

# TNE

## The Teachers for a New Era Project At the University of Connecticut

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Winter, 2007 Bulletin

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### *Message from the Director:*

Greetings from TNE and welcome to the second edition of the *TNE at UConn Bulletin*. In this issue you will meet another one of our exceptional TNE Fellows, Dr. Kate Capshaw-Smith, an Associate Professor in the English department and learn about her work – both teaching and research – with diversity and children's literature. I am sure anyone teaching literature in the schools today will find this a valuable resource. Be sure to visit the TNE website and review the listing of diverse authors and their works available to teachers and students. You will also meet Dr. Alan Marcus, Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, and a recipient of a TNE research grant. Dr. Marcus discusses his work integrating feature films and teaching history. He was also featured in the January 29<sup>th</sup> edition of the *UConn Advance*, discussing his research and his new book, *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*.

Another exciting project that is now available on our website is the TNE Pod-cast Series. Visit the TNE web site ([www.tne.uconn.edu](http://www.tne.uconn.edu)) and listen to short interviews with key educational leaders discussing their research and practice applied to teachers and students in our schools. This series is available whether you have an I-Pod or not, you only need web access and speakers or headphones. If you have suggestions for people you would like us to interview or topics you would like to see discussed, please send us an email. We are looking to expand our list of topics and people.

We also want to update you that we are making significant progress in enabling Neag Teacher Education students the opportunity to earn undergraduate degrees in content areas, such as mathematics, history, English, biology, and agriculture, in addition to their education degree. A proposal has been drafted and presented to the University Senate and is currently being considered. This is a great opportunity for Neag students, and the future pupils in their classrooms, as they enhance their content preparation as well as their pedagogical skills. We will keep you posted as that proposal advances through the system.

We hope that you enjoy this second edition of the *Bulletin* and we encourage suggestions and comments. Please be sure to visit us at our website, [www.tne.uconn.edu](http://www.tne.uconn.edu) for more information about the exciting people and projects at TNE.



Scott W. Brown, Ph.D.  
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Questions? Comments?  
Suggestions for the next issue?  
Please contact:  
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TNE Fellow and Associate Professor of English

# Dr. Kate Capshaw-Smith

*Discusses her quest to expand the culture of children's literature and the University's new Diversity Studies Minor*

**Teachers for a New Era:** You've recently won the 2006 Best Scholarly Book award from the Children's Literature Association for your book, *Children's Literature of the Harlem Renaissance*. In addition, you've completed many publications in journals and books as well as notes and encyclopedia entries and book reviews. What have you been most proud of in your career so far?

**Kate Capshaw Smith:** "I've found great satisfaction in my work in the classroom, particularly with future elementary and secondary teachers. As a professor of children's and young adult literature, I can have an impact on the kinds of books that get into actual elementary and secondary classrooms. I take that responsibility very seriously. The best moments in my professional life have happened when students who have graduated contact me to let me know about their experience teaching the books they first encountered in my class. University students have appreciated studying texts by Walter Dean Myers, Virginia Hamilton, An Na, Langston Hughes, and others, because these books have helped them engage their elementary and secondary students in the best of children's literature. The idea that a child is reading a book that I suggested to their teacher blows me away. And I feel responsible to that child, and work consciously to include on my syllabus texts by authors from diverse backgrounds. Too often the story of children's literature excludes people of color. I guess that leads to the other source of satisfaction in my career, which is my research into African American children's writers of the 1920s and 1930s. As a field, children's literature has not paid enough attention to ethnic writers. My research has brought me great joy because I have helped recover dynamic texts by writers who believed deeply in the significance of black childhood."

**TNE:** What brought you to the University of Connecticut, specifically the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences?

**KCS:** "The Department of English has such a rich history in the field of children's literature. The founding scholar in the field, Francelia Butler, was a faculty member in the English Department. She started the premier journal, *Children's Literature*, helped found the Children's Literature Association, and lobbied the Modern Language Association to establish a Division on Children's Literature. Her courses in children's literature at UConn are legendary. This long-standing commitment to children's literature in the department and in the College of Arts and Sciences was very attractive to me. And presently the English Department has a number of top scholars in the field, including Margaret Higonnet and Sam Pickering, as well as the award winning children's poet, Marilyn Nelson. Our graduate program in English attracts some of the best students in children's literature, and working with them is satisfying on many levels. And the University owns the stellar Northeast Children's Literature Collection at the Dodd Center, a fantastic site for research. What children's literature scholar wouldn't want

to work at the University of Connecticut? I am very happy to be here."

