2013-2014 Marian Wright Teaching Circles

The Thompson Center for Learning and Teaching is pleased to announce that eight teaching circles have formed for the 2013-2014 academic year. It is not too late to join a circle if you see one that interests you – just contact the facilitator directly, at the email provided.

Enhancing Multiculturalism: Teaching Fiction for Global Cross-Cultural Awareness and Understanding ~ Facilitator: Ernest Emenyonu, Africana Studies, ernest@umflint.edu

The young but distinguished Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (winner of Commonwealth Writers Prize, Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, the Orange Broadband Prize, & recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, among others), will visit UM-Flint next March as the 2014 Visiting writer in the AFS/Flint Public Library African & Diaspora Artist Visit series funded by the Ruth Mott Foundation. Her most recent novel, Americanah (2013) set in a “rich tapestry of Nigerian and American life portraying the ways a handful of vivid characters try to live in both worlds simultaneously”, makes a major statement in the values of global multiculturalism and cross-cultural understanding. Adichie’s works of fiction are read widely in American schools and colleges including UM-Flint. The Teaching Circle is designed to help create an awareness of her impending visit, as the members read Americanah and engage in the world-wide discourse/dialogue which it has inspired on the teaching of multiculturalism in literature classrooms.

Integration of both Instructional and Assessment Strategies within Physical Therapy Education to Advance Clinical Practice ~ Facilitator: Jennifer Blackwood and James Creps, Physical Therapy, jblackwo@umflint.edu, jcreps@umflint.edu

Faculty in the physical therapy program desire to be excellent clinicians and educators in physical therapy, however, there is a limited amount of time to address best practice in pedagogy. This teaching circle will focus on different teaching and assessment strategies that influence clinical practice in physical therapy in both the entry level curriculum and post professional graduate level studies. The emphasis will be placed on high impact practices and will utilize the Mary McMillan lecture in physical therapy as a genesis for discussion. This concern over assessment has been present in the department for years and faculty feel that it is imperative to address this as the size and scope of the programs offered have increased. This will insure that knowledge translation from didactic education to clinical practice occurs and forms the cornerstone of successful physical therapy education.

Beyond Intentional Teaching ~ Facilitator: Della Becker-Cornell, Early Childhood Development Center, dellac@umflint.edu

As the ECDC continues exploring the Reggio-practice and taking our skills as a team and as individual educators to new and deeper levels, we constantly search for tools and resources to help this process, we have decided to use the book, Twelve Best Practices of Early Childhood - Reggio and other inspired approaches, by Anne Lewin-Benham. The book begins with a self-survey of the classroom environment, materials, structures and practices. It includes chapters such as documentation, open-flow day, materials, meaningful conversations and teaching with intention. As each teacher completes the survey, it reveals areas that could be addressed and explored in-depth. Having the flexibility to choose which area or areas to focus on gives each teacher the opportunity to reflect and grow in the area most needed.

Through this work as a teaching circle, we are developing trust in one another to work in collaboration. As a Reggio-inspired school, we know that collaboration is a key element in our
future success as a school and also for our own personal and professional satisfaction. Learning to work as a team on this level will help us to develop a common vision as a school and strengthen our ability to work together.

**Teaching for Equity** – Facilitated by Danielle De La Mare, Communication & Visual Arts, ddelamar@umflint.edu

Members of this circle are all involved in educating teacher candidates and have an interest in helping them understand how issues of social justice play out in their future teaching careers. In this teaching circle, we will explore what “teaching for equity” and “place-based education” mean as we work with teacher candidates in various disciplines.

**Teaching Workshop: Inter-Disciplinary Collaboration in Teaching Methodologies** ~ Facilitator: Sarah Lippert, Communication & Visual Art, slipp@umflint.edu

This aim of this teaching circle is to explore opportunities for collaboration in teaching. Members will focus on several approaches to the theme of collaboration, including different forms of collaboration, impediments to collaboration and how they may be overcome, and the development of ideas for collaborative projects. A four-part workshop will be held during the fall semester that will focus on the dynamics involved in collaborative teaching. The goal of the workshop is to challenge the scholarly ‘silo effect’ that is typical in academia, by fostering communication between the disciplines, and by sharing ideas about how collaboration can be a rejuvenating and creative source of inspiration in teaching practice.

**Enhancing Leadership Pedagogy** ~ Facilitator: Elaine Makas, Education, emakas@umflint.edu

The teaching of leadership skills and the developing of leaders for our future is not a great challenge for us, but a great service for our society. We believe the teaching and learning of leadership skills can be greatly enhanced through solid educational thought, discussion, and experiences. The challenge of effectively teaching leadership is one we believe can be improved by cross-discipline sharing (both in areas of how we teach leadership skills and how it is understood in our prospective professions). The circle will also address the shared teaching techniques and experiences that will grow leadership within classes, cohorts, and individual students.

**Building Administrative Support for Teaching** ~ Facilitator: DJ Trela, English, djtrela@umflint.edu

At a teaching-oriented university, everyone always says that the student comes first, but what the institution truly values is demonstrated by the budgetary decisions its leaders make. In this teaching circle, we will examine how universities function, utilizing the Lee Bolman and Terrence Dean book Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership, 4th ed., 2008. Bolman and Dean posit four “frames” for organizations: Structural, Human Resources, Political and Symbolic. To a very real degree, leaders within organizations function using one or a combination of these frames. Therefore, effecting change requires an understanding of how leaders function—or what frame or frames motivate them.

By reading the text and discussing the climate at UM-Flint, we will consider how leaders might best be motivated to support additional resources specifically focused on our core mission.