Hello Colleagues!!!! There is always a great feeling of excitement as you start a new school year. I have three children in school and it is always thrilling to see them eagerly go to their classes and come back with new information that they learned. My sixth grade son, who tried to be cool about being excited for the new school year, has learned that the economy is not in the best shape. How did he learn this? He observed what was going on around him in class. He saw students with less extravagant school supplies as well as the teacher’s comments about how they were going to be doing more with less this school year. It led to a great discussion about what was occurring in our economy. It is also this awareness that we have an important role as educators to have our students be aware of the world around them as well!

As noted in the previous issue, we at KCSS are trying to make this year’s Professional Development Day accessible for as many teachers as possible. We have cut the price of our conference registration as well as placed it on a Saturday so that your school will not have to pay for substitutes. While it is tough to give up a Saturday, we feel that the professional and career development that we are offering will be well worth the time that you will give to the conference.

I encourage you to look at the conference preview inside as well as all the professional development opportunities that can be found within the newsletter. Many of the opportunities are free or very inexpensive to enhance your teaching.

AND as always, we encourage you to submit ideas and comments via my email so that more can benefit from our collective wisdom in the classroom. Send them to me via email: bburen@ksu.edu

Best wishes,

Dr. Brad Burenheide
KCSS Officers

President
Deb Brown
deborahbrown@smsd.org

Vice President
Brad Burenheide
bburen@ksu.edu

Treasurer/ Secretary
Maureen Donegan
mdoneganirc@olatheschools.com

Past President
Tom Vontz
tvontz@ksu.edu

The Purpose of KCSS is…

A. to assume leadership in Kansas…
   1. in improving the teaching of the social studies
   2. in promoting research of the social studies
   3. in promoting the professional growth of social studies teachers
B. to cooperate with state and local education associations.
C. to promote the organization of, and cooperate with, local councils for the social studies, and
D. to serve the interests of the National Council for the Social Studies in Kansas.

More info can be found at www.kcss.info
Friends in Social Studies,

Thank you for the past year and the opportunity to serve you as the KCSS President. It was a great year for KCSS. We nominated the Blue Valley School District for the national award of excellence in social studies and saw them receive this prominent award from NCSS last fall in Houston. KCSS was awarded a silver star by NCSS, for the number of NCSS members, one of only a handful of states to receive this distinction. Our own Brad Burenheide was elected to the NCSS House of Delegates Resolutions Committee. While I am proud of our organization and the national recognition we have received, I have realized that there are still many Kansas social studies teachers who do not know about KCSS. I invite you to tell your colleagues about KCSS and help us reach all social studies educators in our state. Forward Sunflower Social Studies and spread the word.

Social Studies IS alive in Kansas. One very good example of that is the upcoming KCSS Professional Development conference being offered in Manhattan on October 10th. At a very affordable price, you can join social studies educators from across the state in a variety of presentations and round table discussions as well as network with those like yourself you are dedicated to quality social studies education in Kansas. Please join us for a great day in the “Little Apple”.

Your KCSS board is continuing to work hard in the effort to create an awareness of the importance of social studies education in our state. We need your help in that effort. There is much attention today given to reading and math and yes, they are important. But the message ALL of us need to deliver is that Social Studies education is important too. Social studies prepares people to take their place as effective, participating members of our democracy. Whether you are part of history, geography, government/civics, economics, global studies, or one of the behavioral sciences, the message needs to be delivered: social studies creates effective citizens and social studies education is more important than ever. See you in Manhattan.

Regards,

Deb Brown
The 2009 KCSS “Judy Cromwell Excellence in Teaching Award” nomination form is available at this time. Judy Cromwell was an outstanding teacher and advocate for social studies in Kansas and her work for the KCSS was outstanding. In 2007, this award was named in her honor. Information on nominations and the form are included in this announcement section. Please nominate an outstanding teacher today!

**2009 Kansas Council for the Social Studies Judy Cromwell Excellence in Teaching Awards**

"Recognizing Exceptional Social Studies Instruction"

**Eligibility:**

The nominee must:

- be presently serving as a social studies educator (K-Higher Education) with at least a half-time appointment.
- have taught a minimum of three years at the designated grade level.

Awards will be given in each of the grade levels: elementary, middle, high school, and if there are nominations, higher education.

**Nomination Process:**

- Any one may nominate. Self-nominations will be accepted.
- Complete a 1-2 page letter of nomination or applicant narrative that addresses one or more of the criteria listed below.
- Include letter of support for the nomination prepared by one of the following:
  - A fellow teacher
  - Department chairperson
  - Building principal
  - School district social studies supervisor
  - Another individual well acquainted with nominee’s teaching effectiveness who can provide credible evidence of the person’s achievements.

