Undergraduate Research, documented by journal article.
7. Judge for MSU's 2010 Undergraduate Research Conference, documented by conference program and materials submitted.
8. Judge for MSU's 2010 Graduate Research Conference, documented by conference program and materials submitted.
9. Mentor to 3 undergraduate students to attend and to present at the 2010 Focus on the Children Conference in Rochester, MN, documented by conference program.

## REFLECTIONS

While there is no concise definition of what may constitute evidence of scholarship, it is generally recognized that a scholar has a wide and critical command of his or her field of study as well as broad cultural interests. The highest indication of scholarship is the ability to make original contributions in one's field of knowledge. Excellence in scholarship typically reveals itself as continuing research documented primarily in publications appearing in the relevant journals or in the form of books published by respected publishing companies. It may also be "evidenced in certain areas of creativity demonstrated through the medium of communication customary in a discipline."

These artifacts represent my work as a researcher who makes contributions to the profession of early education and teacher education. My own research agenda is developing focus around the education of pre-service teachers, cross-cultural education, and international education.

### Conference Presentations

"Train-the-Trainer Workshop for ACEI's Global Guidelines Assessment," for the Brighter Future for Children: Strengthening School, Family, and Community Connections, the 2010 annual conference and exhibition of the Association for Childhood Education International, April 28 – May 1, 2010 in Phoenix, AZ.

"Pilot test of a quality rating and improvement system in early education programs in Magadan, Russian Federation and in Minnesota, USA," annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, November, 2009, Canberra City, ACT, Australia.

The conference presentations provided opportunities for me to network with colleagues. I received feedback on my own ideas presented during conference sessions. I learned about new developments in early education and teacher education. I met colleagues with whom I already am collaborating on research or writing projects. These experiences also gave me ideas about involving undergraduate students in research and scholarly projects. This has resulted in many student projects (also see report on Criterion 4).

### Publications

Sandell, E. J., Hardin, B. J., and Wortham, S. C. 2009. *Using the ACEI's Global Guidelines Assessment for improving early education throughout the world. Childhood Education, 86, 157 – 160.*

Sandell, E. J. and O. V. Klypa. [In Press] Kindergarten in Russia's Far East: The Effect of Climate. In S. Wortham (Ed.). *Global Perspectives in Early Childhood Education: Common Characteristics and Unique Qualities in Preschool Programs*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Co.

I was the lead author for chapter six, which presents the nature of quality in early childhood programs within the unique economic, geographic, and cultural influences that

infuse early childhood programs in Russia's Far East. The framework for looking at characteristics of quality from a global perspective comes from the OMEP/ACEI Global Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care. The primary targeted market is professors and students in higher education who desire information on quality preschool education from an international perspective. The 23 authors represented 12 different countries with various types of early childhood programs. Other authors from the United States have worked in international early childhood education in many capacities. Undergraduate students, professional early childhood educators in the field are part of the primary targeted market. International preschool professionals who are seeking information about program initiation and assessment or general information about the nature of preschool programs in different countries and cultures are a secondary market.

### Undergraduate Programs

The Holmes Group (1990) report calls for teacher preparation faculty to be engaged in thoughtful inquiry as they work together as partners with perspective teachers to encourage and promote reflection and research on practice. The report states:

Schools that prepare new teachers must do something more. From the time student teachers first begin seriously to hone their skills and to assume their professional attitudes, the habits of reflecting, questioning, and trying out and evaluating new ways of teaching-by themselves and with colleagues-- should become embedded in their professional identity. (Holmes Group, 1990, p.55)

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) believe that effective professional development means that teachers must be provided with opportunities to reflect critically on their practice to construct new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners. "Teachers must be given ample opportunities to learn in constructivist settings and construct for themselves educational visions through which they can reflect on educational practices" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. 121).

I look forward to continuing and productive collaborative efforts during the next several years. I plan to try to establish an unpaid internship for undergraduate students. I also will invite MSU Library staff members to provide instructional sessions for my classes, so students learn about research resources and skills within their academic programs.

I want to systematically improve student research practices through action research projects. The action research projects would involve five collaborative steps: (a) identification of a question to be researched, (b) formation of a strategic plan of action in which to answer the question, (c) collection of data in various forms to study the effects of the strategic action plan, (d) reflection upon the results of the strategic action plan to make sense of the processes, problems, issues, and constraints, and (e) creation of new action steps to be taken based on what was learned. My hope is that each semester can encompass one cycle of action research.

## Center for Undergraduate Research

As a “Faculty Seeking Undergraduate Scholars,” I have an entry on the (virtual) Center for Undergraduate Research: <http://grad.mnsu.edu/research/cursc/> sponsored by the Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and Creative Works Advisory Group. The virtual Center is dedicated to improving the presence and quality of undergraduate-faculty collaborations across campus. The goal of the center is to help the university achieve its mission of promoting learning by effectively integrating undergraduate teaching, scholarship and research.

