

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

Fall & Winter 2017 – 2018 Newsletter, v. 7. n. 2

## *From the President:*

Dear ACT Members,

ACT is off to a great 2018.

We look forward to a great conference in Columbia, South Carolina October 26-27! Our keynotes are Dr. Mariana Souto-Manning from Teacher's College and Dr. Bruce Marlow, author of *Creating and Sustaining the Constructivist Classroom*. At this time we are accepting conference proposals. Proposal information can be found at <http://acteducators.com/2018-conference/>

We have also reinigorated our Facebook page so please visit, comment and post your constructivist thoughts <http://www.facebook.com/groups/48559805714/>.

Thanks to Jane Broderick for all her work on these newsletters over the years.

Enjoy this newsletter!

Meir Muller

President

## **ACT Mission**

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.

**Find us on Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/groups/48559805714/>

**Visit our Website:** <http://acteducators.com/>

## **Jane Tingle Broderick**

### *Newsletter Editor*

East Tennessee State University  
Johnson City, TN

[broderic@etsu.edu](mailto:broderic@etsu.edu)

## **Board Members**

### **Meir Muller**

#### *President*

University of South Carolina  
Columbia, SC

[meirmuller@sc.rr.com](mailto:meirmuller@sc.rr.com)

### **Carolyn Black**

#### *Past President*

University of Houston

University of Houston Charter School

[cblack@uh.edu](mailto:cblack@uh.edu)

### **Kate Chechak**

The School at Columbia  
New York, NY

[kate.chechak@gmail.com](mailto:kate.chechak@gmail.com)

### **Tom Chiaromonte**

#### *Treasurer*

Fullerton College

Fullerton, CA

[tchiaromonte@fullcoll.edu](mailto:tchiaromonte@fullcoll.edu)

### **Brenda Fyfe**

Webster University  
St Louis, MO

[fyfebv@webster.edu](mailto:fyfebv@webster.edu)

### **Sonja de Groot Kim**

Kean University

Union, NJ

[sonjadegrootkim@yahoo.com](mailto:sonjadegrootkim@yahoo.com)

### **Seong Bock Hong**

#### *President Elect*

The University of Michigan-Dearborn  
Dearborn, MI

[seong@umich.edu](mailto:seong@umich.edu)

### **Sonia Yoshizawa**

ETSU

Johnson City, TN

[sonia.yoshizawa@gmail.com](mailto:sonia.yoshizawa@gmail.com)

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## BOARD MEMBER INTERVIEW *with Tom Chiaromonte*

By **Randa Dunlap, PhD Fellow, East Tennessee State University**

The 2017 Association for Constructivist Teaching Conference was held in Fullerton, California, and hosted by ACT Board member **Tom Chiaromonte**, professor of Child Development and Educational Studies at Fullerton College. In addition to his role as a professor, Chiaromonte has previously served as the director of the Child Development Laboratory School, a tour of which was one of the highlights for attendees of the 2017 pre-conference. During the interview, Chiaromonte shared his “road to Early Childhood,” including experiences from his 30 years at Fullerton College.



### **Making a Difference:**

When asked about his background and what brought him into this profession, Chiaromonte explained his desire to “contribute to society,” and “better the lives of others.” This passion for bettering humanity is evident through the interactions and experiences Tom has had with his service to children, their families, students as well as researchers in the fields of early education, and his many colleagues.

### **Background:**

As a freshman at California State University, Long Beach, Tom had strong interests in speech and language, as well as special education. While there, he obtained his B.A. in Communicative Disorders with thoughts of possibly becoming an audiologist or a speech and language pathologist. Working in Communicative Disorders was a “great opportunity to work with children with special needs,” one of Tom’s original interests. While finishing his first degree, he also found time to work at the Speech and Language Center in Orange County. However, once he graduated, he decided it was time to re-evaluate his options before deciding on a graduate program. Taking a year off, Tom began searching through college catalogs to assist in his decision of

### **Board Members**

**Constance Kamii**  
University of Alabama  
Birmingham, AL  
[ckamii@uab.edu](mailto:ckamii@uab.edu)

**Kelly Russell**  
*Constructivist Journal Editor*  
Birmingham Southern College  
Birmingham, AL  
[krussell@bsc.edu](mailto:krussell@bsc.edu)