**Awards**

Each recipient will receive:

- Complimentary registration for KCSS Conference ($100 registration waived)
- $50 cash
- A framed commemorative award certificate
- Recognition at state conference
- Award recipient is eligible for nomination for the NCSS award if an NCSS member.

**Criteria for Excellence in Teaching Awards:**

*One or more of the following categories should be addressed in the nomination letter:*

- Creates and uses instructional materials related to the social studies curricula creatively and effectively.
- Creatively modifies and implements instructional material from the social studies curricula.
- Incorporates talents and facilities of resource persons and places to enrich social studies curricula.
- Stimulates basic democratic process, beliefs, values, and skills that help produce effective citizens.
- Encourages the development of critical thinking & decision making skills that are essential to citizenship.
- Presents evidence of active involvement with social studies related professional development.
- Models community participation and/or leadership (city council, service organization, etc.) OR Demonstrates leadership and/or implementation of social studies curriculum and instruction in innovative and effective ways.

Submit nomination form, nomination letter or applicant narrative, and letter of support by September 15, 2009.

Mail to: KCSS Excellence in Teaching Awards
c/o Jamie Dawson
1118 Oxford Drive
Emporia, Kansas 66801
2009 Kansas Council for the Social Studies
“Judy Cromwell Excellence in Teaching Award”
Nomination Form

Name of Nominee: ________________________________________________________________

Address: ________________________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________  Zip: ________________________________

Phone Number: ___________________  Email: ______________________________________

School Name: _________________________________________________________________

School Address: __________________________________________________________________

City: _______________________________________________  Zip: _________________________

Grade(s) taught __________________________

Level for award (Circle one  Elementary   Middle/Jr. High   High School   Higher Education)

Subject(s) taught: __________________________________________________________________

Name of Person making the nomination: _____________________________________________

Name of Person writing Letter of Support _____________________________________________

Address: ________________________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________  State: _______________  Zip: _________________________

Phone #_________________________  Email: ______________________________________

Submit this form along with a one-two page Nomination Letter (or Applicant Narrative, if self-
nominated) AND one additional letter of support

by September 15, 2009

to

KCSS Excellence in Teaching Awards
c/o Jamie Dawson
1118 Oxford
Emporia, Kansas  66801

Nomination materials may also be emailed to Jamie Dawson:
jamie.dawson@usd253.org

If you have questions, you may email Jamie or contact KCSS President Deb Brown:
Shawnee Mission School District  (913)993-8664 or fax (913)993-8674
deborahbrown@smsd.org
2009 KCHE “Exceeding the Standards Conference”

The 2009 conference will be held in Garden City on Monday, October 5. There will be an optional pre-conference tour of the Mid-America Air Museum in Liberal, Ks. Transportation will be provided to Liberal from the conference hotel.

The conference will be held at the Clarion Inn and Conference Center. Registration will be $70 for NCHE members and $95 for non-members. The conference theme is What’s Your Source: Primary Sources and the Standards.
Registration For:
What’s Your Source??: Primary Sources and the Standards
KCHE’s Fall Conference
October 4 - 5, 2009

The conference will be held at the Clarion Inn and Conference Center in Garden City, KS. Registration includes both days of the conference, a continental breakfast, lunch, and an evening reception with entertainment at the Clarion Inn and Conference Center.

The Clarion Inn (620-275-7471) will offer a special conference room rate of $94.99 per night. To take advantage of this rate, conference participants will need to reserve their room by September 1.

Payment and registration form should be sent to:

Make check payable to: Kansas Council for History Education
Mail to: Nate McAlister, Treasurer
613 Central Ave
Hoyt, KS 66440

(Please check the appropriate costs for your registration)

Checks or District Purchase Order should be made payable to KCHE

Name: ____________________________________________________________

NCHE/KCHE Members $ 70 _____

Non-Members $ 95 _____

Optional Tours (Sunday 12:30 – 5:00 p.m.)
Mid-America Air Museum in Liberal, Kansas. Transportation will be provided. $ 15 _____

(FREE) Optional Reception (Sunday 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.)
Please let us know if you are planning to attend so we can plan the food and drinks. _____

Total

School Name: ____________________________ Grade Level (s) Taught: _______________________

District #: ____________________________ School Phone: _________________________________

School Address: ________________________________________________________________

Home Address: ________________________________________________________________

Email Address_______________________________________________________________

TAH Grant Participant? _______Current _______Alum Name of Grant____________________
Announcing the New and Improved Annual

