

# ST. OLAF COLLEGE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT *ALUMNI MESSENGER*

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## **ALOHA! STUDENT TEACHING IN HAWAII**



When we step outside of our classrooms at Kealakehe Intermediate School and Kealakehe High School, we are sandwiched in between an infinite view of the Pacific

Ocean and the dormant volcano Hualalai. It is completely breathtaking. The public schools are located on the west side of the Big Island at an elevation of approximately 600 feet above sea level. The student body at each school accurately reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the community. The number of students identified as “Part-Hawaiian” make up the largest sub group, followed by Caucasian, Filipino, Japanese and Hawaiians. Asians, Hispanics, African Americans, Native Americans, Portuguese, Samoans, and other Pacific Islanders make up the rest of the school population.

There were many advantages and disadvantages to teaching at these schools. One of the greatest disadvantages was the challenge of teaching in a rural island community and having to be subjected to the island view of education. A big challenge we faced with our experiences teaching in Hawaii is the students’ laid-back mentality and lack of motivation to really succeed. Because the people in Hawaii

are so disconnected to the mainland education culture, there is an additional aspect of diversity and challenge in the classroom. We always knew when the surf was high because we would have an abnormally high number of absences! Some of the students want to do really well, but because of the lack of job opportunities that require college degrees or a high surf that just came in, the majority of the students do not place a high concern on school and plan on only finishing high school.

However, all negatives aside, Kealakehe is an extraordinary place to teach. The richness and knowledge that comes through the enormously diverse student body is priceless. We have learned so much about the local culture as well as many others simply through talking with our students. Aspects of their culture and family traditions come up all the time here. By talking with the students, we gained a perspective that was totally honest and straightforward. We were amazed at how important and

*(continued on page 2)*



### **What’s Inside??**

Student Teachers in Hawaii	p. 1
A Little Hawaiian Dictionary	p. 2
Student Teaching Abroad	p. 3
What’s Up This Interim?	p. 4

## ALOHA! STUDENT TEACHING IN HAWAII

*(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)*

respected the hula dance and the ukulele were to these Hawaiian students. Similarly, they thought it was the strangest and funniest thing that Minnesotans didn't eat rice at every meal and that in the winter, we cut holes in our frozen lakes so that we could go fishing. Because Hawaii is one of the most diverse places on earth, the people here are forced to accept each other's cultural differences; they have to, if they want to survive.

We feel extremely fortunate and thankful to have done our student teaching at Kealakehe. The enormous array of personalities, traditions and landscapes of the island, are unmatched. We are constantly asked why we don't apply for a job at a private school here and we have no hesitation in justifying our reasons. Although the school system has weaknesses and the students pose a great challenge, the diversity of the students and the experiences they bring with them are worth way more than the frustrations we are faced with. Overcoming these frustrations and appreciating the students are what we thrive on and what keep us wanting to go to school every day.

Contributed by:

**Katy Hochmayr and  
Annie Erickson**

Class of 2003

*Kealakehe Intermediate School*

## SOME BASIC HAWAIIAN WORDS

**aloha** - hello, goodbye, welcome, farewell, love

**heiau** - Hawaiian temple, place of worship

**hula** - native dance of Hawaii

**kamaaina** - native born citizen or local resident of Hawaii

**lanai** - a porch, balcony or veranda

**luau** - a Hawaiian feast

**mahalo** - thank you

**makai** - a direction "towards the sea"

**mauka** - a direction "towards the mountains"

**mele** - a song or chant

**ohana** - family

**ono** - delicious



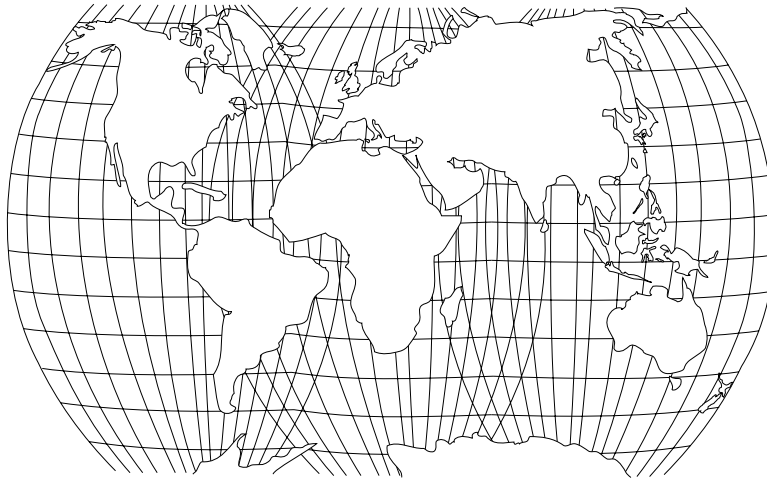
## STUDENT TEACHING ABROAD: INDIA AND HONG KONG

Since 1977, St. Olaf's Education Department has sent students off to fulfill their student teaching assignments overseas. St. Olaf has developed relationships with schools in India - Kodaikanal

International School and Woodstock International School, Hong Kong - Hong Kong International School, and Korea - Seoul Foreign School. Previously, students were able to complete their student teaching at Taipei American School in Taiwan.