**TNE:** How has working with TNE - not only as a Fellow, but also on the TNE Curriculum Design Committee - impacted your career? What has this position allowed you to do in regards to your research?

**KCS:** "Working with TNE has allowed me to get a broader sense of the commitment of the University to a quality education for every student. TNE is supported enthusiastically at all levels of the administration. Participating in the Curriculum Design Committee has allowed me to forge significant relationships with colleagues across CLAS and in the Neag School of Education. In terms of my professional development, this summer I collaborated with a TNE participant from Boston College's English Department to present our work at the Association for the Departments of English conference. This was a wonderful opportunity to spotlight the collaboration between education and arts and sciences at our institutions."

**TNE:** One of the initiatives you have been a major part of is the development of Diversity Studies Minor for UConn students. How do you feel this will impact UConn students?

**KCS:** "Because the new minor will be available to all students at the University, it has the potential to have a wide-ranging impact on how the University conceptualizes diversity studies. It's a terrific project because it will allow students to think about diversity comparatively. In my classes on ethnic American



*"The idea that a child is reading a book that I suggested to their teacher blows me away."*

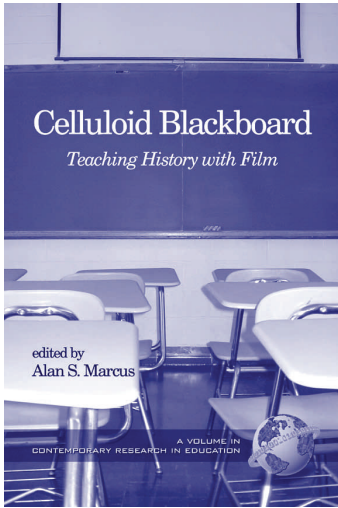
literature, students often make exciting connections between texts by writers from various backgrounds and ethnicities. The minor will expand on this phenomenon by enabling students to study diversity in more depth, allowing students to achieve both a broad-based knowledge of the theoretical currents shaping diversity studies, and to particularize the points of comparison and contrast between groups."

**TNE:** What do you believe is the most critical issue facing K-12 teachers in today's classrooms?

**KCS:** "I believe that engaging students in a love of language is the most critical issue in classrooms today. When students attend to the beauty of language, they are better able to sustain intellectual inquiry. If they learn to love words, they will have the skills in close attention to be able to apprehend the beauty of mathematics, history, art, and other disciplines. When students get excited about reading, and the way in which reading sparks the imagination, they are better equipped to investigate the world around them."

# Hollywood and High School History

*A peek at the recently released book edited by Dr. Alan Marcus*



“Imagine a world where the film *Forrest Gump* is the most influential source for learning about the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and growing up in the mid-20th century United States” (p.1). Not far from the truth, according to the research of Dr. Alan Marcus, Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Connecticut.

Funded in part by a TNE faculty research grant, Dr. Marcus has studied the use of feature films in the high school history classroom as a complimentary source of information that can scaffold students historical thinking skills through developing historical empathy and offering multiple perspectives, among other benefits. In addition to the benefits of film as a pedagogical tool, Dr.

Marcus reports that students view many history-based feature films outside of class and will continue to view them throughout their lives. Thus, using film allows teachers to build on students’ prior knowledge. His research is described in detail in the book he edited, *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, published by Information Age Publishing in November of 2006. The book includes contributions from historians, history educators, and practicing classroom teachers and provides frameworks for the analysis of history-based films, as well as the results from several studies about how students make sense of the past through film.

Dr. Marcus hopes for future history teachers to use his research to increase students’ “historical film literacy,” which he defines as “the skills and knowledge to productively analyze, interpret, and evaluate historically based films” (p.3). By developing these skills, Dr. Marcus believes that students will be better equipped to watch historically based movies with a more critical eye.

## Educational Expansions

*TNE’s exciting new project takes shape*

Educational Expansions is a TNE research initiative designed to examine pupil performance as indicated by measures such as the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and teacher preparation. TNE has met with several Connecticut School Districts to explore the relationships between CMT performance and Neag preparation. To date, the majority of schools approached about the project have expressed interest in working with TNE at UConn and the Connecticut State Department of Education to develop a state-wide database to examine the characteristics of effective teachers as they are related to pupil performance on standardized assessments.