2009 International Career and Strategies Workshop for High School Students and their Teachers:

An Opportunity for Students to Learn about International Careers and for Teachers to Connect Meaningfully as International Educators

Thursday, October 8, 2009

8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

Kansas Union, University of Kansas

Sponsored by KU International Programs, the KU Center for Global and International Studies, and the KU Applied English Center

www.international.ku.edu

The primary focus of the International Career Workshop is to publicize the wealth of international opportunities available to current and future university graduates from the Kansas region by connecting them with practicing professionals already engaged in those careers. The workshop strives to situate students’ Kansas education as a springboard for challenging and exciting international careers, regardless of where they choose to live. This year’s program will focus on the business, education, and not-for-profit sectors and will provide students with hands-on, highly interactive opportunities to explore a variety of careers from working for a translation company or teaching English as a Second Language, to managing an international store in Kansas or creating Asian Art exhibits as a museum curator in Kansas City. The program places specific emphasis on foreign language and culture studies and highlights study abroad opportunities.

A series of teacher workshops have also been planned this year that will explore the wealth of international resources and strategies available to Kansas high school teachers through institutions like KU. Resources for the language and social studies classrooms will be emphasized. Significant time will also be devoted to a facilitated discussion on the challenges teachers face in Kansas’ ever-diversifying schools and the solutions that teachers have developed to embrace a broad spectrum of cultural and linguistic perspectives and abilities.

There will be three interactive panels of speakers for the student participants, and all students will have an opportunity to participate in all three sessions. There will also be three 50-minute workshops available to the teachers while the students are in their sessions. The morning will be followed by live music from an international music group and a keynote talk by “Godzilla aficionado,” Dr. William Tsutsui. We hope you can join us, and we look forward to welcoming you on campus!

FOR MORE INFORMATION & A COMPLETE PROGRAM, PLEASE CONTACT:

Celeste Morgan Yaluk
celestem@ku.edu Phone: (785)864-7247
International Career Workshop 2009 (October 8th)
8:30 – 2:00

PROGRAM
Concurrent Student Sessions (8:30, 9:30, and 10:30)

BUSINESS
Topics: Working in the translation field and managing a local- international business in Kansas

- Jackie Smith – Director of Marketing for SH3 Inc. translation company (Confirmed)
- Lora Wiley – Owner of Au Marche (Confirmed)
- Interactive Component:
  - Students need to plan a translation project for an SH3 Inc. client. What are the challenges, what are the concerns? Different groups could focus on different world regions to enable discussion on cultural differences, etc... Au Marche may be one of the clients – so that they can give feedback to students’ ideas.

EDUCATION
Topics: Exploring the role foreign language plays in students’ educational and professional lives, and an exploration of how study abroad can transform the college experience from cultural and linguistic exposure to getting that job after graduation

- Robert Lopez – Study Abroad (Confirmed)
- Marc Greenberg – KU Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures (Confirmed)
- Interactive Component with GAP student facilitators:
  - Brainstorm on biggest challenges of going abroad – Robert facilitates discussion based on what students really think.
  - Brainstorm on how foreign languages can be used – in education, careers, and beyond.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT
Topics: Discussing the fun and challenges of working as a Curator of Asian Art at the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City and international opportunities to engage in service learning right here in Kansas.

- Ling-en Lu – Asian Art Curator for the Nelson-Atkins (Confirmed)
- International Service Learning – KU Service Learning (Confirmed)
- Interactive Component:
  - Groups engage in an interpretive exercise related to Asian Art – decide what it is, where it’s from, etc... - Ms. Lu facilitates discussion with groups and talks about challenges of art education at the Museum – what you can assume – what you can't assume – making art from Asia accessible to the public.
Teacher/Counselor Workshops (8:30, 9:30, and 10:30)

**Workshop 1: STATE POLICIES REGARDING LANGUAGE TESTING FOR NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH AT REGENT’S INSTITUTIONS (8:30 am)**

Facilitate by faculty from the KU Applied English Center, this session will focus on language assessment at Kansas Regents’ institutions: who must take it and what students should expect when they arrive on a Kansas campus. This session will explore what all non-native English speakers will undertake upon arrival on a Kansas university campus and how teachers can help prepare students for what to expect. This session is not KU-specific.

**Workshop 2: INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES FOR LANGUAGE, SOCIAL STUDIES, AND BUSINESS-RELATED CLASSES (9:30 am)**

This session will explore the international resources and materials available to high school teachers through KU’s international outreach programs and how these might be accessed. Special attention will be given to materials relevant to the foreign language, social studies, economics, and business-related classrooms.

