



## Teacher Evaluation-Student Performance Conference

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Dr. Leslie Grant

Leslie W. Grant will be the keynote presenter at the fall VSUP Conference on September 23, 2011 at the Holiday Inn in Charlottesville. Dr. Grant is an Assistant Professor of Teaching and Learning at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. Dr. Grant is the co-author of *Teacher-Made Assessments: How to*

*Connect Curriculum, Instruction, and Student Learning* (Eye on Education, 2008) and *Student Achievement Goal Setting: Using Data to Improve Teaching and Learning* (Eye on Education, 2009).

Dr. Grant has worked with school districts and has presented at international, national, and state level conferences in the areas of classroom-based assessments, student achievement goal setting, and teacher evaluation. Her research interests focus on classroom-based assessments and teacher quality. Dr. Grant was a teacher and instructional leader before serving as a developer of state customized

assessments for a major test publishing company. She received her doctoral degree in Educational Policy, Planning and Leadership from The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Student achievement goal setting is a research-based practice of using student achievement data to set goals, which are then incorporated into the overall teacher evaluation process. This process honors both the needs of the curriculum and the needs of the student, thereby making this process individualized for each teacher based on the context in which he or she teaches

leading to fair and equitable evaluation of a teacher's important work. In this session, participants will be given the opportunity to assess the validity and reliability of various measures of student growth which are currently in use in different school divisions.

By the end of the workshop, participants should have a working knowledge of how to collect and assess student achievement data that can be incorporated into an evaluation system which is effective for all educators.

Registration information will be sent to each VSUP division.

## VSUP Test Item Bank Status Report and Plans for 2011-2012

The Test Item Bank is an important component of the Virginia School-University Partnership. The Test Bank began in the fall of 2007 in response to the need for quality test questions on formative assessments that helped prepare students for the Standards of Learning tests. After focusing initially on Math 6 and Math 7, during the past three years the Test Item Bank has developed over 1,300

questions in the following subject areas: Grade 3 Reading (242), Grade 5 Math (161), Grade 6 Math (162), Grade 7 Math (258), Grade 8 Math (71), US History I (161), and US History II (266). This year the plan is to expand the Test Item Bank to include Math 3, Math 4, and Civics. These questions are used by VSUP school divisions for the purpose of providing instructional support to teachers in assessing and remediating

students. In a survey given in May of 2011, 100% of VSUP divisions reported using the Test Bank items and 100% rated the quality of questions (in terms of their relationship to the SOL curriculum) as good (55%) or excellent (45%). Only member school divisions have access to these Test Bank items through Interactive Achievement or ExamView software and Collab, UVA's online computer system.

Professional development is a key part of the Test Item Bank. School divisions provide release time for teachers and instructional specialists in each subject area to attend four full-day meetings held throughout the year at The Albemarle Resource Center in Charlottesville. At the first meeting of the year, participants are given training in how to write quality test items and how (cont. page 2)

# VSUP Teacher Scholarship Winner Returns from Tour of China

**Carly Nicholson** is an English and Creative Writing teacher at Charlottesville High School. She received a full scholarship to tour China in a contest sponsored by VIF and VSUP. She shared the following reflections on her trip.

*I had the chance to visit three places I've always wanted to see: Beijing, Xi'an, and Shanghai. Each place lived up to my anticipation. Just outside Beijing, I hiked up the Great Wall; in Xi'an, I was given hours to tour the terracotta army, and in Shanghai, I felt witness to China's new surge, not only in*

*joining the modern world, but surpassing it. However, what really made this trip were the people.*

*It was a rarity to take a tour like this with such like-minded people. We were twenty-five educators who love to travel, and who were often questioning how we might use this new learning in our classrooms. I've already begun designing a unit around my experience of visiting Tiananmen Square, using The Hunger Games, and I have many more units in mind based on my experience.*

*Yet again, the greatest benefit of this trip is the relationships I made with the people I met: the other educators, the tour guides,*

