From the President:

I hope everyone is well and into the swing of life, post the 2016 ACT Conference! It was energizing to gather with members from Alaska to Alabama, Vermont to California, points in between and Mexico!

“Diversity, Multiculturalism and Learning: A Constructivist Approach” was an important step in our life as a constructivist organization. We thank our speakers Patrick Camangian and Luis Salinas and our important and strong presenters! Mark, a UH grad student shared this reflection with his professor.

The breakout sessions were interactive and relatively small, so we were able to have direct interaction with the presenters and they did an excellent job of giving us hands on exercises to truly allow us to understand and appreciate the concepts being taught. The keynote speaker provided one of the best presentations I had ever witnessed. His content was relevant, timely, heart wrenching, and really opened my eyes to some of the challenges that students face and how as an educator, we can engage students to help maximize their chances of success. Thank you for the opportunity to attend.

Thanks for the significant contributions to the Conference – General Session Chair Brenda Fyfe, Local Program Chair Patricia Paquin, Treasurer Seong Bock Hong, Registrar Meir Muller, the Proposal Review and Selection Team: Holly McCartney, Kathryn Castle, Meir Muller and Kelly Kent, and Document Preparer Kate Chechak!

Thanks for the work of the ACT Board, October 6. We welcome Tom Chiaromonte from Fullerton College and Beth VanMeeteren from Regents Center University of Northern Iowa to the ACT Board!

Mark your calendars! The 2017 ACT Conference will be held October 20-21 in Fullerton, California. Thanks to the planning team of Tom Chiaromonte, Cris Lozon, Seon Chun Burbank and Elizabeth Echternach! They represent 3 model schools for children and 2 higher education institutions. Fullerton College will be our host for the conference.

We missed those of you who were unable to attend! Thank you all for your work and concern for ACT!! Thanks to Jane Broderick and Andrew Stremmel for this ACT Newsletter! Thank you to ETSU Doctoral Fellow Eryn Watts for assisting with this issue of the newsletter.

Enjoy reading the Fall Newsletter!
Carolyn Black
Dear ACT Friends & Colleagues,

We have just passed through another ACT Conference season where all participants enjoyed deep enriching conversation. We come together because our shared knowledge and experiences nourish our souls. We hope that the newsletters continue to inspire members through the year until we meet again in Fullerton, CA.

Our From the Field article tells the story of two girls experiences with developing, planning, and facilitating fundraising for the school that hosts their school age program. In the Board Member interview learn about Holly McCartney.

We are always seeking new stories from the field and are often in need of stories from the middle and high school years. If you are willing to share a story with us, please contact us to work out an arrangement. Stories related to research projects at all levels are always welcome!

Sincerely,

Jane & Andy
COMMITTEE REPORTS

Conference Committee
- Conference Chair Carolyn Black – cfblack@uh.edu
Please make plans now to attend the 2017 ACT Conference in Fullerton, CA, October 20-21! Our Conference Planning Committee is hard at work. We will have more information in our January newsletter and on our website in the upcoming months.
  - visit our website: www.constructivistassociation.org

Conference Program Committee
Program Chair Tom Chiaromonte: tchiaromonte@fullcoll.edu
- Tom has a strong group to work with in Fullerton and will announce roles of each in our next newsletter.
- The 2017 conference theme will be announced in the next newsletter.

Newsletter Co-Editors: Jane Broderick, broderic@etsu.edu & Andy Stremmel, andrew.stremmel@sdstate.edu
- Published three times annually, sent to members, and housed on ACT the members’ only page.
  - Send us your “From the Field” stories to share with our members.
  - Submit news of publications, presentations and creative activities to share with our members.

Website Design and Manager: Christian Schmid; ckschmid@gmail.com

Membership Committee
- Chair:
  - New members continue to register!
  - Pay for membership online and encourage your friends to join our group: www.constructivistassociation.org

Thank you all for your support in the work of ACT ~ the ACT Board

A Message from the President

Member Support: At an ACT 2015 general session, several members who are isolated from other constructivists voiced the need for additional support during the year. ACT is moving forward on this request. Suggestions for the format include conference call or SKYPE/facetime, or a Facebook Group. Please email ideas or interest in joining or leading a small group so we can continue to move forward with this effort. Thank you!