- Tatyana Wilds – Outreach Coordinator for the KU Area Studies Centers (Russia, East Europe, Eurasia; Western Europe, Latin America, East Asia, and Africa) (Confirmed)
- Jane Irungu – Associate Director of the Kansas African Studies Center and Coordinator the center’s Summer Institute for Teachers (Confirmed)
- Dr. Melissa Birch - Center for International Business Education & Research (Confirmed)

**Workshop 3: ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY FOR CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS - A DISCUSSION OF CHALLENGES AND CLASSROOM STRATEGIES**

This session will be a facilitated discussion on the challenges Kansas high school teachers face when working to include culturally and linguistically diverse students in the regular classroom. Specific attention will be given to solutions emerging from the classroom and resources available to help teachers.

Session Facilitators Include:
- Dr. Lizette Peter – Assistant Professor – KU Department of Curriculum & Teaching
- Dr. Tracy Hirata-Edds – Lecturer – KU Applied English Center
- Francie Christopher – Project Coordinator – Kansas Migrant and ELL Academy

**Lunch-time Concert (11:30 – 12:00)**

Mr. van Zoest and members of his Carl Maria von Weber Guitar Orchestra will be visiting from Eutin, Germany and will perform over lunch. Eutin is Lawrence’s Sister City.

**Lunch-time Keynote Talk (12:00 to 1:00)**

Bill Tsutsui – Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Professor of East Asian Languages and Culture (Confirmed)  Topic: *Kansas and Kansans in the World*

**Afternoon Optional Activities (2:00)**

- Admissions Tour of KU campus for interested students
- AEC Hand-on Class Experience Opportunities:
  - Sample advanced writing class for non-native English speaking students
  - Special session on language careers for all students (ESL, Peace Corps, etc...)


COMING THIS FALL!
www.crees.ku.edu

THE CENTER FOR RUSSIAN, EAST EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN STUDIES AND
THE SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART PRESENT

K-16 WORKSHOP FOR EDUCATORS, NOVEMBER 7, 2009

REIMAGINING CENTRAL EUROPE: TRANSITION AND IDENTITY

As part of a semester-long commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the fall of Soviet Communism in East Central Europe, the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies and the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas announce a K-16 Workshop for Educators, “Reimagining Central Europe: Transition and Identity.” The workshop will be held during the Velvet Revolution Week which will be filled with exciting events.

**When: Saturday, November 7**
**Time: 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**

**Where: Spencer Museum of Art**
**The University of Kansas**
**Limited travel grants available.**

**THE WORKSHOP WILL INCLUDE A GALLERY TOUR AND A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

**Presenters:**

**Professor Svetlana Vassileva - Karagyozova,**
Slavic Languages and Literatures, KU
http://www2.ku.edu/~slavic/faculty_pages/vassileva.shtml

**Professor Nathaniel Wood,** History, KU
http://www.history.ku.edu/faculty/wood/index.shtml

For more information and to register please contact Tatyana Wilds:
tvw@ku.edu

**This workshop is free of charge and offers a chance to earn professional credit. In addition to earning professional credit, you may elect to be a “teacher-scholar” associated with our centers and earn $100!**

To qualify, you must: a) attend the workshop,
b) create a lesson based on the workshop, and
c) use the lesson in your classroom.

We will feature it on our website and share it with other teachers.
To better meet the needs of the membership of KCSS, we are hosting a Professional Development Day on Saturday, October 10, 2009, in Manhattan, KS. Information can be found below as well as a submission form for Session Proposals.

Yes We Can! A Stimulus Package for Social Studies Education
Professional Development Day, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS
Bluemont Hall from 10:00-4:30. The PDD will have 25 sessions for attendees to choose from, as well as a lunch, and a KCSS business session.

Attendance fees are as follows:
$30--Teacher
$15—Session Presenter/College Student

Scheduled Session Titles & Program Highlights!

Academic World Quest Competition  The Map: Your Initial Source For Social Studies
Using Primary Sources in the 21st Century  Operation Integration
An Integrated Thematic Unit on Energy  We The People
21st Century Skills and Social Studies  Project Archaeology in Kansas
Civic Education Programs in Kansas  Guided Practice of a Teaching Strategy
Stimulating Student Interest in History With Primary Sources  How They Do It: Strategies of High Quality Teachers of History

4 Roundtable Sessions where you can meet with content specialists and discuss your discipline. Share and get great ideas of what you can do in teaching your discipline!

A Special Networking Session for Novice Teachers to Interact with Experienced Teachers!