**Calvert E. Schlick, Jr**  
Peekskill Museum  
Peekskill, NY  
[drscllick@aol.com](mailto:drscllick@aol.com)

**Jennifer Thompson**  
*Term Selection Task Force*  
1st Grade, Juneau School District  
Juneau, Alaska  
[jenjuneauak@gmail.com](mailto:jenjuneauak@gmail.com)

**Beth Van Meeteren**  
Director, Center for Early Childhood  
Development  
University of Northern Iowa  
[Beth.VanMeeteren@uni.edu](mailto:Beth.VanMeeteren@uni.edu)

**Chris Lozon**  
Director, St. Margaret’s Early  
Childhood Development  
San Juan Capistrano, CA  
[Cris.Lozon@smes.org](mailto:Cris.Lozon@smes.org)

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which university to attend. Here, he was balancing Communicative Disorders versus Child Development programs. Because of a highly acclaimed lab program (a laboratory school connected to the university), Tom chose Iowa State University—also the alma mater of constructivist author Rheta DeVries—for his graduate studies, where he received his M.S. in Child Development. Here, Tom worked in the lab school while also completing his thesis: *Helping behaviors and social competence in preschool children*.

Upon successful completion of his graduate studies, Chiaromonte returned back to California where he would later decide to pursue his education toward a PhD from a four-year university. In the mean-time, he worked first as a preschool teacher, then with Head Start during the mid-1980s and served as a program coordinator in Orange County. He became a faculty member at Fullerton College in 1989, and in 1990 started his PhD program in Education at Claremont Graduate University. Certainly, his background eludes to the fact that he has had extensive experiences working with young children and their families in various roles, all before entering into his doctoral program.

## **Information about Teaching Philosophy:**

In the early 1990s, Tom was exposed to Reggio Emilia and the idea of constructivist education. Taking what he had learned about the Reggio Emilia approach and combining those ideas with constructivist principles, he worked with colleagues to steer and impact Fullerton College's Early Childhood Program. During this time, Tom also became highly successful at grant-writing, obtaining funding for teacher training and a documentation library. Grant writing would become an asset for Tom, because in this field, "things take money...to buy materials and buy technology."

## **Research:**

Chiaromonte finished his doctoral program at Claremont Graduate University with a dissertation on *Predictors of emotional exhaustion in early childhood teachers*. Pre-service teachers' perceptions and teacher burn-out became strong research interests for Tom. He was introduced to another well-known constructivist, Andy Stremmel, and the two began a friendship and collaborative relationship. Throughout his career, it was colleagues such as Stremmel that helped fuel and support Chiaromonte's research interests. Since 1989, Chiaromonte has had numerous publications as well as conference presentations.

## **Fullerton College and Service:**

Since his career began, Chiaromonte has served as chair of the Department of Child Development and Educational Studies at Fullerton College, in addition to his role as director of the Child Development Laboratory Schools and his extensive teaching career. Today, he continues to serve as a tenured faculty member and is responsible for his course load with large numbers of students; thus, most of his time is spent lecturing. Tom strives to make learning meaningful for his students by focusing on the lab school and connecting theory and philosophy to application in this setting. Thus, he blends theory with practice. In addition to having had such a successful teaching career, multiple publications, presentations across the country, and serving in many leadership roles and in different professional organizations, the thing Tom is most proud of is his children—his son and daughter—with whom he enjoys spending time with in their Orange County home.

## **Tom Chiaromonte Publications:**

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- Chiaromonte, T., Kinkel, J., Whitney, M. (In-press). Mathematics and preschoolers: Helping teachers incorporate meaningful learning into everyday activities. *Proceedings of the Association of Constructivist Teaching Conference*.
- Chiaromonte, T. (In-press). On becoming social: A child's journey through the home, school, and community. *Kendall Hunt Publishers*, Burlington, IA.
- Chiaromonte, T. (on-going). Raising our kids. Regular column in *The Fullerton Observer*. [www.fullertonobserver.com](http://www.fullertonobserver.com).
- Hume, S. (2008). Get-real guide to toddlers and TV. *Parenting*, July. Expert quote.
- Schipani, D. (2006). Help kids feel good about their feelings. *Redbook*, Vol. 207, No. 4. Expert quote.
- Chiaromonte, T. (2003). Why am I so tired? Exploring three factors that play a role in emotional exhaustion in early childhood educators. *Children and Families*. Vol. XVII, No. 2.
- American Red Cross. (2000). *California child care health and safety training program participant handbook*. Author. (Technical advisor for the manual).
- Lamm, C., Root, N., Chiaromonte, T. (1994). Anti-bias lens: Creating authentic images through dialogue. In P. H. Dreyer (ed.), *Claremont reading conference 58th year 1994, creating authentic images: A multicultural perspective*. The Claremont Reading Conference Institute for Developmental Studies, The Claremont Graduate School. Claremont, CA.
- Chiaromonte, T. (1994). Reasons concerning parental selection of laboratory preschool programs. *National Association of Laboratory Schools Journal*, 18 (2), 35 - 47.
- Chiaromonte, T. (1990). Early childhood education in China: Political implications. (Report No. PS 020192). *Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education*. (ERIC Document).
- Stockdale, D.F., Hegland, S.M., & Chiaromonte, T. (1989). Helping behaviors: An observational study of preschool children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 4 (4), 533 - 543.
- Reviewer, *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*.
- Numerous articles in national/state /local newsletters.