If you would like to join or lead an ACT Book Club, please email me: cfblack@uh.edu

We have exciting titles recommended by Board Members:
- Creating & Sustaining the Constructivist Classroom
- To Understand is to Invent
- Conversations with Jean Piaget
- The Constructivist Leader
- Creative Schools: Grass Roots Revolution That’s Transforming Education
MEMBER NEWS & PUBLICATIONS

Meir Muller Publications
Meir Muller received the following award: NAECTE Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher Educator Award, National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Education, Fall, 2016

Andrew Stremmel Publications

JOURNAL UPDATE: Conference Proceedings Journal
Carolyn Hildebrandt and Meir Muller, Co-Editors
Look forward to our launch of our annual conference proceedings journal The Constructivist, online in the upcoming months. This new journal will showcase the great learning that occurs at each conference and will add to our field. The ACT 2015 Conference Proceedings Journal will contain transcripts of the two keynote addresses, articles based on conference workshops and presentations, and additional articles on constructivist theory, research, and practice. We would like to thank the authors for submitting their articles to the journal and the reviewers for providing expert feedback on them. We are currently in the process of sharing the reviewers’ feedback with the authors. Our goal is to have the journal online on our website early this summer. Once published please feel free to share widely as we hope the journal will spark further interest for our upcoming conference. If you have questions about the journal or would like to submit an article to it, please contact Carolyn Hildebrandt at Carolyn.Hildebrandt@uni.edu or Meir Muller at meirmuller@sc.rr.com.
BOARD MEMBER INTERVIEW with Holly McCartney

By Eryn Watts, Doctoral Fellow assigned to Jane Broderick, Board Member and Co-Editor of the ACT Newsletter

Holly McCartney is an Associate Professor of Elementary and Early Childhood Education at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

EW: Can you share a bit about your background and what brought you into the Early Childhood profession?

HM: Teaching was a second career for me. I started out in marketing and communications and after about 7 years I started having children and began looking for a different career. I really enjoy caring and nurturing people and teaching seemed like a good fit. I was here in Harrisonburg, James Madison University has a fabulous history of early childhood professional programs so I went back and did a post baccalaureate master degree program.

I started teaching preschool for children with high needs, typically funded through Title 1, or Head Start, or the State of Virginia Preschool Initiative programs. After about 6 years one of my former professors contacted me and asked me to come to JMU on a one year teaching contract as a teacher in residence. So I did that one year and loved it and decided not to go back to the preschool classroom and after 3 years I went on to get my PhD at UVA. I am now in my 17th year coordinating the program I started in, helping students in the same situation I was in, starting a second career.

EW: Can you talk about your teaching; how it is unique to you, informs your research, and aligns with current trends in education and constructivist pedagogy?

HM: Just as I taught in preschool I try to be student focused and as much as possible I try to let the students drive the curriculum. As I plan the curriculum I am thinking I don’t know where we will be on November 1st - I have a plan but the students might take us in a different direction even though I have this framework. I think it’s critical to build community in your classroom so I start with that every week. We start with a morning meeting which is part of the responsive classroom philosophy. I model the importance of building relationships with your students.

I try to do as much hands on as I can. I’m not a lecturer because I do believe we construct our knowledge through experiences and I try to provide these experiences for my college students just like I would for my preschool classroom, and hopefully I’m intentional enough to make the connections with the college students that they carrying this onto their classroom.
EW: Can you share about your program?

HM: The program I coordinate is a post-baccalaureate program. It’s a three-semester, one summer, compacted program which is a pretty quick way to get your license and a master of arts and teaching. In the state of Virginia there are multiple ways to go about getting your license and this program prepares you to be licensed from preschool to third grade so we really do have an early childhood focus.

EW: Can you share about your research?

HM: We are not an R1 but there is the expectation that research gets done and for me and many of my colleagues it’s tied to my teaching. It just seems to work best that way. I have a broad range of interests. A few years ago I was on leave and my research focus was on ethics. More recently I’m looking at working with refugee families and providing experiences for them to help them transition into the classroom. We have a huge refugee population in Harrisonburg so this summer we offered a three-week pilot summer program that JMU graduate students participated in. They planned and implemented the program for 30 children and their families integrating creativity and the arts with reading instruction for teaching English language learners. So now we’re currently analyzing all the data from the interviews and observations and we will be presenting that a couple of places this year in Virginia and out of state.