DOOR PRIZES GALORE!
Name: __________________________________________________

Organization/School: __________________________________________________

E-Mail Address: ______________________________ Grade Teaching: ______

Mail Address: ______________________________________________________

Reliable Phone Number: ____________________________________________
(Confirmation will be sent via e-mail. Other forms of communication will be used only if the e-mail is undeliverable).

Payment Method: ___ Check Enclosed       ___ Purchase Order
$30 for attendees $15 for presenters and students

Meal Choice (Boxed Lunch Provided by Jimmy Johns include with Registration)

___ #1 Pepe (Ham)       ___ #2 Big John (Roast Beef)

___ #3 Totally Tuna     ___ #4 Turkey Tom

___ #5 Vito (Italian Sub)    ___ #6 Vegetarian

REGISTRATION NEEDS TO BE SUBMITTED BY OCTOBER 1, 2009 TO ENSURE
ACCURATE ATTANDANCE AND MEAL

Send registration form and payment method to:
KCSS Professional Development Day
c/o Mrs. Jaime Dawson
1118 Oxford
Emporia, KS  66801
Fax:  785-532-7304
Email:  jaime.dawson@usd253.org

Questions, contact Dr. Brad Burenheide, bburen@ksu.edu, 785-532-5157
2009 NCSS Conference

Join NCSS at the nation’s largest and most comprehensive social studies professional development conference.

Atlanta 2009

Plan to be in Atlanta November 13-15, 2009 for the 89th NCSS Annual Conference. With the theme Dreams and Deeds: The Civic Mission of Schools, the conference will highlight the central role of social studies in our schools: preparing young citizens to make a better world.

As the “Capital of the New South” and the cradle of the civil rights movement, Atlanta is steeped in history, culture, and new ideas, making it the perfect setting to explore 21st century social studies education with more than 4000 leading educators. This is one professional development event you can’t afford to miss!

Conference Strands
- Teaching for Social Justice and Human Rights
- The Economy
- Citizenship and the Democratic Process
- Technology and Mass Media
- Community Involvement & Service Learning

Special Features
- Keynote Speakers:
  - Maya Soetoro-Ng, a peace educator and author of Three Cups of Tea
  - Greg Mortenson, author of Three Cups of Tea
  - Lincolner scholar Eric Foner
- Evening reception at the Carter Library
- Sessions and speakers on teaching about the economic crisis
- Seminar on Teaching American History Grants with TAH Grants Director Alex Stein, and over 100 American History sessions ideal for TAH grantees
- International Educators’ events
- Workshop for pre-service teachers on preparing for the PRAXIS Tests
- Lincoln Bicentennial sessions
- Clinics at the King Center, the Carter Library, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, The Breman Jewish Heritage and Holocaust Museum
- Performance by Atlanta’s Joanna Maddox as “Martha Anderson”
- Saturday night film festival
- African-American history and urban geography walking tours of Atlanta

Atlanta Highlights
- Martin Luther King Jr., National Historic Site
- Ebenezer Baptist Church
- Jimmy Carter Presidential Library
- Atlanta History Center
- CNN
- Georgia Aquarium

Save the date for the premier social studies event in historic Atlanta!

National Council for the Social Studies

Advance registration runs from June 1 to October 30, 2009 at www.socialstudies.org/conference
In this edition of The Chalkboard, Dr. Tim Fry of Washburn University provides an article regarding an educational trip to Jamaica with some of his students to understand how social studies is taught in another culture as well as demonstrating what some teacher education programs are doing across the state.

TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES IN JAMAICA
—International Experience for Pre-service Educators

In January of 2008, I had the good fortune to accompany eight Washburn University students on a trip to the country of Jamaica. It was an intersession trip that lasted from Friday, January 4th until the early morning hours of Monday January 21st—the day the spring semester at Washburn started. The students were fulfilling a newly created graduation requirement at our university entitled “Washburn Transformational Experience (WTE).” All undergraduates must complete one of four WTE options—Leadership Service, a Creative Endeavor, Community Service or as in this case, International Travel. Money has been earmarked by our administration to provide assistance in the form of scholarships to offset student costs.

This specific “Transformational Experience in Jamaica Program” has been in existence for about three years. The director of the program is Dr. Judith L. McConnell-Farmer, Professor of Early Childhood Education at Washburn. Professor McConnell-Farmer (Dr. Judy) instituted our program after accompanying a group of University of Wisconsin—Platteville professors and students to Jamaica in the winter of 2005. There she was able to make contacts with various Jamaican school administrators and also various lodging and transportation services. Making two trips a year (Winter and Spring) for the last several years, Dr. Judy has made many friends and contacts that made our trip in January 2008 run smoothly.

