As a teacher educator at the University of Utah, Peggy McCandless still brings to teaching, the same levels of passion and enthusiasm that were part of her work when she began at the U some 20 years ago. These qualities are shared with each of her pre-service teachers and fuel her commitments to quality teacher education.

Having taught over 400 student teachers in the past 20 years, Peggy’s commitment to quality teacher preparation is evident in the work of her students in their classrooms locally, nationally, and around the world. Her former students are among the most recognized teachers, administrators, and community participants in the state. Peggy’s influence has been particularly significant in implementing social studies methods, service learning, and most recently her work in affiliation with the Beverly Taylor Arts in Education programs. Peggy’s philosophy embodies teaching and learning that embed research-based practices in classrooms and schools. Through collaborative learning and an integrated approach to curriculum, the educators under Peggy’s tutelage understand the complexity of teaching and teachers’ work. Never far from the classroom, Peggy co-teaches in many classroom settings, collaborates with teachers, administrators, and communities. When asked what she envisions for her students, Peggy responds, “I hope my students will be good consumers of research, become leaders in the educational field, and embrace service learning and an integrated approach to designing curriculum. I want them to be agents of change and to always remember that it’s all about the students they are teaching. I hope that they are always standing up and fighting for the rights of young learners.”.
The UITE is forever grateful for the strong partnership schools that work with our elementary and secondary teacher candidates. We are proud of all their hard work and dedication to excellence in teaching and learning. We are also very thankful for their time and energy while mentoring new teachers to the profession. Most recently two of our partnership schools were recognized for the growth in their CRT test scores. Bennion Elementary and Wasatch Elementary, both in the Salt Lake School District, were recognized as Top Performing Schools for the 2010-2011 school year. The Teacher Achievement Recognition program supported by The Grand America Hotel, the Salt Lake Education Foundation, and the Salt Lake School District recognizes programs, schools, and teachers based on data, specifically growth in student achievement. “Student scores from early in the school year will be compared to scores form the end of the school year. Comparing growth makes the program fair for all schools, regardless of demographics.” The UITE would like to extend our congratulations to these two partnership school and thank them for allowing our teacher candidates access to their incredible role modeling.

Donnette McNeill-Waters is the Granite School District’s Human Resources Director. She was appointed as the Associate Director of Human Resources for elementary schools in March 2003 and became the Director of Human Resources in December of 2010. She has been a part of the Granite School District family since she entered kindergarten. This opportunity to serve as Human Resources Director has afforded her the opportunity to positively impact students’ academic success on many different levels.

Donnette began her teaching career as an upper grade elementary teacher first at Copper Hills and then Plymouth Elementary. It was during that time that she realized that even though she couldn’t change students’ circumstances, she could teach them to believe in their abilities and motivate them to strive for things they never imagined possible. Reflecting on her own teaching experience, she believes that the most significant factor in a classroom is an effective and compassionate teacher that possess a strong content and pedagogical knowledge. The greatest joy in the world is seeing a child’s eyes light up when they finally understand a concept or an idea.

In 1998, Donnette completed her Masters in Elementary Education and earned an Administrative Supervisory Certificate. She was hired as an intern to be an assistant principal at Eisenhower Jr. High. It was at Eisenhower that she really learned what it meant to be a visionary administrator and instructional leader. She loved working with adolescents, it was intriguing to watch them mature and grow; laughter was a survival mechanism in this assignment.

Donnette went on to become the assistant principal of Magna and Orchard Elementary Schools. In 2000, she was promoted to principal at Orchard Elementary and three years later she was transferred to Bennion Elementary. She has enjoyed her time as an elementary principal and thought that it was the best job in school administration. In her heart she is an educator and hopes to return to the classroom someday. As the HR director, Donnette is also the Urban Institute for Teacher Education’s main contact at the Granite District. Through this collaborative partnership, workshops are conducted to train site teachers how to effectively coach teacher candidates using explicit guided practice and objective feedback. This partnership has also been able to offer students high quality, supportive, and diverse student teaching and internship experiences. Donnette believes that recruiting and hiring highly qualified and effective teachers is her most important task.

