Teachers and staff from Rochester’s School 58, World of Inquiry School, pulled out their backpacks and notebooks and stepped uncertainly into an August day’s downpour as they participated in a two-day urban expedition into the City. Guided by their students’ parents, they embarked on an exhilarating journey into the communities and homes of their students.

Trekking through urban neighborhoods, hitting all six zip code areas in which the largest numbers of their students reside, they immersed themselves in activities with families as they visited their homes throughout the day. During the tour, parents also shared the hidden gems and obstacles within their neighborhoods and introduced teachers to their community resources. Teachers kept an expedition journal which they later shared with their colleagues back at school.

The urban expedition is only one example of how Rochester City School District (RCSD) teachers are working collaboratively to increase the levels of equity and academic achievement among students as part of the Urban Teacher Leadership Academy (UTLA), a partnership between the Rochester City School District and the Warner School, and administered through the Warner Center for Professional Development and Education Reform. Co-facilitated by Professor Sonia James-Wilson, UTL program director, and Michele Hancock, Rochester City School District’s chief of professional development and diversity, UTLA provides opportunities for teachers to develop as leaders who influence others toward equity-based educational practices and school improvement.

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News Around Warner...

Curry Reappointed to Board
Mary Jane Curry, assistant professor in teaching and curriculum, has been reappointed to the editorial board of the Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy for 2008.

Guiffrida, Warner Alumna Co-Author Article Published in Journal of Counseling & Development
Douglas Guiffrida, an associate professor in counseling, human development and educational leadership, and Rachel Jordan, a recent graduate of the Warner School’s doctoral program in counseling, co-authored the article, “The Use of Metaphor in Clinical Supervision,” with Steve Saiz from SUNY Plattsburgh and Kristin Bames from St. John Fisher College. The article appeared in the fall 2007 issue of Journal of Counseling & Development, which is the flagship journal of the American Counseling Association.

Walter Mourns the Loss of a Colleague, Friend
The Warner School community is mourning the loss of a colleague and friend, Patricia (Patty) Carney, 51, who served as a mentor teacher for three years on the Science Start program through the Early Reading First Grant and worked primarily with St. Andrew School in Rochester, died on January 6, 2008 after a courageous battle with Leukemia.

Patty’s commitment to young children manifested in her day-to-day work. “Patty was one of the most committed special educators I have ever known,” says Martha Mock, an assistant professor who worked closely with Patty on the ScienceStart program. “She brought her knowledge of early childhood and years of experience from BOCES to work here at the Warner School and with the inner-city Catholic schools, and we all have benefited from that. She always had a positive outlook on her work and helped us remember what makes the field of education so important.”

Patty joined the Warner School in 2004 after a career at BOCES 2 as an early childhood special educator. She also was a puppeteer and used her talents to entertain and educate young children and adults.

The Warner School community extends its deepest sympathy to Patty’s husband, Maynard, and her family.

Warner Doctoral Students Win Big at AESA Conference, Set Sights on Publishing a Book
Twelve Warner students added a prestigious honor to their resumes this year. Doctoral students, who took EDU 527 Advanced Seminar in Teaching and Learning in the spring semester, collaborated on a symposium, “Youth Cultural Practices as Resources for Learning and Development,” that they presented at the Annual American Educational Studies Association (AESA) Conference in the fall. The students’ and their professor’s efforts have opened up new opportunities for them to collaborate on a book, which they hope to release in spring 2009.

The symposium is the result of the students’ great work over the course of a semester as they researched and led class discussions on topics that made connections to mathematics, literacy, science learning, and cultural practices with a focus on informing pedagogy and future research. The grounding concept is that youth are active agents in creating knowledge, cultural practices, and social spaces. Students then prepared a series of presentations that they presented at the AESA Conference.

“I have observed such astounding results of the students’ work,” says Nancy Ares, an associate professor in teaching and curriculum. “They not only played a significant role in determining the structure and outcomes of the course, which is not a conventional approach to teaching, they also had the unique opportunity of presenting their work to a scholarly organization and we are now pursuing a book contract to write about our research.”

Doctoral students used the symposium as a way to present research and practice that bring social and cultural perspectives to understanding learning and the development of youth. Joe Pow, a part-time Ed.D. student in teaching and curriculum who focused his research efforts on science learning and cultural practices, credits Professor Ares’ course for helping him to see why attracting minorities into scientific and technical career fields is so problematic in this country.

“Having this cultural perspective has given me greater insight as to why there is such a dramatic achievement gap between white students and students from marginalized populations when it comes to science,” explains Pow. “As a result, I’ve become more sensitive to the fact that science is itself a culture with a characteristic set of practices, and consequently, any time a student walks into a science classroom, they are crossing a cultural border. This crossing can, and usually does, cause tensions that can significantly impact the learning process.”