While the trip took place in January ‘08, many months of planning and informational meetings with our students were required throughout the fall 2007 semester. Deadlines and paperwork for applications, registration, scholarships and
passports kept us focused. In addition, curriculum and lesson planning for our future Jamaican students had to be done.

With eight Washburn students selected to go on this particular trip, it was decided that Dr. Judy would work with half of our students in designing lessons for early childhood Jamaican students. I worked with the other four students in designing social studies lessons for 4th through 6th grade Jamaican students. Arrangements had been made for us to work for the greater part of a week in two different Jamaican towns—we could repeat our week’s worth of lesson plans at the second location.

The four students I worked with designing social studies lessons to teach in Jamaica were all in my Elementary Social Studies Methods class during the fall 2007 semester. The class had a practicum component working in elementary schools in Topeka and so as we were designing lessons that fall, we were also thinking of good social studies lessons to teach in Jamaica. Towards the end of the fall semester, we met several times to discuss lessons that had been successful in the practicum that we could maybe adapt for use in Jamaica. We decided to all write up three lesson plans each, myself included, with a primary focus on map/globe skills.

We ran off extra lesson plans and laminated some of them to leave with teachers in our schools. Many handouts with lots of cut and pasted graphics were made, as we knew they did not have textbooks or many paper resources. Out of pocket, my students bought blow-up globes and several trade books to use with our lessons. These resources were then left in the various Jamaican classrooms.

We also bought extra pencils, erasers, scissors, other classroom supplies and even collected clothing to donate. Needless to say, we all got two very large suitcases and checked our bags before boarding our flight to Jamaica.

On Friday evening January 4th, we met as a group at a hotel near the Kansas City Airport, and weighed bags and shuffled lesson plans and donations so that no bags were too heavy. A last minute check was made to make sure students’ passports were in order. Before dawn, we shuttled to the airport and took an early morning flight to Houston. We switched planes in Houston and flew into Montego Bay airport, on the northwest coast of Jamaica. We arrived early afternoon, went through customs, exchanged a little money, secured our bags from baggage claim
and then worked hard to maneuver all that luggage through the airport—most of us carrying several and pulling two or three each.

Arrangements had been made to have a bus meet us and take us to Treasure Beach, a little town on the south central coast of Jamaica about 70 miles to the southeast. We met our driver who then painstakingly lifted all of those big heavy bags through a side window of the bus. We had our first jerk chicken lunch at a local restaurant in Montego Bay. Several of us bought water and phone cards at a convenience store next to the restaurant. After reloading, I sat close to the driver and he asked me if we wanted to go up in elevation and across the island or take the coastal route. Not sure, I told him to chose.

We wound up going up in elevation through rainforest and on a wild ride across the island on narrow winding roads. The driver seemed to go very fast past little settlements and many pedestrians. Some of our students began to complain of motion sickness and we tried to rearrange them closer to the front. I commented that I liked the reggae music the driver was playing and he said he had some other good music of a local band from Montego Bay. After switching CDs, I literally became entranced by the great music and the surreal vistas of rainforest and little towns we seemed to race through.

As we neared the southern coast, I noticed a definite change in climate. We had driven for several hours through very green and lush foliage. However, the south central coast of Jamaica is in a rain shadow of the Blue Mountains and looks much like southern California—dry with much less vegetation. We arrived late in the afternoon at the little town of Treasure Beach and wound our way up a rocky hill with a great view to the south of the Caribbean Sea. Several little houses and stores lined the narrow road up the hill and many goats and chickens were roaming free that slowed us down. Up on the hill sat two large structures, one of which would be our home for the next week—kind of a Bed and Breakfast called “Rock Villa.” Owners Sylvan and Blondie Walker greeted us and helped us move into our rooms. After a short time, we sat down to a wonderful dinner prepared and served by the Walkers. After dinner, we held a short meeting with students, reminded them to keep writing in their journals, and then relaxed before bed.

Early the next morning, Sylvan announced breakfast was ready and we had the first of many wonderful breakfasts that included fresh bread and many different tropical fruits--papaya and a “Sweet Sop” that most of us had never seen or heard of. It was Sunday morning and we could hear music from an Assembly of God
Church a few blocks away. Many of us changed clothes and walked to church. Wonderful singing and I think the minister appreciated our relatively generous contributions in the collection plate. Around noon, we walked to the beach and ate at a local restaurant called “Jack Sprats.” Jack’s would become a favorite place to hang out as my students discovered a few days later that they had a wireless internet connection. We had been several days without email! We swam in the ocean on that Sunday afternoon, had another wonderful supper, and then got to work lining up lessons for our first day of teaching in Jamaica.