The school districts were selected and recruited for participation based on the number of The Neag School of Education’s teacher preparation graduates employed there. Through a blind review of the data, TNE strives to measure graduate’s pupil’s performance compared to teachers with certification from other schools and alternative preparation programs. TNE will examine the acquired data from the 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008 school years in a longitudinal study to understand where and how teachers are making pupil gains. The final report is expected to be completed in the Winter of 2008.



## Pod-cast Directory

*Log on and learn*

*WHO CAN YOU HEAR ON THE WEBSITE NOW?*

### **Dr. Kimberly Lawless**

Associate Professor of Educational Psychology and Language, Literacy & Culture

*University of Illinois, Chicago*

### **Dr. Mark Boyer**

Professor, Department of Political Sciences  
Co-Director, GlobalEd Project

### **Dr. Mike Alfano**

Director, Teacher Certification Program  
for College Graduates

### **Dr. Fabiana Cardetti**

Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics

### **Dr. Michael Dintenfuss**

Associate Professor, Department of History

### **Dr. George Sugai**

Professor, Special Education

Director, Center for Behavior and Education & Research

Co-Director, Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports

### **Dr. Jason Irizarry**

Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum & Instruction

*WHO IS COMING SOON?*

### **Dr. Manuela Wagner**

Assistant Professor, Department of Modern and Classical Languages

### **Dr. Mary Yakimowski**

Neag School of Education Director of Assessment

### **Dr. Veronica Makowsky**

Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education  
and Regional Campus Administration

### **Dr. Robin Grenier**

Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Leadership

### **Dr. Eliana Rojas**

Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Program Director, Bilingual-Bicultural Education

### **Dr. Don Leu**

John & Maria Neag Endowed Chair in  
Literacy & Technology

Professor of Education

President, National Reading Conference  
Director, New Literacies Research Lab

### **Dr. Barry Sheckley**

Department Head, Educational Leadership  
Ray Neag Professor of Adult Learning

All Pod-casts are free for download:  
[www.tne.uconn.edu](http://www.tne.uconn.edu)

# Hot off the Press!

## Recent Publications & Presentations

- Artino, A.R. *Task Value, Self-Efficacy, and Experience: Predicting Military Students' Attitudes Toward Self-Placed, Online Learning*. Presented at the Northeastern Educational Research Conference: October, 2006.\*
- Artino, A. R. & Stephens, J.M. *Using Social Cognitive Theory to Predict Students' Use of Self-Regulated Learning Strategies in Online Courses*. Presented at the Northeastern Educational Research Conference: October, 2006.\*
- Brown, S.W. (2007, January). The GlobalEd Project Goes International: The Cyprus Project. *The Doves Olympic Movement Leadership Conference*. Argos, Cyprus, January 28, 2007.
- Brown, S.W., Boyer, M.A., Gehlbach, H., Ioannou, A., Lima, C.O., Niv-Solomon, A., Janik, L. & Maneggia, D. (2007, Feb.). An International Negotiations Simulation on the Web: The GlobalEd Project. Paper Presented at the Eastern Educational Research Association Conference; Clearwater, FL.
- Brown, S.W., Gehlbach, H., Liu, X., Goldstien, J., Rickards, C., Behuniak, P., Natale, C.F., & Tomala, G. *It takes a village to Support a New Teacher: TNE Induction Survey Results*. Presented at the Hawaii International Education Conference on Education. January, 2007.\*
- Capshaw--Smith, K. (2004). *Children's Literature of the Harlem Renaissance*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. Winner of the Children's Literature Association's 2006 award for best scholarly book.
- Glenn, W. (2007). Applying New Lenses: Building Confidence and Developing Skills in Struggling Student Writers. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Chicago, IL, April 9-13.
- Ioannou, A., Brown, S.W., Gehlbach, H., Boyer, M., Niv-Solomon, A., & Janik, L. *The GlobalEd Project: A study of Self Efficacy and Learning in a Multimedia Enhanced Problem Based Learning Environment*. Presented at the Northeastern Educational Research Conference: October, 2006.\*
- Irizarry, J.G. & Meyer, K. *The Teachers for a New Era Syllabi Project Report: Linking Courses to Connecticut Standards*.\*
- Marcus, A. S. (Ed). (2007). *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*. Information Age Publishers: Charlotte, NC.
- Stephens, J.M. & Gehlbach, H. (2007). *Under pressure and under-engaged: Motivational profiles and academic cheating in high school*. In E. Anderman and T. Mrdock (Eds.), *The psychology of academic cheating* (pp. 107-139). Amsterdam: Academic Press.

\*Presentation Slides and report texts available at [www.tne.uconn.edu](http://www.tne.uconn.edu).



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