



CI to Host Middle School Students for Book Discussion

Camarillo, Calif., April 21, 2010 -During the spring last year, Dr. Mary Adler, CSU Channel Islands (CI) Associate Professor of English and Academic Advisor for English Education, decided to set up a joint session between students in her Adolescent Literature class and students from University Charter Middle School. Dr. Adler's students talked about books they had enjoyed in middle school and the middle school students talked about their favorite books and shared their writing folders with the college students. It turned out to be a very pleasant experience for everyone.

Dr. Adler has scheduled another joint event on Wednesday, April 28, from noon to 2 p.m. in Malibu Hall 100 on the CI campus. "This year," Dr. Adler stated, "My group and the University Charter Middle School group will both be reading *Bull Run* by Paul Fleishman. They will participate in small group discussions about the novel. CI students will generate the questions and lead the discussions. The middle school students will also share their writing folders with their CI counterparts."

Dr. Adler commented, "Often college students, far removed from middle school years, are forced to hypothesize about what adolescents in middle school are thinking and how they behave. However, connecting one on one with the middle schoolers offers fresh and real insights into the lives of today's young adults." It gives these CI students, many of whom plan to become teachers, a first-hand adolescent point of view.

During the session CI students are also asked questions about university life, and the exposure to the idea of higher education and life on campus is very valuable to the 12 to 14-year-olds.

Dr. Adler mentioned that another interesting part of this mix of ages is the mix of CI students themselves. She explained that some of CI's students are "homegrown" (freshmen to senior) students; some are transfers from community colleges; some are returning, after having graduated, to make a career change; some are first-generation college students and some are returning to complete their first degree. "It makes a very rich mix in the classroom with many points of view and diverse life experiences."

Dr. Adler often collaborates with the English teachers at the University Charter Middle School, including Danna Lomax and Jennifer Todd. It was in the context of this work that the idea for a joint program was born. It would present a chance for the younger students to get a taste of college life while discussing literature with a group of older mentors.

Dr. Adler stated that for the college students it was often surprising to see how mature the view points and concerns were of the 12 to 14 year-olds.

Four teachers from University Charter Middle School, including two CI student teachers - Dacia Houser, English, and Jaime Reyes, history, -will bring two classes of English/history students, 65 in all, to campus.

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