Early the next morning, a minivan arrived and all of us squeezed in it with teaching supplies crammed into backpacks and brief cases. My four students and I were dropped off at Sandy Bank Primary School. We could hear singing and could see the students assembled in kind of a courtyard inside the low rectangle concrete block structure. The students start each day with devotions—singing and prayers. We immediately realized that there was not as much separation of church and state as we were accustomed to. Most students wore a khaki uniform, girls with white shirts and khaki skirts. However, we saw many variations and later realized that probably due to economics, the dress code was not strictly enforced.

After the students scattered towards their classrooms, we entered and found the busy principal’s office. Students were coming in late, money was being collected—the usual procedural stuff in any school. Amidst all the business, we were able to introduce ourselves to Principal Norma Moxam. After some discussion and quick thinking, it was decided that we would work with two 6th grade classes in the mornings and a “challenging” fourth grade class in the afternoons. My students split into pairs for the two 6th grade classrooms and we all worked together with a large, lively, somewhat unruly, class of 4th graders after lunch.

The two six grade classes were different in size and ability. Two of my students got to work with about 20 of the top students while the other two worked with almost twice that many—a few of whom primarily spoke the local language of Patois. Patois is a combination of African words, French, Spanish, Portuguese and English. Both 6th grade classes started successfully with a nametag culture lesson. The teacher of the smaller gifted group informed me “she was raised Rastafarian and therefore wore pants while most of the other teachers were Christians and had to wear dresses or skirts.” I was learning some Jamaican culture as well!
The rest of the morning we introduced our 6th grade students to a unit on map skills that we would continue with the rest of the week. For lunch, the students seem to scatter to pockets of parents and other community members under the few trees outside, who passed out small parcels to hungry kids. We noticed that several seemed to be trying to survive on flavored sugar water and crackers or baked snack food. Our minivan driver picked us up and took us to Jack’s for lunch—several of us ate fried conch with garlic and rice. We figured out that our van driver was the father of one of our 6th grade girls.

Arriving back at the school after lunch, we saw a pick up soccer match and several students milling around that soon surrounded us as we stepped out of the van. Very friendly and smiling, we made small talk with questions and compliments. However, as we arrived at our fourth grade classroom, it seemed to be run amuck. No adult or teacher seemed to be paying attention as many fourth grade students were chasing each around the classroom, many swinging sticks in a violent manner. We tried to settle them down and eventually their teacher, a recent college graduate and a very nice young woman, sort of got them to settle a bit. Mrs. Foster admitted she was struggling with this year’s fourth graders and we could see why. Cramped conditions and sitting on picnic table style seats elbow to elbow, they were a challenge to keep on track. We did have two 4th boys get into a fight and also Mrs. Foster left us alone a lot of the time—really think she needed a break. Another problem were the facilities—loud noises from other classrooms could be heard as there was no glass in window openings and many open places where the concrete blocks were turned to allow for airflow. Reminded me of the open classroom philosophy tried in the United States in the 1970s.

We ended up reading a lot more story books to these fourth graders and a little less having them complete worksheets or projects. We did have some good productive lessons with the sixth graders over the next several days. One of our 6th grade lessons had them making balloon globes, a great lesson on relative location. They traced continents on blown up balloons, labeled the equator and of course Jamaica, and then preceded to tie string on them and hang them from the rafters. Forty balloon globes hanging in a classroom is an awesome sight—they had fun and many were proud of how their “globes” looked.

Principal Moxam thanked us for working with the 6th graders and said she felt like we were a big help as the 6th graders were all about to take a national test. She explained that sixth grade is a transition point in their education. If they do well on the test, they go to a Jr. High School with a curriculum geared to prepare them for
high school and college. If they don’t do well on their 6th grade exam, they can go into a Jr. High as a second chance to prove themselves and perhaps get into a high school track for college. If they don’t do well in their second chance Jr. High, their public schooling is over.

It was a great life for a week in Treasure Beach. We taught by day, had time to swim in the ocean for a couple hours before a great dinner at Rock Villa, and then had time to put our lessons together for the next day. On Friday, we exchanged gifts with teachers and Principal Moxam. We also left half of our extra teaching supplies and each of the students got a new pencil. We got lots of hugs and well wishes from students and teachers—we had really formed some bonds. We got to spend most of Saturday on the beach and then packed our bags that night for a new adventure in the town of Mandeville starting on Sunday.

