On September 11 2003, I had my first experience with a fourth grade class at Blodgett Elementary School in Syracuse, NY. When we arrived, Mrs. Vadalas’ class had just come back from recess. I was nervous to begin with, and the fact that the students were rowdy and hectic did not ease my fears. While Mrs. Vadalas was quieting them, all I kept thinking was “how am I going to be able to do that when I am a teacher?” She eventually calmed the students down by telling little jokes and making the children giggle. It was like magic, I was amazed.

When we first got into the classroom I was nervous about standing in front of the seven or eight fourth graders staring up at me. As the day went on, I started to fit in. I was even asked to work one-on-one with a little boy who was having trouble reading and writing in English. He had moved from Puerto Rico a year ago. Seeing him succeed at the simplest thing, such as a worksheet, made me feel amazing.

The topic of discussion for most of the day was “Why we are proud to be American.” I was astonished by the row of hands that flew up to tell Mrs. Vadalas what they thought it meant. Many of the children said they were proud to be American because they live in a free country. I thought it was amazing how many students actually grasped that idea. Many talked about how they are free to go to school, and free to live where they live now.

At the end of the day there was reading time, and I helped the students color. The students were so friendly, and at the end of the day one of the little boys even escorted me down to the office. I am excited to see what these kids have in store for me in the weeks to come.

Welcome C.U.R.E. Students

New C.U.R.E. Students
Shane Arce-Childhood Education
Terry Case-Physical Education
Chad Cinquegrana-Physical Education
Renee DaSilva-Childhood Education
Tara Gourdine-Adolescent Math Education
Rose Graham-Physical Education
Elyse Loughlin-Physical Education
Ramfis Montalvo-Physical Education
Sonja Perez-Special Education
Nicole Rodriguez-Physical Education
Shiela Romero-Childhood Education
Doreen Wade-Physical Education
Luisa Arbanil-Childhood Education
Tyanisha Brown-Health Education

The Urban and Multicultural Education Club
This club gets you more in contact with teaching in urban settings and closer to the students. Upcoming events include movie nights, a fundraiser selling Syracuse Cultural Workers products, lectures from people in urban schools, fundraising to help New York City Schools, the Blodgett elementary project and on-going work with the Education Club.

Dates 10/2, 10/16, 10/30, 11/13, 11/27, 12/11
Time: 7pm
Location: Corey Union 301-303.
The majority of students were newly emigrated from countries such as Russia, Korea and Turkey. I felt the different ethnicities of the students would provide a learning experience. By asking questions about their families and countries during snack time, we began to form connections. I learned that many of them were forbidden to speak English in their homes because their parents felt it was the first step to complete Americanization. This meant that they were not applying what they had been learning in school.

The teacher, Mrs. Sharkey, and I spent the first two weeks doing lessons in reading, writing and arithmetic; science and social studies were neglected because they were not being tested. By the third week of school, the teacher Mrs. Sharkey had been taken out of the classroom repeatedly because she was competent at many administrative tasks that were unfamiliar to the newly hired principal. Since I was uncertified and unable to stay in the classroom alone with the students, a certified teacher had to present. To solve this problem, the school decided to bring the fourth grade class into the fifth grade classroom. The fifth grade students and I occupied the front of the classroom while the fourth grade class occupied the back. This was an exciting challenge for me because I was allowed to have freedom in the classroom and do things my way within certain parameters.

After three days, the school hired another teacher, Ms. Ciappa, to replace Mrs. Sharkey. She was instructed to focus on test review for the remainder of the summer school program. The students practiced for the reading and math tests every day, teaching some concepts in the process. I felt this did not benefit the students and was not going to produce better test results. I voiced my concerns and learned that this was the procedure for testing. Even though all received the same score as the first time they took the test, all were promoted to sixth grade.

To close the summer, we had a pizza party where I said goodbye to the students and wished them a good year in sixth grade. Overall, Summer In The City proved a valuable learning experience that will shape my teaching methods in the future.

### C.U.R.E. Quiz

**Test Yourself on Recent Urban Education News**

Q1. Under “No Child Left Behind”, if your child’s school is considered a “School Needing Improvement” what additional educational options do you have?

Q2. According to New York City’s own statistics, what percentage of students who began high school in 1997/8, graduated on time?

Q3. What is the difference between the amount of money Mr. Bush requested for additional military operations and reconstruction in Iraq and the amount he requested for Title 1 education programs for the upcoming budget year?

Q4. What are your thoughts on the recent grant from the Gates Foundation to fund new NYC schools?
ALUMNI UPDATE: HARMONY BOOKER

BY CLAUDIA TRACY

Harmony Booker is a graduate of SUNY Cortland and an alumna of the C.U.R.E. family. Many people will remember her as the Graduate Assistant in the C.U.R.E. office last year. This year Harmony is living in Syracuse, New York and working at Henninger High School on the northside of Syracuse City. Harmony teaches 9th grade Global History. She currently has five sections of this class, with roughly 25 students per class.

Harmony says, “Each day is a new adventure and the rules are not always written down on paper.” She has been surprised and pleased at how supportive and welcoming the other teachers at Henninger have been. “They all welcomed me with open arms,” she says, “they are all there to give guidance.”