*the teachers and administrators at the Chinese schools we visited. We've already designed a facebook group for our trip.*

*I want my students to experience for themselves: no matter where you go, what you see, it's the human experience you bring home with you.*



## VSUP MEETING CALENDARS 2011-2012



### Steering Committee

- September 29 ARC
- December 8 ARC
- February 2 ARC
- May 17 Bavaro Hall

### Board of Directors

- October 18 Bavaro Hall
- December 13 Bavaro Hall
- February 7 Bavaro Hall
- May 17 Bavaro Hall

### TEST BANK WORKGROUPS

- October 11 ARC
- November 9 ARC
- December 7 ARC
- February 15 ARC

### Test Bank Cont. from p. 1

to enter them into the Test Bank.

This year a large part of the training will be focused on writing questions which effectively test higher level thinking (since in the May 2011 survey, the quality of questions in terms of their reflection of higher order thinking skills was rated excellent by only 18% and merely fair by 18% of school divisions). Participants are asked to bring questions to each meeting and then they work in groups to review and revise these questions. Each item for the Test Bank is reviewed for quality, content, SOL alignment, and level of difficulty according to Bloom's Taxonomy. Three readers/groups approve each item prior to inclusion in the Test Bank.

In addition to the reward of producing this invaluable resource of high quality questions which can be used by their home school or division, participants also benefit from the training and practice they receive in writing good questions and from the opportunity to participate in a Professional Learning Community made up of colleagues from across Central Virginia with whom they can share ideas.

This year VSUP is also encouraging all Test Bank participants to take advantage of further professional development opportunities by attending selected VSUP conferences for the discounted rate of only \$25 per conference. Additional information will be provided at the first meeting of the 2011-2012 Test item Bank Workgroups. Meeting dates are noted at the left.



## SEVEN DIVISIONS TO SEND TEAMS TO CHINA



GREAT WALL OF CHINA



Five VSUP member school divisions and two other Virginia school divisions will send teams of administrators and teachers to China this October to learn about China's culture, history and economy and to develop international partnerships with Chinese schools. Fredericksburg, Manassas Park, Middlesex, Nelson, and Waynesboro will be joined by Fairfax and Prince William in sending three educators each, while VSUP divisions Albemarle and Greene counties will be sending one representative for a total of 24 educators out of 49 participants in the 2011 VSUP "China As A Global Partner" program. The remaining participants are spouses, VSUP staff members and Virginia education leaders from the 2009 VASS "India As A Global Partner" program.



ulty members from the Darden School of Business, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Curry School of Education and the Asia Institute. Rob Gifford, newly appointed China Editor for the Economist and author of *China Road*, required reading for the program, will be flying from London to present on his experiences reporting on China's re-emergence as a world power, during his years as NPR's correspondent in East Asia.

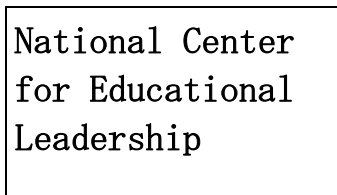
Gifford's book is about his travel in China from east to west along a modern highway that follows the old Silk Road. In *China Road* he weaves together the history of destinations along his route with his observations about the changes in modern China as he progresses toward China's border with Turkistan. VSUP administrators and teachers who are not participating in the program will be invited to UVA's Bavaro Hall on October 8 to hear Gifford's presentation as well as those of other UVA professors.

During the twelve day in-country phase of the program the participants will visit a middle school and high school in Beijing from which UVA recruits many of its Chinese students. They will also visit a school in Shanghai which out-scored almost all of the schools taking the most

recently administered PISA tests. During the school visitations, the school division teams will have opportunities to discuss Chinese curricula, assessments, teaching strategies, and student life with Chinese teachers and students as well as to discuss how they can develop partnerships between the schools in China and schools in their divisions.