On Sunday morning, we said sad farewells to Sylvan and Blondie, loaded our still heavy bags into a bus and headed north towards the center of the island. We made a stop along the way at a popular national treasure called YS Falls. Here we donned our swimming suits and got to frolic in a beautiful clear mountain stream for a couple of hours. There were many waterfalls and pools to swim in. They even had several rope swings that we could swing out the rainforest and drop into deep pools. Incredible place and a serious effort is being made to keep it so pristine.

Mandeville is approximately 50 miles north of Treasure Beach but several hours drive through winding terrain. We also lost a few hours at YS Falls and so didn’t get to the Tropic View Hotel until late afternoon. The hotel is one of the nicest, most modern hotels in Mandeville. They had a pool, laundry facilities, restaurant and a computer room with additional wireless connections! Many of the people staying there were Americans and Europeans who were in Mandeville as part of their jobs. Mandeville is an industrial town of about 30,000 people, most of whom work in the nearby open pit bauxite mine. After eating in the hotel restaurant, we gathered to plan for teaching the next day.

We had to be at our school at seven in the morning as Hatfield Primary and Jr. High splits their school day to accommodate two age groups. During the fall semester, the Junior High meets from 7 till noon and the elementary school goes from noon till 5 pm. For the spring semester that was just getting started, those elementary students had to start school at seven o’clock in the morning! When we arrived, many students were lined up and several more were lining up in sort of a
military formation—straight lines and columns on the courtyard. A few teachers were addressing the assemblage and once again as in Treasure Beach, were heard prayers, devotions and singing. We met with the vice-principal, Ms. Gayle, who gave us a tour and our room assignments. We got to visit with the school’s Principal, Mrs. Brown, later in the morning during mid-morning break.

Ms. Gayle assigned two of my students to work for the first half of the day in a fairly low functioning 4th grade classroom that contained 21 boys and 4 girls. The teacher in this classroom, Ms. Gordon, was another recent college graduate and had some progressive teaching styles—we watched her teach her students a song about the metric system.

My other two students spent the first half of the day in a regular more traditional 4th grade classroom. This middle age man teacher, Mr. Thompson, was teaching about climate, and taught largely by recitation. He would explain a concept or fact to his students, pause on key words and have the students repeat the words over and over. He would often stop and write some of those key words and phrases on the board. The students would then repeat the words out loud over and over as he pointed to the words. Both of these early morning settings provided my students the opportunity to observe these Jamaican teachers work with students and my students only had time to teach a short lesson or two before the mid-morning break.

After break, we all got to work in an advanced functioning 4th grade classroom. These were very bright students, fun to work with and were definitely being groomed to do well on their upcoming national test in the 6th grade. I even tried some direct instruction with these students, much in the same way I had seen Mr. Thompson work with his students earlier in the day. I had students say and repeat several key concept words and we read several of our completed worksheets together out loud. While not exactly the constructivist inquiry approach I try to stress in my teacher education classes, this direct recitation method was perhaps an attempt to get these young Jamaican students ready for those standardized facts-based national exams.

We taught a similar curriculum that we had taught the week before of map and globe skills. I personally got to teach at least one lesson to each class that we worked with. This gave me the opportunity to model for my students as well as have some of the fun in teaching--hard to sit and watch my students have all the fun.
We made a few outings in the evenings while in Mandeville. We went downtown for grocery/drug store needs early in the week and to a coffee processing plant another evening to stock up on reasonably priced Blue Mountain coffee. One evening, we visited Saint John Bosco’s Home for Boys. We delivered much of the clothing and shoes we had brought from Kansas, inflated the basketballs and soccer balls we had brought with us, and also took school supplies and books. This church run home houses both wayward and abandoned boys that were eager for interaction with caring adults. We spread out across the grounds where they were playing before their supper and had some fun. I taught about a dozen boys to play “round the world” with a basketball and goal. I also read a few books to some boys, one of which snuggled up to me as I read. Other boys crowded around my students and were read to or worked with on soccer skills. I do not think any of us will ever forget our trip to this “home for boys.”

On Friday, we repeated the exchange of gifts with teachers and administrators at Hatfield School. Loaded up our much lighter bags and headed back to Montego Bay. Spent Friday evening and most of the day Saturday on the beach in the beautiful setting of Montego Bay. Sunday morning went to the airport and started the long trip back home to reality—freezing conditions and ice. However, I can say without a doubt, we had all been given—an incredible transformational experience!

If you have ideas to submit to “The Chalkboard,” send them to Dr. Brad Burenheide at bburen@ksu.edu or call him at 785-532-5157.