I asked Harmony if she felt prepared for her work. “I feel extremely prepared for work,” she said, because of “…the education I received at Cortland, and through the experience student teaching at Corcoran High School.” She says her greatest challenge has been adjusting to teaching in a large school. “My greatest reward,” she says, “was having a student say to me that she feels like she was actually learning and understanding Social Studies for the first time. Her exact words were ‘I learn from you…you really reach us.’”

Harmony is putting in long hours at Henninger. She is in the classroom from 7:30 to 3:00 and stays four days a week until 4:30 preparing lessons and grading papers. She does not mind at all. “…each day is a new and exciting challenge. Each child has the potential and possibility of shining and fulfilling his or her dreams,” she says, “I have learned that even if you are a new teacher walking into a school, the friendships you make and the teachers you get advice from on important lessons help you develop into a more well-around teacher and person…I have realized that even the most experienced teacher learns from his or her students. It is the responsibility of teachers…to find the sparkle in each student, to help them want to learn.”

On April 17, the first Internet video conference at SUNY Cortland bridged the continent to bring distinguished author and Professor of Education at UCLA’s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, Dr. Peter McLaren, into Dr. Stephanie Urso Spina’s INT-270: ‘Exploring Education’ classroom on our campus. The students and faculty members, Michelle Kelly, Joseph Rayle, and Aaron Hart, joined Dr. Spina in the Sperry Building, where the class interviewed their guest “face to face” while he sat in a meeting room at UCLA in Los Angeles, California. Cortland’s Urban Recruitment of Educators (C.U.R.E.) program was the sponsor for this program. The students were able to ask questions and see Dr. McLaren as well as hear his responses via an Internet connection on a large television screen.

McLaren’s “Life in Schools” (2002) was one of the required texts for INT-270 and the basis for some of the most provocative and productive discussions of the semester. Professor Spina, who has collaborated with Dr. McLaren on several projects, arranged for his “visit” with the help of SUNY Cortland’s Administrative Computing and Classroom Media Services. This was the first academic use here of Internet based video conferencing with this newly acquired technology. Dr. Spina’s students enjoyed their hour-long conversation with Dr. McLaren and showed great enthusiasm for the opportunity.

Professor McLaren has presented distinguished lectures at a number of North American universities and throughout Latin America and Europe. He continues to speak and write from a transdisciplinary perspective in the four areas for which he has become well known internationally: critical pedagogy, multicultural education, critical ethnography, and critical theory. He is the author, co-author, editor or co-editor of approximately forty books and monographs. In addition to the fourth edition of Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education (Allyn and Bacon, 4th Edition, 2002), Dr. McLaren’s recent books include Marxism Against Postmodernism in Educational Theory (with Dave Hill, Mike Cole, and Glenn Rikowski, Lexington Books, 2003) and Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).
Janise (rhymes with Denise) Ashe is the Graduate Assistant in the C.U.R.E. office this year. Janise is currently working on her master’s degree in Teaching Children with Disabilities. I spoke with Janise in her office and asked her about her experiences and what lead her to SUNY Cortland. “I went into Special Ed.” she said “because of a little girl I grew up with who was a special needs child.” Janise spent time with this girl and made sure to pay her extra attention. In return the little girl said to “Janise, I love you so much.” “It touched my heart” said Janise.

Janise comes to us from Brooklyn, NY where she lives with her Grandmother in Flatbush. She plans to return to New York City when she is finished with her SUNY education. Janise says the hardest thing about adjusting to life at Cortland was the lack of diversity. “I just continue being who I am” she says, “I don’t change the fact that I’m from the inner city.” She says what has helped her most to adjust is to remember where she came from, but also where she’s going.

When she is not working hard here at C.U.R.E. and studying, Janise likes to play basketball and listen to music. “I like all types of music” she says, “I’m very eclectic. It depends on my mood.” Most of all she loves to use her cell phone. “I miss everyone at home” she says. What does she like best about Cortland? Believe it or not...the snow.

C.U.R.E. Profile: Janise Ashe
by Claudia Tracy

C.U.R.E. Newsletter

Cortland’s Urban Recruitment of Educators

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Upcoming Events
October 15, 4-5:30 President’s Reception for C.U.R.E.
October 15, 3-4:30 Institute for Disability Studies meeting, Corey Union
October 24, 9-4, Cortland Mini-Conference on Improving Teaching & Learning: “Autism & Developmental Disabilities: Promoting Integration & Quality of Life Across the Lifespan,” Corey Union
November 5, 12:30-1:30 Sandwich Seminar: “Summer In The City”, Corey Union
November 15, 8-4:30 “Wrightslaw Advocacy & Training Seminar” presented by the Institute for Disability Studies, Corey Union

C.U.R.E. Quiz Answers
Q1. You can transfer your child to another school (if you can find one with room) or you can take part in “supplemental services” such as tutoring or on-line instruction.
Q2. According to a NY Times article on September 15, 2003 “slightly less than 40 percent...graduated on time, while 19 percent were discharged, 16 percent dropped out, 2 percent got a GED diploma and 23 percent were still enrolled and would need more time to graduate.”
Q3. $74.7 billion. Bush requested $87 billion to continue the war in Iraq and $12.3 billion to fund Title 1 programs.
Q4. We’d like to hear from you at CURE@cortland.edu. See our bulletin board for more information!

www.cortland.edu/cure