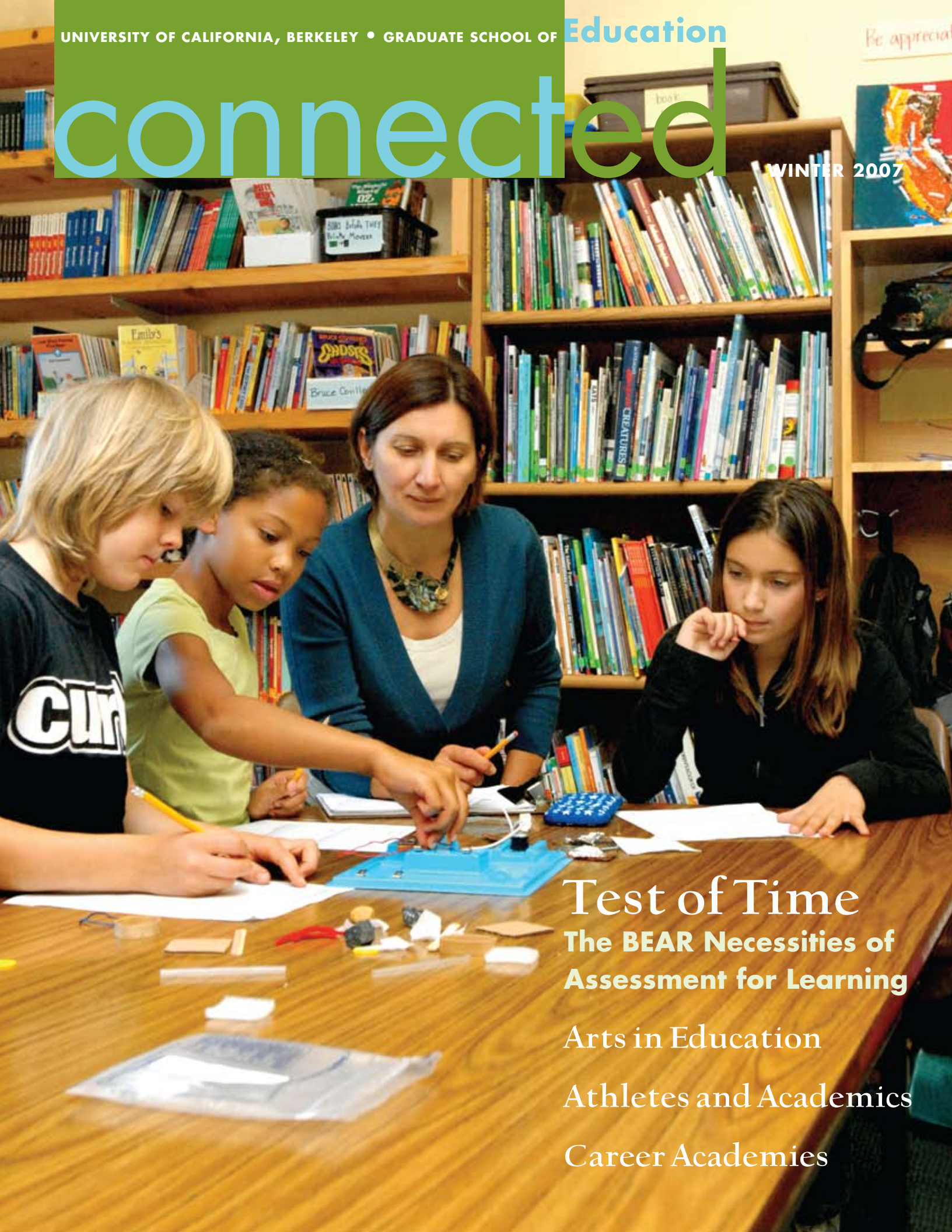


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Pre-service Initiative Takes Root in GSE, Local Schools

By Zack Rogow

As graduate students file into the Arts in the Elementary Classroom course in Tolman Hall, they discover a percussion instrument at each desk — castanets, a frog-shaped wood block, a triangle, a rain stick, even a donkey’s jawbone, or quijada — and begin to toy with their sounds.

When the Developmental Teacher Education (DTE) class begins, teaching artist Nydia Gonzalez shows the credential students how to use movement, singing and musical instruments for a variety of classroom activities. The students stand in a circle and use their hands and bodies to make sounds that recreate the whoosh and tinkle of a rainforest. They learn a traditional Mexican game that uses song and movement to teach the concept of opposites. Then they collaborate to write a song that summarizes the plot and theme of the children’s book classic *Charlotte’s Web*.

