

# Elementary and Early Childhood Education Program

## PSU Berks

### **EECE and Business Program Team with KU to Host Family Wellness Event at 16th and Haak Elem. School**

Seniors majoring in Elementary and Early Childhood Education from Penn State Berks collaborated with Kutztown University Special Education undergraduates to offer a Family Wellness evening for children and their families at the 16th & Haak Elementary School in Reading on November 8th. Mr. James Shankweiler from the Berks Business Program and Dr. Cynthia Stunkard from the KU Special Education Program teamed together to organize the event. KU students created lesson plans that were turned into learning centers, and activities focused on healthy snacks, exercise, making healthy food choices, and understanding how to grow food anywhere. Fifth graders from the elementary school also assisted in the evening program. Other students from Berks, who were juniors in the Elementary and Early Childhood Education program assisted the seniors from KU and Berks to conduct the activities for the evening. Flyers for the program were developed by Valerie Miller, a senior Marketing student in Professor James Shankweiler's Social Entrepreneurship class at Berks and were translated into Spanish by Dr. Maria Fellie's Spanish class and distributed to the elementary school children. Business students in Dr. Ada Leung's Social Media class created a social media presence for the event developing before, during, and after-the-event pushes to highlight the importance of healthy eating and to demonstrate the broad collaboration that made this event possible. At the end of the evening, all children were given a grade-appropriate book, milk or juice, apples, and a toothbrush to take home. Dr. David Bender, Professor Elaine Meils, and Dr. Jayne Leh in the Berks education program assisted with organizing the event.

# Newsletter

**Fall, 2018**

*We Offer Excellent Experiences  
to Form Exceptional  
Teachers*

### **Why Choose PSU Berks Elementary and Early Childhood Education Program?**

by Emily Golia

Are you looking for the most rewarding career choice possible? Elementary and Early Childhood Education is your answer. The Penn State Berks program is a great program for students who are passionate about teaching young children. Although this program is rigorous and demanding, it produces the best quality of teachers. I began my college education at Penn State, University Park. After my first year of college, I transferred to the Berks Campus. The differing class sizes between University Park and Berks campus makes all the difference. Since I transferred to Berks, I have created such good relationships with both my professors and my classmates.

What I love most about Penn State Berks are the opportunities. Even in my first year in the education program, which was my sophomore year, I got to experience and observe in an actual classroom. Starting in my junior year, I started teaching. Not only did I get the opportunity to teach whole classroom lessons, but I also got to work one-on-one with students in a migrant education program in the city of Reading. These students are in need of extra academic help, and it was truly amazing what we got to do for them. This program was the real "ah ha" moment for me. I worked with a student who was in 3rd grade, but was at a first/second grade reading level. By the end of the program, after working with her, she reached the average reading level for her grade. It was an indescribable experience to work with this student and watch her as she progressed. The feeling of walking into a classroom and having 20 smiling faces greet you every morning is a feeling that every education student chases throughout their life. The Penn State Berks EECE Program is a truly amazing program for any prospective teacher.

# Faculty Corners

**Dr. Mahsa Kazempour**  
**Associate Professor of Science Education**

For the past six semesters, more than 30 teams in my BiSC3 course have completed service learning projects requested by Glenside Elementary School as part of the Environmental Awareness and Community Action Project (EACAP). This semester, five teams are working hard to prepare classroom plants for the 16 Glenside classrooms in an effort to build positive classroom environment. Plants will be accompanied with positive quotes, instructions for care, etc. One team is helping create seed boxes for plants for the new greenhouse and working on garden enhancements and maintenance. Since Fall 2015, a total of 34 teams have worked with Glenside in creating birdhouses for the garden, painting environment and science themed murals in the cafeteria and on the school shed, creating decorated ceiling tiles, maintaining the garden, building the school greenhouse, fundraising and purchasing more than 300 library books, assisting with the 5th grade visit to the campus, and much more. I work closely with Ms. Melissa Fisher, principal at Glenside Elementary School, to create a listing of projects for BiSC3 students to select from each semester and I supervise and support the student teams throughout their projects each semester. Visit <http://sites.psu.edu/environmentalcommunityproject/> to learn more about the project and view some of the completed projects.