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Jefferson Honored for Service to the Community

Frederick C. Jefferson, professor emeritus who oversees the Leadership and Organizational Development program initiative in the Warner Center for Professional Development and Education Reform, has been recognized locally by Preferred Care and the Charles Settlement House for his volunteerism and leadership in the community.

The first honor from Preferred Care credits Jefferson for his volunteerism in the community that exemplifies living well and features him in Preferred Care’s 2008 calendar, themed “What it means to live well.” As one of the 2008 12 Gold “stars” showcased who knows how to live well and to the fullest—always challenging himself in mind, body and spirit—Jefferson is the featured Preferred Care Gold member for the month of January.

Jefferson, who believes volunteering “nourishes the soul of the community and the volunteer,” is commended for his community achievements throughout the years. “I had the pleasure of working with Dr. Jefferson at the American Red Cross back in the 1980s,” says Elaine Fallesen, a Preferred Care employee who nominated Jefferson for the 2008 calendar. “His work in the community exemplifies living well in many ways. He reminds us that volunteering is a great way to give back to the community while getting something back for ourselves, too.”

The second honor, the community leadership award which Jefferson received from the Charles Settlement House at its 90th Anniversary & Award Luncheon in November, credits his work in improving settlement houses and serving several other nonprofit and human service organizations in Rochester. As a board member for the United Neighborhood Centers of Greater Rochester Foundation, he helped raise the funds needed to upgrade facilities and transform settlement houses locally. Jefferson remains active with the United Way of Greater Rochester, where he is a past chairman. He also chairs the Greater Rochester Chapter of the American Red Cross and serves in numerous other nonprofit roles.

New Gleason Library Designed for Group Study

On November 2, 2007, the Gleason Library officially opened for student use on the 1st floor in the east wing of Rush Rhees Library. The renovation project was largely funded by a $5 million grant from the Gleason Foundation. Previously, the 23,000 square foot location was home to library staff offices, which have been relocated throughout the library.

From the large picture windows, which brighten up the interior, to the wood-grain walls, earthy colors, and the colorful mesh ergonomic chairs on wheels, the library’s new design fully supports student learning.

Designed from student inspiration, the conversion has provided space for a wide-open group study area. The learning center features comfortable lounge furniture that can be easily configured, a media lounge, a theater, private work areas, group cubicles, public workstations, and electric outlets for laptops.

For those who prefer smaller study sessions, the library offers four smaller cubicles with sliding doors, containing a table and chairs, and walls to write on, for more intimate group work.

For those who need to view a film and would like to do so in a larger group setting, there is a theater with a full projection screen, which holds about 20 people, that can be reserved. Reservation requests can be made at GleasonTheater@library.rochester.edu.

Students will have access to the new collaborative study area 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This is conveniently connected to the IT Center on the ground floor.

Susan Gibbons, associate dean of River Campus Libraries and a Warner School doctoral student in the accelerated Ed.D. program, played an integral part in the development stage. She, along with her staff, held design workshops where students gave their input by drawing their own designs for the space and noting what features they wanted to include in the library.
School 58 has designed professional development for teachers to follow up on the activities of the summer, and have continued to build links to families through panel discussions and upcoming family-centered school events.

Other UTLA projects taking place within the 11 schools involved have related to concerns for equity to vocabulary development, mathematics learning in early childhood, social emotional wellness, and violent behavior in school. “We work with an amazing group of professionals who have demonstrated the positive effects that teacher collaboration, leadership development, and an increased understanding of issues of diversity can have on a school community,” explains Professor James-Wilson. “Our collaboration with the district through this program has helped us to meet the Warner School mission in a very powerful way.”

For more information about the Urban Teacher Leadership Academy, contact Sonia James-Wilson at (585) 275-3948 or by e-mail at sjwilson@warner.rochester.edu.

Warner Doctoral Students Win Big at AESA Conference

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Doctoral students Burke Scarbrogh, Jennifer King, Maryam Razvi Padela, Alice Hamischfeger, Jeremiah Frink, Rebecca DiTomasso, Matilda Tang, Joe Bow, Eleano Tsounami, Kankana Mukhopadhyay, Emily Daniels, and Rabia Hose explored and presented the following papers as part of the symposium: Youth as Active Agents; Mathematics and Numeracy as Social Practice; Literacy and Literacies as Social Practice; Science Learning and Cultural Practices; Cultural Practices and the Production of Social Space.

As an extension to the class, Ares and her students have turned their focus to writing a book about their work. They currently have senior scholars from the United States and the United Kingdom who have agreed to partner with them in contributing chapters.