

Jun-1995

# News from the Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching

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## Recommended Citation

Apstein, Barbara (1995). News from the Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching. *Bridgewater Review*, 14(1), 21-22.  
Available at: [http://vc.bridgew.edu/br\\_rev/vol14/iss1/10](http://vc.bridgew.edu/br_rev/vol14/iss1/10)

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## Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching



### **SEMAGNET AND SEMGEC: Geography and Global Education Networks for South- eastern Massachusetts Teachers**

Good teachers are always looking for new ways of engaging their students' interest and intellectual curiosity. To meet the need for innovative and up-to-date ideas and materials in teaching geography and global education, Professors Glenn Miller, Reed Stewart and Vernon Domingo of BSC's Department of Earth Sciences and Geography, along with several area school teachers, founded the Southeastern Massachusetts Geography Network (SEMAGNET) in 1988. Their newest departmental colleagues, Professors

Mahdu Rao and Sandy Clark, have since been added as co-directors.

In 1992, the co-directors were successful in their attempt to broaden their offerings by receiving funding from Bay State Skills Corporation to establish the Southeastern Massachusetts Global Education Center (SEMGEC) at BSC. In addition to sponsoring workshops and an annual geography fair, the two networks operate a Global Education Resource Center, which is housed in the Media Services office in BSC's Maxwell Library. Teachers from the region and BSC education majors may borrow

teaching kits, games, simulations, and videotapes. Printed materials may also be borrowed from the Department of Earth Sciences and Geography Library.

SEMAGNET and SEMGEC's most recent workshop, entitled "A Sam-

pling of Natural National Treasures," was held at the college on January 28, and was attended by 55 elementary and secondary school teachers. There were three presentations: Glenn Miller's "Go West Young Man (and Woman): A Sampling of Western National Parks," Sandy Clark's "A Geographer's View of the Grand Canyon," and Michael Whatley's "Cape Cod National Seashore: A Curriculum."

Professor Miller's presentation included an overview of when and why national parks came into existence. He then explained a process for creating three-dimensional models of landforms, augmented with examples of landform models of Bryce Canyon and Yosemite National Parks. Professor

Miller also explained a teacher's packet that he prepared which included several other hands-on ideas for teachers.

Professor Sandy Clark gave a wonderful "rafting tour" of the Grand Canyon through slides she took while rafting on the Colorado River. Her slide presentation was used to help describe the physical processes that formed, and continue to shape, the Grand Canyon.

Professor Whatley's presentation was written under the auspices of the Cape Cod National Seashore. His project is based on an actual archaeological discovery. In November 1990, a powerful storm hit the Cape, cutting into and eroding the sand dunes along the Wellfleet beach and uncovering the remains of a prehistoric firepit, which had been used either for cooking or for ceremonial purposes.

Based on this find, Whatley designed a curriculum to introduce children to archaeological excavation. The "site" is prepared in the shape of a grid divided into sections one meter square with wooden stakes and string. A small group of students is assigned to each square. Supplied with trowels, they are directed to dig slowly and carefully at 5 centimeter intervals, and to record all their findings. When they find an artifact, they first draw a picture of it and measure it. (The "artifacts" have, of course, been buried in advance by the teacher). They place each artifact in a plastic bag, labeling them according to location in the grid and the level at which they were found. In the top layer, after uncovering the remains of a beer can, the students find replicas of the kind of handmade iron nails used by European settlers of the 1600's, suggesting that a building once stood on the site. Descending to the second layer, the students uncover pottery fragments, agricultural tools such as planting sticks, and arrowheads dating from the late Woodland period. They

also find the remains of a firepit, indicated by stones placed in a circle. Continuing to the deepest layer, the students unearth fluted spear points made from flint, fashioned to hunt big game such as mastodon, caribou and elk, as well as fragments of stone tools. They will learn later that these artifacts date from the Paleoindian period, 10,000 years ago.

Back in the classroom, the students are led to draw conclusions from their "finds." They speculate about the number of people who lived in the area during different eras, the types of food they ate, the tools they used, and whether they were hunters or farmers. They also learn how archaeologists can glean further information from artifacts as well as from soil, pollen and organic materials through laboratory analysis.

In addition to regularly offered workshops, SEMAGNET and SEMGEC organize field trips, secure resource materials, sponsor a speaker's bureau, provide teacher consultation, and award mini-grants to teachers who have developed creative ways of increasing geography awareness and global awareness.

#### **CART PROJECTS: RUSSIAN-AMERICAN SPECIAL EDUCATION TELECONFERENCE**

On February 3, 1995, a team of American teachers of Special Education headed by Professor Lisa Battaglino spent two hours conversing with their Russian colleagues. Neither passports nor airplane tickets were necessary for this meeting to occur, because the two groups communicated by means of interactive teleconferencing.

The idea for the project was initiated in 1992, when Bridgewater faculty learned that Special Education was al-

most non-existent in the Russian public schools. Two years later, a group of seven faculty, administrators and students joined with public school partners to visit Moscow and examine the conditions under which disabled children are educated in Russia. Their earlier impression that these children are not offered systematic instruction was confirmed. The group met with a Russian team of educators and with Elena Avrutina, the General Director of the Ministry of Education, who showed great interest in setting up a collaborative program. Avrutina visited Bridgewater shortly afterwards and met with President Tinsley, Provost Bardo, and members of the Special Education faculty.

The first Russian-American interactive teleconference, a pilot project, took place in April, 1994. U. S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown hosted the Russian site at the Moscow Academy of Science and the Hale and Dorr law firm hosted the Boston site. This initial conference was highly successful, with minimal time delays, clear live television transmittals and clear audio transmission.

For the February 3, 1995 conference, the first Russian-American Special Education teleconference, Dr. Battaglino travelled to Moscow to help ensure that everything would go smoothly. The participants enjoyed a wide-ranging exchange of ideas and information about Special Education policies, practices and attitudes. Three topics discussed in detail were the role of the clinical psychologist in Special Education, training students for transition into work and parents of children with special needs.

Professor Battaglino hopes that these discussions will lead to some concrete accomplishments. One major objective is to help Russian children with disabilities move out of institu-



**Prof. Battaglino (R) and  
friends in Red Square.**

tions and home settings into public schools; another is to develop an international Special Education teaching model and network, enhanced through state of the art technology, to help educate Russian teachers of children with disabilities.

The opening of the Moakley Center for Technological Applications next fall will make communication between the Moscow and Bridgewater groups easier. Through teleconferencing, direct satellite linkage and video capability, Russians will be able to participate in College courses, "sit in" on Special Education classrooms in Bridgewater and collaborate with American experts. Bridgewater students will be able to observe Moscow classrooms and even to participate in the mainstreaming of students with disabilities. The Moscow-Bridgewater Special Education partnership may well become a model for other groups who want to share ideas and information across great distances. The possibilities are exciting.

*B.A.*