For the fourth consecutive year, more than 50 Glenside Elementary School's 5th grade students will celebrate Earth Day and take part in a series of environmentally focused activities as part of their Environment Day visit to the campus in April. The half-day visit includes a walk through the campus and through the wooded area to reach Pfiffer Farm where they participate in a tour of the campus greenhouse with John Rost and get to see and learn about the greenhouse, bat houses, the solar panel providing energy for the greenhouse, the honeybee garden, and bluebird nest boxes. They also participate in environment themed activities set up as science stations facilitated by teams of education and BiSC3 students as well as other science and environment themed games and discussions focused on what is an environment and ways we may each positively and negatively impact our environment. Pictures from the past two visits may be found here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/vvI9a4WItbSMaQGv2>

Seniors in the SCIED458 science methods course take part in the Home Inquiry project each fall in order to learn more about the process of scientific inquiry and ways they can implement such projects in their classrooms. Beginning with simple observations of either the daytime sky, night time sky, or outside area of their choice, they begin to formulate questions, gather more observations, make inferences, investigate various questions of inquiry, and research the content area they become intrigued about. Their projects evolve throughout the semester as they investigate, learn about, and share their journeys and findings about a variety of science concepts that were the focus of their curiosity and inquiry during the semester. The culminating presentations include discussion of a variety of concepts related to moon phases, invasive species, interactions of living things, leaf color changes, bird migrations, types of clouds, impact of natural disasters, air and light pollution, etc. as well as the classroom implications of the project. Two of my recent publications focus on the Home Inquiry project.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1046560X.2018.1487201>

<http://innovations.theaste.org/the-home-inquiry-project-elementary-preservice-teachers-scientific-inquiry-journey/>

**Dr. Jayne M. Leh**  
**Associate Professor of Special Education**

Juniors in the EECE Program at Berks work with children of migrant status as part of a field placement in SPLED 400. For the third year in a row, students have been placed in afterschool programs across the Reading School District to support children in Kindergarten through 5th grade who are English Language Learners and of migrant status. The Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program at Millersville University, under the supervision of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, assigns PSU Berks juniors to small groups of children for tutoring. The students then select one child to work with as they complete their SPLED 400 course project. Students assist with homework and assess academic needs in reading and mathematics using curriculum-based measurements. Students administer assessments, graph and evaluate data, and make progress monitoring decisions based on student responses to brief interventions. Students then make recommendations for teaching, consider appropriate interventions, and draw conclusions regarding disability status while considering culture and migrant status. Because of the rich nature of the experience, the juniors continue with the placement experiences during the spring semester in SPLED 403A, where they gain greater experience designing and implementing academic interventions for low-achieving students in reading and mathematics.

**Dr. Jessica Schocker**  
**Associate Professor of Social Studies Education**

This fall in SSED 430W, the seniors in elementary education are studying the theories, content, and best methods for teaching history, civics, geography, economics, and beyond. To engage with the content and some of the leaders in our field, the senior class recently took a trip to Harrisburg to attend the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies annual conference. There, they met the president of the National Council for the Social Studies, India Meissel, along with other award-winning teachers, scholars, and social studies professionals. Some highlights of the trip included meeting with educators from National Geographic, attending sessions about various cutting edge best practices, and networking with PA social studies teachers and pre-service teachers from across the state. The Penn State Berks students made an excellent impression on the coordinators of the conference!

Meanwhile, the students are working on several long term projects, two of which I'll highlight here. First, the students are conducting a community inquiry of their student teaching placement schools and the surrounding neighborhoods. After studying the scholarship on best practices for teaching in a culturally sustaining and relevant way, students are getting to know their communities by collecting data from interviews with students, parents, teachers, administrators, and school support staff. After writing a detailed report, they will design lessons appropriate for their classes that enact place-based, culturally relevant content and methods. The students will be presenting these projects in early November.

Second, the students are working on a deep dive into a content topic of their choice in what is called the Journey Box Project. After studying the national and state standards for social studies earlier this semester, the seniors chose topics for their Journey Box based on a gap they identified in the content. The students are collecting primary source documents, images, children's books, and more to create a diverse repertoire of resources for teaching their selected topic. The Journey Boxes will be presented in an open forum on the last day of classes this semester, December 7, at 10:10 AM, and all education students and faculty are invited to come see their work and hear about their topics and experiences.

**Dr. Hartono Tjoe**  
**Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education**

Penn State Berks seniors welcomed first graders from the 10th and Green Elementary School for the Third Annual Math and Science Day on October 15, 2018. The first graders participated in four different math activities and four science activities developed by elementary and early childhood mathematics in the Elementary Schools and Teaching Science in the Elementary School. Reading School District Elementary Schools interested to be considered for the Fourth Annual Math and Science Day on October 2019 are encouraged to contact Dr. Hartono Tjoe at [hht1@psu.edu](mailto:hht1@psu.edu) by January 1, 2019.

**PDS Update**  
**by Professor Christiana Varner**

The PDS efforts have focused on team building, integrated learning, data driven strategy choices, HOTS, and questioning skills. We continue to build relationships that foster risk taking by arranging classroom visits, conversations, and workshops.