EW: Other?

HM: The first time I heard constructivism was in my undergrad course where we were learning about child development and Piaget and it fascinated me. Children construct knowledge through their environment and real experiences with real things and that has always been the foundation to JMU’s early childhood program. So that was how I always approached teaching from day one. I feel really fortunate that I came from a place where it was a foundational piece of our philosophy. Every class I teach I try to have an introductory experience that is hands on where students experience constructing new knowledge.

Experiencing Socratic Dialogue as facilitated by Kathy Cadwell (far right) and her two high school students Evan (second from left) and Kaia (not pictured).
FROM THE FIELD: Introducing ideas and activities from ACT Members in the field

Contributed by: Claudine Grieshaber, Rainbow Riders Preschool, Blacksburg, VA; Enrollment Director/Wing Administrator for the Pre-K classrooms.

The Pool Project: Guiding School Age Children to Develop, Organize and Facilitate Fundraising Projects

School Age Programs are often organized around clubs that children design with instructors based on their interests. A synergistic forward movement ignites when these interests hinge on the real life concerns of children and teachers respond in ways that empower them to meet realizable goals. This story of the pool project, which is still ongoing in October 2016, was initiated and spurred on by three school age children at the end of the Summer and early Fall of 2015.

Framing a problem
A pair of girls, Sylvia and Dixie (both age 9) proposed to their teacher that they needed some new things in the school to keep them interested, because at times it was just not fun. Their teacher guided them to Claudine because everyone at Rainbow Riders knew that Claudine is the person at school who buys supplies and materials. Claudine asked the girls to think hard about what they want and return with a list. When they returned she was surprised at the reach of their requests:

1. An in-ground pool that would need to be housed on the empty lot adjacent to the school. The girls were aware that the lot was up for sale.
2. To enhance the inground rock climbing wall in the outdoor play scape.
3. Gymnastics equipment for the movement room indoors.

Addressing the problem with a real world response and phase one of a call to action
To deter them Claudine informed them that these items all cost a lot of money. She wondered “with them” how they could get the money for these purchases. Their discussion eventually led them to the idea of fundraising. From this perspective Claudine asked them to write a proposal using a form that was designed for this project. Claudine describes the process as continual flow of working through discussion to the point in which a task is formed. The children would then go off to complete the task and would set up a next meeting when they were finished to report on their work.

Sylvia and Dixie made an interesting decision to focus on the in-ground pool project first because they knew that fundraising for this would take a really long time, “It will take us through high school.” They set about researching the cost of land to purchase the next door lot. The process of pricing the cost of pools was a challenge. It led them into a design phase where they set about drawing pools to get an idea of size and pool design elements in order to price their pool effectively.

At one of their meetings during this design phase Claudine introduced Sylvia and Dixie to the idea that there might be other costs associated with having a pool open for children. For example, what would a life guard cost. Their task was to think about the hours the pool would be open and the legal number of lifeguards they would need for the determined hours. Initially they wanted a full day schedule, but through their research realized that realistically the hours would need to be reduced.

Please share the ACT Newsletter with likeminded people ...
Again, it might be helpful to the reader to know that each of the meetings with Claudine always ended with an assignment, which served to effectively engage the students throughout. Sylvia claims that: “It entertained us and helped us to not be bored. We weren’t really moping and we did this homework quickly because it was fun.”

**Call to action phase two: Generating doable fundraiser plans**

Early in the Spring of 2016 the girls were ready to think about potential fundraisers they could organize and manage for this project. Sylvia and Dixie literally came up with around 80 ideas, some that were free and some with a cost. A lot of thinking went into the fundraiser planning. They had a mindset that they didn’t want to ask parents for too much money as that would take away the effectiveness of the fundraiser. One of their ideas included a Kids Night Out, yet they soon realized that the purchase of pizza and drinks for the children at this event would reduce the profits too dramatically to make it worthwhile. In thinking through the benefits and risks of each idea the list was narrowed down to ten doable fundraiser ideas to target in the 2016-2017 year after surveying families and staff at Rainbow Riders.

