

## Luther College's 'Project ResPEct' Fosters Beneficial Collaborations Between HPE Undergrads and Alumni

**Issue:** As undergraduates, future health and physical education teachers seldom have an opportunity to work closely with local alumni who can mentor them and provide hands-on experience as they explore and develop their own unique teaching style.

Welcome to Luther College, a private, liberal arts school in rural, northeast Iowa that specializes in education. Thanks to its outstanding academic reputation and athletic program, more than 90 percent of its health and PE program grads have landed teaching jobs — and six of them are within a 20-mile radius of the college campus in Decorah. The alumni's success has been gratifying for assistant professor and SHAPE America member Ellen Drewes-Stoen, who has personally monitored and nurtured the careers of many of her former students.

**SHAPE America** – Society of Health and Physical Educators is the nation's largest membership organization of health and physical education professionals. The organization sets the standard for health and physical education in the U.S., and its National Standards for K-12 Physical Education serve as the foundation for well-designed physical education programs across the country. SHAPE America was also a proud member of the coalition that developed the National Health Education Standards, and is a founding partner of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, *Let's Move!* Active Schools (now Active Schools) and the Jump Rope For Heart/Hoops For Heart programs.



"Project ResPEct" alumni participants 2016, left to right: Mike Tangen, Jess Tangen, Amy Pipho, Jackie Hoyme, Melissa Norman, Jonathan Carlson.

"I've really had fun watching them grow into colleagues," says the self-described "methods junkie" who thrives on creating new courses and lesson plans. "Inspiring students is my passion."

**The Big Idea:** While supervising previous undergraduate students in their local student-teaching posts, it occurred to Drewes-Stoen how much Luther's current undergraduates could benefit from working on projects in the classroom with their predecessors.

The 2015-16 academic year presented an interesting opportunity. The Luther College Alumni Office had recently started working with an alumnus who offered mini-grants for innovative projects involving student/alumni collaborations. Drewes-Stoen had an idea to create a mutually beneficial project that would pair master teachers with teacher candidates.

"The mini-grant seemed to be a natural fit for our HPE teaching programs," says

Drewes-Stoen. "And having our HPE teaching alumni in such close proximity, as well as having taught them previously in my classes, was a real bonus."

Her proposal for "Project ResPEct" was awarded \$800 by the Alumni Department — enough to provide \$150 stipends for the mentors and fund an end-of-the-year pizza party for first- and second-year HPE students, mentors, faculty and future students. The event would give the collaborators an opportunity to present their projects and foster networking and potential future collaborations between the master teachers and upcoming HPE teacher candidates.

**Implementation:** In Project ResPEct, each teacher candidate enrolled in one of Drewes-Stoen's PE methods courses forms a partnership with an alumnus, called a master teacher. From October to April, they collaborate to develop projects of mutual interest, such as

teaching strategies, management protocols, professionalism, assessment, teacher-coach roles, planning a field day or other school-wide activity, reading and discussing scholarly articles, and curriculum planning. The projects can be directed to any level between elementary and high school, and must include one or more of these categories: hot topics, golden nuggets and/or unsolved mysteries. Each involves four to five hours of collaboration, either in person or by phone, email or Skype. Upon completion, master teachers and teacher candidates present a “reflection and summary” of their projects.

In 2015-16, the inaugural year of Project ResPEct, teacher candidate Jackie Hoyme completed a strength-conditioning warm-up video for students in master teacher Jess Tangen’s middle school classes at St. Benedict’s School and Mike Tangen’s classes at Decorah High School. She met with the students, developed the choreography, and created a video that was an immediate hit with students.

“I like working with technology, which is being incorporated more and more into the classroom, so this was good practice for me,” says Hoyme. “I am happy we were able to create something that brought the two schools together. Working with Jess and Mike, I was able to create a fun and useful tool that students really enjoy.” She says the video is slowly gaining interest outside of the group for which it was intended.

Another student, Melissa Norman,

incorporated activity breaks — brief bursts of activity — into master teacher Amy Pipho’s health classroom in Decorah Middle School. Norman observed that students’ test scores turned out higher than the control group that did not have activity breaks.

“The project was a great experience,” says Norman. “I was able to work in the schools and explore a topic I found interesting. It was extremely helpful to see how activity breaks can affect a student’s learning. I will be able to use the knowledge and hands-on experience I gained in my future classroom and gym.”

**Takeaway:** The program encountered its first challenges in 2016-17, which raised many questions that Drewes-Stoen is still addressing: Are the demands of the project too ambitious or rigorous for the teacher candidates, who may be overcommitted with classes, schoolwork and other demands? Should the project be required for all teacher candidates as part of the course syllabus, or should the HPE department select and invite outstanding teacher candidates to participate?

Drewes-Stoen thinks future master teachers should ask themselves what they would do if they only had the time. “This way of thinking would enable our teacher candidates to collaborate with master teachers on a project that is especially beneficial for all, and perhaps would provide a focus that would enhance future takeaways for this project.”

## Project Team

**Ellen Drewes-Stoen**, Lead Faculty Member, Assistant Professor, Luther College

**Jonathan Carlson**, ('07), PE Teacher, Decorah Middle School, Decorah, IA

**Amy Pipho**, ('97), PE/Health Teacher, Decorah Middle School, Decorah, IA

**Jessica Tangen**, ('08), PE/Health Teacher, St. Benedict’s School, Decorah, IA

**Mike Tangen**, ('08), PE Teacher, Decorah High School, Decorah, IA

**Brenda Ranum**, Alumni Office, Luther College

**Results:** Project ResPEct met with resounding approval from both master teachers and teacher candidates in its inaugural year, and has been renewed twice. “It was an amazing opportunity for all involved,” notes Tangen. “Having Luther College students come into the classroom is a great way for them to learn and interact with students in a variety of different grades. So much learning can take place.”

“I enjoyed doing the activity breaks in the classroom with Melissa and the students, who seemed to enjoy taking a break from their studies and redirecting their mind for a short while to help them focus,” adds Pipho. “The grant allowed for more interaction with college students preparing to be teachers, and it was a great learning experience for both Melissa and me.”



## SHAPE America’s National Standards for Physical Education

The physically literate individual:

- ✓ Demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
- ✓ Applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.
- ✓ Demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.
- ✓ Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.
- ✓ Recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

## 50 Million Strong by 2029

is SHAPE America’s commitment to put all children on the path to health and physical literacy through effective health and physical education programs. Across the country, HPE teachers and other supporters are making an impact by taking action in the following areas:

- ✓ Effective Instruction
- ✓ Healthy Behaviors & Physical Activity
- ✓ Advocacy

Want to know how you can make an impact? Learn more at [shapeamerica.org/50million](http://shapeamerica.org/50million).