A November workshop with faculty consisted of small group break-out sessions and question stems tied to Bloom's taxonomy. Glenside teachers spent time working with their grade level teams to write specific HOTS questions and objectives to incorporate into upcoming lessons. Some grade level teams worked with Berks student teachers to create classroom laminated guides to encourage more meaningful conversations about reading and writing during conferences and peer reads. Other teams created manipulatives tied to a Bloom's questioning workshop they had previously attended but had not had time to integrate.

Moving forward, the EECE Program intends to continue to support and collaborate with Glenside in data reporting and feedback and include activities such as a Spring Literacy Night with leveled books for all children. LLED students will develop activities and lessons to share with families. In addition, a workshop at Berks is planned for the spring for Glenside faculty and staff as an ACT 80 Professional Development day. The morning sessions will consist of interdisciplinary strategies for content and critical thinking in the classroom. Afternoon sessions will consist of grade level teams, which will work together to develop a unit to use in their classrooms.

## Student Teaching Corner...

**Kayla Witt:** Student Teacher at Glenside Elementary School, Reading, Pa

In the spring, I will be graduating from Penn State Berks with my Bachelor's degree in Childhood and Early Adolescent Education specializing in Pre-K through 4th grade. Throughout the course work over this four-year degree, my professors and mentors have provided meaningful and engaging learning opportunities. There is a balance between course work and attending placements throughout local school districts to apply the course concepts we have learned. Our placements within school districts are wonderfully varied both in content and experience. Personally, I've had experiences in various learning environments including: special education classrooms, Montessori schools, general education classrooms across grade levels, and working one-on-one with English Language Learners. These placement experiences begin in the first year of the program to help strengthen our experiences within the schools, and to help decide if teaching is the career path we wish to pursue. My experiences at Penn State Berks have been nothing short of amazing and transformative. I have learned how to develop engaging lessons for my students, how to properly assess and analyze student data, and how to utilize my knowledge of childhood development to be an effective teacher. These experiences have prepared me for my senior year as I am currently a Teacher Intern at Glenside Elementary School in a first grade classroom.

In addition to my role as a Teacher Intern to my 1st grade class, I am currently co-advising an after-school club for 3rd and 4th grade students. The club is called "Community Superheroes" and it was designed so that students can understand how acts of kindness can affect and positively transform their communities. Students will complete activities such as: the THON art contest, making flowers for a local nursing home, and creating "No Littering" signs for the school building. Advising and organizing this club has been a wonderful learning experience as I navigate planning, budgeting, and completing weekly activities with the students. It has been a rewarding experience to work with older students during our after-school club. Being able to work with a different age group has given me insight on developing lessons and activities, building rapport with the students, and keeping the students engaged. These valuable lessons will surely stick with me throughout the remainder of my Teacher Interning experience as well as my career as an educator.

**Emily Golia:** Student Teacher at Glenside Elementary School, Reading, Pa

I am currently a teacher intern at Glenside Elementary in their pre-k classroom. I think being in the pre-k classroom is very interesting. Working with students at the age of 4 and 5 is such an amazing age. It is the students' first time ever in a school setting, so the teachers in pre-k ultimately set the tone of the students experience in school for the rest of their education. Along with teaching pre-k, I also run a club called "Craft Club." This club consists of 12 first grade students and 2 teacher interns. Each week, the teachers read the students a book. These books are filled with culture, social studies, science, and math. After reading the book, the students complete a corresponding craft. These crafts not only express the students' creativity, but they also improve their fine motor skills by cutting, drawing, writing, and gluing. The goal of this club is for the students to have fun. As the students get into the older grades, the concepts and material becomes more complex. My personal opinion is that school is not all just hard work. There should be some "educational fun" that the students get to participate in once the day is done. Craft club allows students to have that educational fun at the end of their long day of learning in a classroom. I think having the experience to run afterschool clubs for the students is an unbelievable opportunity that allows us to work with the students in a different setting.

### International Field Experience

#### PSU Berks Students: Studying Education in German Classrooms

Since 2012, PSU students have traveled to Germany each May to visit German classrooms and study how education in the U.S. differs from Germany. In May 2019, students will again leave for approximately 3 weeks to explore the differences between the two education systems. Dr. Leh organizes the trip in order to fine tune each student's understanding of who they are as a future teacher. By examining the differences between German and U.S. classrooms, students uncover their own pedagogical beliefs and foundational underpinnings of what they believe education to be and how children should be educated. The application deadline is December 15; guidelines and application materials are located at: <https://berks.psu.edu/international-field-experience-3>