On a personal note, Donnette is married and has three sons. Two of her boys are in high school, and one is in the Business School of Accountancy at Weber State University. Managing a family and a career can be extremely challenging, but with the right support, a reduced sleep schedule, humor, organization, and lots of chocolate, it is achievable. She would like to wish the best of luck to those entering the most important profession, the one that makes all other professions possible; teaching!

Thank You For Your Dedication!
As part of their social studies methods class, the elementary licensure students are given the opportunity to design and implement service learning projects during the fall semester field practicum. Service Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Service Learning is also an effective means to integrate curriculum in new and exciting ways. As one student wrote, “My service learning project was nicely integrated into many subjects. It helped students learn more about the world around them. The project helped them be more informed, caring, and active members of their community. Teaching all of this project with a constructivist outlook engaged my students because they were engaged in authentic learning tasks.” On December 12, during finals week, the elementary candidates presented their projects to other colleagues, instructors, and faculty at the University of Utah Bennion Center. Pictured here are a few examples of projects that were completed this past fall.

Jennifer Okamura

Tania Falcon

Amanda Mecham

Former Student Demonstrates The Mission of UITE

The mission of the UITE is to prepare educators to serve urban students and educational communities in all their rich diversity. We conceive of educational diversity as the dynamic engagement of a range of cultural and urban traditions, including individual differences in ability. To this end, our teacher candidates are engaged in various teaching and learning pedagogies that help acknowledge this goal. For example, our elementary teacher candidates, with the help of their elementary classroom students, design and implement service learning projects. Service-Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. One of our graduates, Genny, who student taught last year at Roosevelt Elementary in the Granite School District, taught her first graders how to say “Hi” in the many different languages which are spoken by students at Roosevelt Elementary. Once her first graders learned, they, in turn, taught the rest of the school how to say “Hi” and presented mini-lessons on how to include everyone. The bulletin board, pictured, was made by Genny and is displayed in the main hall to be seen by everyone who enters Roosevelt Elementary School.

Integrating Art into The Curriculum

The UITE is excited to pilot a new course this semester titled, “Integrating Art Curriculum in K-6 Urban Classrooms”. This course integrates the arts into academic learning, which research has shown to not only help improve a student’s academic success, but also to assist in creating an inclusive school community. The course draws on research from several disciplines to inform students’ understanding of integrating the arts in diverse educational settings. Students will explore the arts as an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. One goal of the course is to consider how integrating the arts in culturally and linguistically diverse elementary classrooms creates inclusive curriculum that reflects a variety of world-views and perspectives. The course also addresses best practices within arts integration and how to shape the new Common Core curriculum that is meaningful and engaging for elementary students. We are excited to have Kelly McIntyre-Martinez as the lead instructor for this course. She brings extensive experience and education to this course and her knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, art integration will be invaluable for her students.
2011 Recipient for Future Teacher Award

Tania Lobato-Falcon is the recipient of the 2011 Future Teacher Award from the Utah Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. The Utah Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Utah ASCD) is an organization dedicated to providing excellent professional development to Utah's educational leaders. Their mission is to provide programs, products, and services essential to the way educators learn, teach, and lead.

Tania decided to pursue a career in education after many years of volunteer work in her own children’s elementary schools. She is currently a teacher candidate at Rolling Meadows Elementary in West Valley City, where she is teaching 4th grade. As an educator she aspires to teach in a diverse, welcoming and student centered classroom.

She believes that it is her responsibility as a teacher to build strong relationships with each of her students and to understand their strengths and limitations so that they can realize their full potential every day. She believes that individual goals should be set, and that standards should be based on grade level, physical and mental capabilities and the common core.

Tania believes that instilling a love of knowledge, respect, integrity, and self-discipline are essential elements of any classroom and should be taught and practiced every day. In addition, service learning will be an important part of her project-based environment, with the expectation that every child can achieve.

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