This past semester, the department was able to place three student teachers at these schools. Reid Wixson '03 and Laura White '03 spent the semester living and teaching in Kodaikanal, India. Julie Nedved '03 spent the semester working with the middle school at Hong Kong International School. These schools are international schools or "American" schools that use a curriculum fairly similar to those found in most schools in the United States. The staff teach almost all of the courses in English and the student body reflects what many of the students call a "mini-United Nations" with representation from multiple countries, ethnicities, and religions. St. Olaf has intentionally kept the number of these schools small. The department has maintained close ties with these schools and developed relationships with them over the years. Laura White's host teacher this past semester, Anna Worlein '98, is a graduate of the education program at St. Olaf.

Kodaikanal International School is a boarding school and this offers a unique opportunity for St. Olaf students to interact with the students in various aspects of their lives outside of the classroom as well as within. For example, this past semester, Reid Wixson also worked after hours within the elementary dorms. A highlight of the experience at Kodai school is the chance to serve as chaperones on school field trips and



extended trips throughout India. Laura White was able to get to know students who weren't in her regular classes and was able to develop relationships with students she otherwise wouldn't have met. A similar highlight is PEAK week for

the student teachers at Hong Kong International School. Julie Nedved was able to learn a great deal about the history of Hong Kong as she prepared and planned for and participated in this week-long extended learning opportunity with her students. Each of these students took advantage of the wonderful opportunity to interact with members of the host communities and participate in cultural celebrations. An additional benefit is the opportunity to travel both during and after the student teaching experience. All three students "took their time" returning home as they traveled to various other countries.

Students who are interested in student teaching abroad are assessed under slightly different criteria than other student teacher candidates. Applicants must demonstrate excellent preparation within their individual content areas and exceed within their education courses. Student teaching alone is a challenging and demanding experience. Those choosing to do so abroad must be able to live within a culture most likely quite different from their own as well as adapt to the rigors of full-time teaching. Although the number of applicants has remained small, there are always a few within the program that wish to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to live and learn in another country.

Graduates of this experience have often returned to campus to share their experiences with others and to encourage students to consider going abroad as an attractive option for student teaching.

*Submitted by Prof. Maria Kelly*

## COOL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT INTERIM COURSE OFFERINGS!



Here's what the St. Olaf Education Department is offering this interim for perspective teachers!

### **170 Urban Schools and Communities**

Through lectures, readings and field placements in Minneapolis, students gain an understanding of how race, class, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation and religion shape the character of urban youth and communities. Students spend the first week on campus in preparation for their placements and the last week reflecting upon their experiences. During weeks two and three students live in Minneapolis and tutor in the schools and participate in various after-school activities. This class is taught by Maria Kelly and is open to first year students.

### **260 Perspectives on Teaching (off-campus: student's choice of setting)**

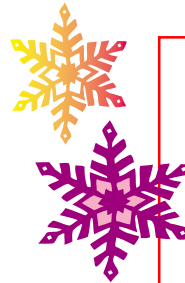
This course provides practical experiences and insights for students desiring to explore career opportunities in the many facets of education. Students, primarily sophomores, live off-campus, participating in different observational and practical experiences in schools of their choice. This course is supervised by Myron Solid.

### **378 Multicultural Education in Hawaii: Seminar and Practicum**

Students examine the influence of race, class and multiculturalism in American schools by participating as teachers' assistants and tutors in two distinctly different K-12 settings. Through guest lectures, readings, field trips and seminars, students explore the unique geography and culture of the Hawaiian Islands and develop a framework for examining diversity on the mainland. Mark Schelske is the professor for this interim off-campus course.

### **379 Urban Education Seminar & Practicum (off-campus: Minneapolis/St. Paul)**

Students working as tutors and teacher aides gain direct teaching experience in urban schools. This course is designed to heighten students' sensitivities to the complexities of the education of urban youth in a multicultural setting. Rosie Pfarr-Baker teaches this course.



**If you'd like to receive an electronic copy of the Alumni Messenger, or if you have some stories or news to contribute, please contact Jo Olson in the Education Department, [olsonjc@stolaf.edu](mailto:olsonjc@stolaf.edu)**

## ST. OLAF COLLEGE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

**"WHAT GREATER OR BETTER GIFT CAN WE OFFER THE REPUBLIC THAN TO TEACH OR INSTRUCT OUR YOUTH?" - CICERO**

**CHAIR: DR. MARK SCHELSKE**

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