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## Constructing Constructivist Practitioners

**Drs. Louanne Jacobs, Kelly Russell, Gay Barnes, Amelia Spencer, Shelia Ingram**

### In the Beginning

It is not often that turn-over results in an entirely new departmental faculty within the span of a single year. In 2008 this is exactly what occurred in the education department at Birmingham-Southern College. Birmingham-Southern is a small liberal arts college. The education department offers a collaborative education degree with dual certifications in elementary and special education as well as certification for a variety of secondary content-area majors. Our department at the time consisted of only four faculty members; we have since included a fifth colleague.

### Unique Opportunity to Re-Construct a Department

We quickly discovered that we shared mentors and friends and the same basic philosophy of teaching and learning. We realized that we had the unique opportunity to shape the framework for an entire program which was grounded in Constructivist theory and practice.



We began by co-constructing a list of “this we believe” statements:

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We believe that purposeful and intentional teachers: (1) demonstrate intellectual curiosity, (2) demonstrate philosophical, pedagogical, and academic grounding, (3) practice reflective and intentional teaching, and (4) practice advocacy for the community, the profession, and for all children.

We further articulated these belief statements as follows:

- Demonstrate intellectual curiosity
  - We believe that purposeful and intentional teachers are intellectually curious. We define intellectual curiosity as any interest that leads to inquiry. We believe that intellectual curiosity, this wakefulness of mind, is a vital quality of an effective teacher. Intellectually curious individuals exist in a state of constant learning, reading and researching. Intellectually curious individuals persistently seek solutions to problems and connections between and among divergent topics.



- Demonstrate philosophical, pedagogical, and academic grounding

We believe that purposeful and intentional teachers **know, know why, and know how.**

- Purposeful and intentional teachers **know** –they have wrestled with knotty questions and complex academic content from a variety of disciplines.
  - Purposeful and intentional teachers **know why** – they have developed a philosophical stance which informs their teaching decisions.
  - Purposeful and intentional teachers **know how** – they have acquired a repertoire of teaching moves informed by their pedagogical studies. These teaching moves include the ability to select and use resources and technologies to support teaching and learning.
  - Purposeful and intentional teachers can clearly articulate their beliefs about teaching and learning, cite supporting research and philosophical underpinnings, and speak to informed applications in a variety of classroom settings.
- Practice reflective and intentional teaching
    - We believe that purposeful and intentional teachers hold a set of principles which guide the decision-making process and which inform practice. We believe that effective teachers do what they do on purpose – each teaching move is intentional and reasoned. We believe that “intentional teachers are thoughtful, reflective people who are conscious of the decisions they make and the actions they take; they live and teach by the principles and practices they value and believe in” (Miller, 2008).



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- Practice advocacy for the community, the profession, and for all children
  - We believe the purposeful and intentional teachers know, respect, participate in, and advocate for the communities in which they teach.
  - We believe that purposeful and intentional teachers serve as advocates for the teaching profession. They participate in professional organizations and contribute to the “professional conversations” of their peers. Their actions and attributes are models of advocacy.
  - We believe that purposeful and intentional teachers know, respect, and advocate for ALL children. They advocate for whatever is necessary to meet the needs of individual members of their learning community.



This collection of dispositional statements became the foundation of our Conceptual Framework.



Follow this link to information for the:

[2018 Association for Constructivist Teaching Conference](#)

October 26 & 27, 2018 at the Marriott Hotel in Columbia, South Carolina

Pre-conference Tour of Schools: October 25

Marilee Cosgrove and Patti Green Pappas greeting  
2017 preconference attendees for their visit to the  
Reggio inspired Richman Public Preschool