Claudine intentionally facilitates back and forth between complex thinking and action in her conversation and tasks to keep the minds of these children flowing. It was time to step into an action oriented phase by implementing the first fundraiser.

**Planning and Implementation of Art Club Fundraiser**

The art club was planned as a program for five consecutive Wednesdays in Fall 2016. Sylvia and Dixie will lead other children in the process of creating art projects around an *under the sea* theme. The cost is $5.00 for children at Rainbow Riders ages 4 years and older.

Sylvia and Dixie reflected on the age groups with great consideration of their own skill level in being able to support the creative work of a large group of children. Their awareness of details involved in planning was strong from the start. They had a list of crafts for each of the five weeks and possible materials. They collected materials from home, from those available at the school, and Claudine was able to bring materials from home as she was aware of their needs.

This particular Fall Sylvia and Dixie would be arriving with the school age children at a later time of day than in previous years. Therefore, it was decided that Claudine would need to know the set up plan ahead of time so that she could set up the materials before the girls arrived, allowing for more art club time.

The meetings with Claudine during these five weeks focus on strategies for Sylvia and Dixie to gather the children from the different classrooms, guide them to the art club room, and introduce and facilitate the arts experiences. Claudine versed them in ideas about grouping, approaches to introducing the activity, and helping children to help each other. Sylvia and Dixie were very responsive and shared their thoughtful decision making process in planning the order in which to pick up the children.

Sylvia: “I made the decision to split into 2 groups [preschool and school-age].”
Dixie: “I volunteered to do preschoolers because I think they are fun.”
Sylvia: “And the triplets [Sylvia’s sisters] are in that group and won’t listen to me.”

In their first art club experience there was a lot of positive conversation among the young participants, which really kept the group going and one child who we have noticed to have a short attention span stayed happily engaged.
Throughout they girls took command of the process, knowing when they needed to meet with Claudine, when their task was done and they needed to go to the next step, or at times when reflection or feedback was needed. Early on meetings occurred only once a month. There was a lot of research going on to obtain prices for the pool, and equipment for the wall climbing and gymnastics before moving to the next step of how to raise the money to buy these items. At that time group met about twice a month, and currently the art club planning requires weekly meetings. It has been fantastic for Claudine to see the confidence of these students grow through this process. Sylvia and Dixie project their voices clearly, their posturing and arm gesturing is very relaxed and assured around the group of young children they are leading and around adults they converse with.

Sylvia and Dixie read and approved of the information provided and chose to answer some questions as a way to include their voices, which was an important feature to them in sharing with our ACT audience.

How did you come up with this idea, to purchase a pool for your school?

Sylvia: “Well, Emma [third girl] and I were looking at pools on the computer because it entertained us. Dixie was on vacation. We said to the teachers, ‘If we could have anything, we should have a pool’. We gave the teachers our reasons like keeping people entertained, not paying for our pool [field] trips, and so on.”

There were a lot of ideas, how did you feel about choosing just this one?

Dixie: “Well, I think there was many ideas but the pool stood out to us because it would keep us entertained.”

Sylvia: “The pool alone cost a lot of money. The other projects we were okay with being back-up projects.”

Dixie: “We knew the pool would take a long time.”

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ACT Newsletter editors: Jane T. Broderick, broderic@etsu.edu & Andrew Stremmel, andrew.stremmel@sdstate.edu

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How do you describe your roles in this process?

Dixie: “It’s just fun!”
Sylvia: “Yeah! It’s just fun to work on a big project.”
Both girls: And we like working with [Claudine].”

How do you rejuvenate to keep this going?
Sylvia: “There was one week…”
Dixie: “… Sylvia did a lot of work at home.”
Sylvia: “It was the first big assignment we had…”
Dixie: “We had to agree on stuff together … … … And we wouldn’t make a profit…”
Sylvia: “… And we said $3. We stopped for a day and …”
Dixie: “… calmed ourselves.”
Sylvia: We were tired.”

How are you a different person now than when you started this process?