By the end of the two-hour class, they have learned a repertoire of techniques that involve music and movement for a range of curricular lessons — precisely what the Arts Education Initiative (AEI) was designed to do, when it launched in 2003.

Supported with a new, 2.5-year, \$413,000 grant from the Ford Foundation and supplemental funds from the Heller Charitable Foundation, the program infuses arts education into DTE and Principal Lead-

ership Institute credential programs at UC Berkeley and other teacher credential programs at partner campuses at CSU East Bay, Humboldt State, Mills and St. Mary’s. While the AEI plays a different role at each of the five campuses, graduates of these pre-service programs are expected to integrate the arts throughout the curriculums when they begin teaching in K–12 schools.

Bucking Trends

“People who care about the arts are alarmed at the dwindling presence of arts in the schools,” says GSE professor emeritus Paul Ammon, AEI’s director and principal investigator. He says the AEI is bucking strong national and statewide currents toward back-to-basics curriculum and test prep that consume much of the school day. “We’re treating the arts as fundamental to learning for K–12 students, as well as for teachers and administrators.”

Della Peretti, DTE coordinator and a key faculty member in the initiative, feels that incorporating the arts at the School of Education has strengthened the credential program’s content as well as its applicant pool. “The number of artists who have applied to the program has dramatically increased,” says Peretti.

First-year DTE student Jordan Emmart says that

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the AEI was a major reason that she applied to UC Berkeley. “I worked in musical theater for years before deciding to become a teacher,” she says. “I was looking at different teacher education programs, and when I found this one, I stopped looking.”

Emmart and other DTE students learn to play guitar in a class offered by Guitars in the Classroom, an organization that advocates its methods nationwide and provides instruction to partner schools at CSU East Bay and Mills. The instructors teach open string tuning so that even novices can easily master songs that they can use for instruction. “It’s not just a course that teaches students how to play the instrument,” says Peretti. “The guitar is a vehicle toward a curriculum integration class.”

Local Impact

While there is not yet any empirical evidence that the AEI has had an impact in Northern California schools, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence of its success.

Four recent DTE graduates who started teaching in a new small school, Learning Without Limits, in the low-income Fruitvale District of Oakland, have used lessons derived from their AEI experiences in their classrooms.

Teacher Malana Willis and another DTE graduate, Samara Ripps, offered an arts integration project that included nutrition, poetry and visual art to second graders. They brought sweet peas, red peppers and carrots for their students to taste, observe, write about and draw. After talking about the health benefits of vegetables, Willis and Ripps used a framework that they provided students with to write odes to their favorite vegetable. One student wrote an “Ode to the Snap Pea” that included the line, “Oh, snap pea! . . . You look like the moon.” Students went on to draw their favorite vegetable with crayons and watercolors.

“The result was an artistic celebration of vegetables that many of our students hadn’t tasted before our activity,” says Willis.

“It’s a great blessing that the [DTE] teachers come with an understanding of the importance of the arts and how to incorporate them into their classrooms,” says Principal Leo Fuchs, a recent Principal Leadership Institute graduate.

Principal Leadership Institute

GSE’s Principal Leadership Institute [PLI] has incorporated the arts in multiple ways into its curricular structure, concentrating on poetry and visual and performing arts as ways to introduce and encode concepts important for leadership.

This summer four conceptual frames for a good school were introduced through readings to PLI students. “They observed and analyzed visual art reproductions and made analogies between conceptions of a good school and the artistic images and themes,” says Principal Leadership Institute coordinator Lynda Tredway, an accomplished fabric artist.

In addition, Tredway says that performance artists work with PLI students, using theater exercises and oral presentation guidelines, to assist them in delivery of vision statements.

While the Leadership Institute’s performance art strand was in place before AEI, Tredway says, “We’re more deliberate about looking at PLI’s curricular structure and artistic products [since receiving the AEI grant]. How do we make sure aspiring principals have a deep and sustained artistic experience so when they leave here, they carry it with them and add value to their schools?”

During 2007–08, PLI is implementing the BRAVO project, which will translate the historical and educational history of race in California into artistic representations. Five artists will work with PLI students at designated points during the year to create artistic representations of historical content to be presented in a works-in-progress exhibition and performance next June.

As the AEI develops in the Developmental Teacher Education and PLI programs at UC Berkeley and other Northern California teacher education programs, it will be augmented by feedback from future graduates like Emmart and graduates like Fuchs, Willis and Ripps who share their school experiences with current program participants.

Says Peretti: “I’m hopeful that what we learn here will make a difference for students in Northern California and beyond.”