In addition, program participants will tour international businesses and attend presentations by corporate executives and representatives from Virginia's Economic Development Office in Shanghai. Participants will also tour many of China's historical sites including the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, the Great Wall in Beijing and the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an.

Over \$40,000 has been raised from nine different companies to support the school division teams. The sponsors include Pearson, VIF International Program, Honeywell, the National Center for Education Leadership, Linc Services, Reo Distribution, SunTrust, VACORP and K12. The members of the VSUP Board of Directors wish to thank all of the sponsors for their very generous contributions to the VSUP "China As A Global Partner" program.



In September and October all of the program participants will attend two week-end seminars featuring presentations by UVA fac-

## VSUP September Workshops Registration Information Provided

Registration information for the following September workshops will be sent to school divisions and is available on the VSUP website (VSUP.org). Other fall workshop announcements will be sent during August.

### **Connecting Teacher Performance and Student Progress: Student Achievement Goal Setting**

*Friday, September 23*

Presenter: Dr. Leslie Grant, Old Dominion University

Audience: Principals, Central Office Administrators, Instructional Leaders

Cost: \$99 for VSUP members

Location: The Holiday Inn in Charlottesville

Time: 8:30 – 3:30

How can teacher evaluation be connected fairly to student performance? What approaches, in addition to using the Virginia Student Growth Model, are available for making this connection part of an equitable evaluation system? This workshop will explore the research-based practice of using evidence of student progress as a significant element in the teacher evaluation process. The focus will be on how to design and implement student performance goal setting for the vast majority of educators for whom SOL data are not available. After being introduced to goal setting based on student achievement data through a series of hands on activities and simulations, participants will be given the opportunity to assess the validity and reliability of various measures of student growth which are currently in use in different school divisions. By the end of the workshop, participants should have a working knowledge of how to collect and assess student achievement data that can be incorporated into an evaluation system which is effective for all educators.

### **Examining Mathematics Instructional Quality Using the M-Scan Tool**

*Tuesday, September 27*

Presenters: Dr. Robert Berry, The University of VA, and Dr. Temple Walkowiak, North Carolina State University

Audience: Teachers, Instructional Leaders, Administrators

Cost: \$99 for VSUP members

Location: The Holiday Inn in Charlottesville

Time: 8:30 – 3:30

Learn about a new tool designed to help teachers translate the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) process standards into practice. Developed by researchers at the University of Virginia, the Mathematics-Scan (M-Scan) is an observational tool which provides a framework of mathematics instructional quality for teachers. The M-Scan examines *Mathematics Instructional Quality* by assessing the quality of mathematical tasks, the nature of mathematical discourse, the use of mathematical representations, and the teacher's demonstrated knowledge of the mathematical content. To assess the quality of tasks, the M-Scan examines the dimensions of *structure of the lesson*, *cognitive demand*, *problem solving*, and *connections and applications*. For the nature of the discourse, the M-Scan considers *explanation and justification* and *mathematical discourse community*. To examine the use of representations, the M-Scan considers *multiple representations* and *students' use of mathematical tools*. For the teacher's demonstrated knowledge, the M-Scan measures *mathematical accuracy*. The nine dimensions (in italics above) are linked to NCTM's Principles and Standards and the Virginia Mathematics Standards of Learning. This workshop will give administrators, instructional leaders, and elementary and middle school teachers the opportunity to envision high-quality mathematics instruction through classroom video observations, concrete examples, and interactive activities. Participants will learn how to use the framework of the M-Scan to reflect on and improve the teaching of mathematics.