Sylvia: “Probably learning all the things like how expensive things are.
Claudine: “You felt more informed? Yes. Getting to see other children’s abilities like I didn’t know A.G. could do good on art and he can!”
Dixie: “I thought it informed me but taught me not to give up.”

What ideas / input from Claudine and others have guided you? And how did they guide you?

S: “I liked the idea of the flier for voting with ideas and stuff. Or buying all the land and selling what we don’t need.”
D: “[Claudine] taught us to be responsible in buying things like buying expensive markers maybe buy not as expensive ones.”

How do you describe your roles in this process?

S: “Dixie and I do it together. If I don’t [understand] some things, Dixie gets it.”
D: “I think my role is… Sylvia writes something down. She planned it out, I read it, and if I disagree, we discuss it.”
S: “But you plan too.”
D: “We both plan but you’re like the planner and I am the checker.”
What have you learned?
S: “Claudine, you would make us, well not make us, research on the computer like costs and stuff that we wouldn’t have known if you didn’t ask.”
Claudine: But what about the planning process?
S: “You know how teachers go along just explaining things but then you said we would have to practice what to say.”
Claudine: And the planning process?]
D: “It’s hard but I get practice and learn what comes up and it becomes easier but still not easy.”

Do you think you would need or could use others to help you? If so how would you guide them in the process?
What would their roles be?
S: “It depends on if it’s a teacher…”
D: “Teachers, yes!”
S: “…cuz we need guidance.”
Claudine: “Any other potential helpers?”
S&D: “Like kids?”
D: “I don’t think so. We’re independent. Maybe teachers but other than that… we got it!”

What is Claudine’s role?
S: “Guiding us.”
D: “I think guiding us definitely and if there’s like a law, you tell us.”

What is next after this fundraiser?
S: “Fun Run!”

[Side note—Sylvia and Dixie have been thinking of when to do a “Fun Run” for children. Coincidentally, the Rainbow Riders PTA is planning a 5k in November. They would like to do a “Fun Run” as well. When Claudine found out, she asked Kristi (Administrator) to consider letting the girls lead this part of the PTA event. The girls have yet to meet with Claudine to hash out the exact details and “pitch” their ideas to the PTA.]

Sylvia and Dixie ask that any readers who know people at Rainbow Riders please keep the “pool goal” a secret!
Our Mission: is to enhance the growth of all educators and students through identification and dissemination of effective constructivist practices in both the professional cultures of teachers and the learning environments of children. It is also to advance educators' understanding of Piaget's constructivism as a scientific theory that explains how human beings construct knowledge and moral values.

Membership: is open to anyone who is interested in the field of education. ACT Members are classroom teachers, administrators, supervisors, consultants, college and university personnel, students, parents and retired educators. Members stem from the USA, Mexico, Japan, Australia, Canada, Brazil, & China. Kate Chechak chair, kate.chechak@gmail.com

Benefits of Membership...
THE ACT NEWSLETTER ... interviews, articles on practice, and book reviews three times per year
THE CONSTRUCTIVIST... An educational e-journal and journal archive
ANNUAL CONFERENCE... discounted registration fee and early notice of call for presenters
AFFILIATION...with an association committed to supporting you. To join, please fill out the membership form on the membership page of our website: www.constructivistassociation.org

Find us on Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/groups/4859805714/

Visit our Website: www.constructivistassociation.org

2017 Annual Conference will be hosted at Fullerton College, Fullerton, CA. Check our website for updates and call for proposals

Our Journal: The Constructivist
As we continue our reviews for the next edition of The Constructivist, we encourage you to consider sharing your experiences and inquiries with us. Whether in the area of practice or research, we welcome your submissions.
Contact our editors, Carolyn Hildebrandt at Carolyn.Hildebrandt@uni.edu or Meir Muller at meirmuller@sc.rr.com for more information.

Left: Brenda Fyfe exploring materials in a presentation by Jane Broderick and Seong Bock Hong.

Right: Seong Bock Hong
A collage of experiences from our workshops and preconference preschool tours … lots of experimenting with math and STEM materials … Participants loved their Science Dance experience where as a group they interpreted their understanding of an ocean wave.