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Description of Project: Assessment of quality for early childhood education and care programs

Mentor Expectations: Minimum of three hours of research per week

Although the site is a work in progress, please take note of the “Faculty Input Form” under “Research Opportunities.” This site encourages faculty to post their current and future needs for undergraduate participants. We hope that students will be able to identify possible opportunities and that faculty will be able to identify interested students, fostering collaboration between faculty and students.

## Student Research Assistants

To my knowledge, I am the only EEC department faculty member who has involved undergraduate students in structured research projects during the past five years, including presentations and articles related to MSU’s Undergraduate Research Conference. These students were able to:

- Gain significant insight into the world of academic research.
- Learn specific skills that will help later in design and conducting scholarly research projects.
- Be involved in research typically only available to advanced graduate students and faculty members.
- Learn high-level project planning and research skills.
- Learn a wide variety of research approaches and terminology.

During AY10, I secured funding for two undergraduate student workers to assist with some research and data collection on one of my projects at MSU. The request resulted in an allocation of \$925.00 for student work time – 100 hours at \$9.25/hour for Student Para-professional Level 3. This will support 2 hours/week for 2 student research assistants for the remaining 4 weeks of Fall semester, 15 weeks of Spring semester, and 6 weeks of Summer Session. Maggie Looft and Kiley Theede

## Task Force on Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work

During Fall, 2009, I served as the COE representative to the Task Force on Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work. I co-authored a monograph with Dean Anne Blackhurst and Associate Professor, Gina Wenger: "The Value of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity in the Tenure and Promotion Process at Minnesota State University, Mankato." This monograph was shared with the Task Force and with members of the President's Cabinet. The paper provided rationale and examples of the ways in which undergraduate research advances both the University's mission and the faculty member's ability to document achievement in each of the five areas specified in Article 22.

As a comprehensive public university, Minnesota State Mankato strives to integrate teaching and research in service to the local, regional, and global communities. This mission is reflected in the criteria for evaluation of faculty members, as specified in Article 22 of the faculty contract. In addition to teaching, research, and service, these criteria include contributing to students' growth and development, as well as the faculty member's own professional development and preparation. Perhaps no single activity integrates the five criteria more effectively than undergraduate research, which represents the true blending of teaching and research in ways that benefit students, faculty, and the larger community. As a result, faculty mentorship of undergraduate research and creative activity fulfills multiple purposes in the promotion and tenure process at Minnesota State Mankato. (Blackhurst, Wenger, and Sandell, 2009).

## Undergraduate Research Conference

During AY09 and AY10, I served as one of two COE representatives to the Undergraduate Research Conference Steering Committee. The Steering Committee met for 2 hours monthly and worked for 3 days at the URC in April.

My mentoring of undergraduate research assistants resulted in one session at the 2010 Undergraduate Research Conference: Fostering Teacher Understanding of Dakota and Lakota Education Experiences: Past, Present, and Future, Maggie Looft and Kiley Theede (Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education) (poster session, 2010 Journal of Undergraduate Research)

## 2010 Focus on Children Conference

The Focus on the Children Conference offered a variety of workshops of interest to early childhood and school age care professionals, educators, parents, foster care providers, and those interested in the development of children, birth through twelve years of age. An audience of 400 attended this event in Rochester, MN.

Along with Dr. Reuter, I was faculty mentor to 3 undergraduate students to attend and to present at the 2010 Focus on the Children Conference in Rochester, MN. We presented

on April 18, 2010, along with students: Amber Bissonette, Alyssa Nicholson-Hansen, and Amanda Sterna. We provided a 1-¼ hours workshop. We tried to provide a blend of recent research, applied theory, and practical application. Most providers and classroom teachers really appreciated receiving a few new strategies they can use right away.

In completing a presentation proposal, all presenters were asked to align workshops with the Minnesota Core Competencies for Early Childhood Education and Care Practitioners or the Minnesota School Age Core Competencies. These documents can be found online at [http://www.mncpd.org/core\\_competencies.html](http://www.mncpd.org/core_competencies.html) This helped insure that the Focus on The Children Conference was an approved training through the Minnesota Center for Professional Development. This process was also a learning experience for the three undergraduate students involved in our presentation.

Brooks, J. & Brooks, M. (1993). In search for understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Darling-Hammond, L. & McLaughlin, (1995). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. Phi Delta Kappan, 76(8), 587-604.

Holmes Group. (1990). Tomorrow's schools: Principles for the design of professional development schools. East Lansing, MI: The Holmes Group.