### **Asia in the World History Curriculum**

*Friday, September 30*

Presenters: Faculty from UVA's Asia Institute and local high school teachers

Audience: Teachers, Instructional Leaders

Cost: \$79 for VSUP members

Location: The Holiday Inn in Charlottesville

Time: 8:30 – 3:30

This workshop will examine ways in which Asia fits into the curriculum of World History I, World History II, A.P. World History, A.P. European History, and A.P. Human Geography. The focus will be on developing a deeper understanding of the wide variety of religions, the role of political institutions, and the influence of the diverse cultures in East Asia and South Asia both on historical interactions and in contemporary events. The goal of the conference will be to give teachers the instructional strategies and resources they need to frame this global content in order to make it accessible to students. This workshop is sponsored by the Asia Institute's Outreach Program at UVA.

## **Proactive School Communications: 4 No Cost PR Tips to Start the Year Off Right**

by Peter J. Sengenberger, M.Ed.

The beginning of a new school year is the perfect time for school administrators to implement proactive communications and public relations initiatives. Considering the competitive nature of education and the scrutiny all schools and divisions are under, it is imperative that divisions take control of their public relations programs.

1. **WUFOO YOUR SCHOOL STAKEHOLDERS** - Remember, effective communications programs are about creating open lines of communications with your stakeholders to ensure that you are fulfilling their needs. Talk to dissatisfied employees, community members, or any stakeholder of any organization, and one common complaint will be that they don't feel management is listening. Companies such as WuFoo.com and SurveyMonkey.com offer a variety of options, including a free one, for organizations to use to create online surveys. Potential topics could include: What do parents think of the proposed changes to the dress code? With tighter budgets, what programs are considered priorities? What does the faculty think of the new discipline procedures? How would parents prefer the new newsletter to be distributed (mail, e-mail, web site, etc.)? Are your students satisfied with your class offerings?
2. **PROACTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS** – The first time you speak to a reporter this year shouldn't be because they called you about AYP, the new teacher evaluation plan, or the graduation and completion index. Administrators need to send out media alerts and press releases about some of the positive programs and initiatives taking place in the school. Not sure where to start? Ask every principal in the division to identify the two programs or initiatives in their school that are the most interesting and are having the most impact on students. Periodically, send press releases to your local media about these programs; include photos if you have them. Possible news stories could include technology integration, new grant funding, students winning or participating in regional competitions, student volunteer organizations, etc. Spread the news about the great things happening in your schools!
3. **POSITIVE PARENT CONTACTS** - One common message from administrators is that teachers need to be in regular contact with parents, and that teachers should ideally contact parents with good news - we don't want the only communication from the school to be when things are going wrong. My question for you, superintendent/principal, is this: *When is the last time you made contact with a parent for something GOOD that happened?* Let me suggest that twice per week you call the parent of a student in your school/division to tell them something great that you noticed about their child. Not only will this let them know that their child is on your radar and is important, but it will establish that you are a school leader who is involved in their child's education. As the school administrator, you will quickly learn valuable information about these parents and their perspective of the school. Regular calls like this will also make you more mindful of the students in your school(s), and you will start to notice positive behaviors...rather than the negative issues administrators regularly have to deal with. Here are a few suggestions to get you started with your new parent contact campaign: performance in a play, participating in the spelling bee, getting published in a school magazine, sporting event performance, improving in a class, etc.
4. **SOCIAL MEDIA** – New forms of social media technology is released every day, and can be broken down into various categories, including microblogging, social networking, RSS feeds, video sharing, audio sharing, document sharing, and on, and on, and on. All of these allow for communication to take place via the web or mobile technology, and can be valuable tools for schools. The two easiest services for schools and divisions to use are Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) and Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)). They are free, simple to use once they are set up, and provide one more avenue for schools and divisions to reach all of their school audiences with timely information.

All of these initiatives have zero financial costs, and the relatively small amount of time required to implement these strategies will be well worth it in terms of the positive relationships and public relations you will develop. Pick one strategy and try it today!

*Peter J. Sengenberger, M.Ed., is the owner of Title20 Consulting, LLC,  
a Virginia-based public relations consulting business that specializes in communications services  
for K-12 educational institutions. Visit [www.titletwenty.com](http://www.titletwenty.com)  
to access a variety of helpful articles and resources.*