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## REPORT TO THE CORPS

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### A.P.P.L.E. REPRESENTED AT VILNIUS CONFERENCE

*An international conference titled “Quality Education for All: Basic Competencies for Lifelong Learning—The European Dimension and the Baltic Vision” was held in Vilnius in October 2003. Irena Ross attended the conference as A.P.P.L.E. President. The conference was organized by A.P.P.L.E. President-elect Vaiva Vebra in her capacity as Chair of the National Education Forum. The following summary of the conference proceedings was prepared by Lidija Laurinciukiene.*

Basic competencies for lifelong learning were the topic of a sub-regional conference organized by the Lithuanian National Education Forum and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania in cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat in Paris, the World Bank Mission in Lithuania, UNDP Lithuania, and the Open Society Fund Lithuania. In addition to representatives from the countries of the sub-region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland), educators from Canada, Georgia, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and the European Commission participated as speakers, observers and guests. This was the first sub-regional conference during Lithuania’s stint as leading country of the informal Working Group for coordination of EFA implementation in the sub-region. Earlier this task was undertaken by Latvia (2002-2003).

*“This Conference marks an international acknowledgement of our country,” affirmed Arturas Paulauskas, Chairman of the Seimas (Parliament). Aleksandr Sannikov, Head of the Europe Desk, Education Sector of the UNESCO Bureau for Programme Coordination, who had assisted with Conference planning, said that the work of Lithuania’s National Education Forum could be an excellent example for other*

*countries: “The activities of the Lithuanian National Education Forum are very impressive in their capacity for drawing members of civil society into the drafting and discussion of conceptual education white papers and legislation.”*

Indeed, the cooperation among Lithuanian politicians, education experts and community representatives, key to the preparation of the new Law on Education, the Lithuanian National Education Strategy Guidelines (2003-2112), as well as the Lithuanian National Action Plan Guidelines and Action Plan for implementation of the UNESCO “Education for All” programme, was frequently noted. The spontaneous formation of local Education forums in various cities and regions (there are now about 30 in Lithuania) is a cutting-edge phenomenon in the subregion. According to Mr. Sannikov, UNESCO is committed to supporting such civic initiatives. Lithuania could and should share its experience widely.

### WHAT IS “QUALITY EDUCATION”?

The three principal Conference speakers (Maureen McLaughlin, Head of the World Bank Education sector, Rupert Maclean, Director of the UNESCO-UNEVOC Institute in Bonn, and Tapio Saavala) all proposed definitions of quality education. These speakers used different key words essential to understanding the quality of attained curriculum for lifelong learning (“basic competencies,” “general abilities,” “life skills,” “learning to know, to be, to do and to live together”). Yet, although their key words differed, it was clear that their general ideas were in concord. Mr. Maclean accented the emphases that various institutions and experts place on differing aspects of the quality of attained curriculum for lifelong learning and emphasized the value of seeking a common denominator. Lithuanian National Education Forum Chairwoman Vaiva Vebraite concurred, saying that “the most valuable ideas are those that we discover together, by comparing and by sharing our separate experiences.”



*Vaiva Vebraitė addresses the group*

### **CHALLENGES AND “DANGER ZONES”**

One of the words most frequently heard among policy analysts today, the word “challenge,” was heard a lot during this Conference as well. M. McLaughlin highlighted hidden challenges to education systems: developing a new understanding of the goals of education; guarantees of fairness; adequate financing; effective use of resources; management and accountability. In speaking to these challenges, she remarked that they were difficult to overcome for countries in transition and suggested that priority might be placed on curriculum renewal, teacher-training reform and necessary conditions for lifelong learning. According to M. McLaughlin, international studies (such as PISA, of the literacy levels of 15-year olds) are very important for clarifying needs and trends in achieving quality education.

Ricardas Alisauskas, Head of the Education Development Division at the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, identified a challenge particular to post-communist countries: that of freedom and accompanying responsibility for decisions taken. Issues raised by V. Vebraitė: whether we will be able to modernize curriculum to bring it into a present-day context; whether we will be able to bring dropouts back into the stream of education; whether we will develop an education program serving both men and women fairly and equally; whether we will reduce illiteracy and how we will increase quality in basic education – also rang out as challenges to education in Lithuania. Pranas Gudynas, Director of the Lithuanian Education Development Centre, called the EFA “Education for All” Lithuanian National Action Plan a serious challenge:

“The achievement of its goals will require tremendous effort.” Meanwhile, Lithuanian Minister of Education and Science Algirdas Monkevičius cautioned that “we do understand that the challenges of globalization and information technologies, while opening up new possibilities for our civilization, also open the way for new dangers and conflicts.” Some of the danger zones that reforms – particular to each country – may lead us into were identified by P. Gudynas. Miscommunication, misuse of rhetoric, misunderstanding of basic ideas and an inability to reconsider and reflect upon them, teachers’ desires for cookie-cutter solutions and societal stereotypes, political populism – these are just a few. Each country has its own list.

### **LEARNING BY DOING**

Participation in the Conference was an active enterprise for everyone. Firstly, the Conference agenda provided for intense small group discussions of principal Conference topics: quality issues, basic competencies and congruency between European Union policies and the Education for All initiative. On the second Conference day, participants had the opportunity to form a clear impression of Lithuanian education reform processes through study visits. A number chose to explore the National Examination Centre and discuss the experience gained through implementation of a single-channel external exam system. Others traveled southeast to a post-independence school in the small city of Salcininkai (where Polish inhabitants are a majority population). New roles for teachers and recent innovations including decentralization of funding for professional development were at the center of discussions in Salcininkai. A third group toured the Vileisis Basic School and learned about implementation of the “School Improvement Programme,” an investment in quality basic education in Lithuania (with support from a World Bank loan). Finally, Conference members were able to visit a rather “exotic” location – a men’s prison – to discuss provision of education for those adults who have little or no formal education, as well as other issues of skills for life-long learning.

Russian Minister of Education Vladimir Filippov took part in the Conference on its second day. Minister Filippov spoke of Russian education reforms and took part in a remarkable public dialogue with Lithuanian Minister of Education and Science Algirdas Monkevičius. Lithuanian National Education Forum member Virginija Budiene, of the Open Society Institute (Hungary), acting as moderator, spurred both ministers to answer questions about their views of the role and the responsibility of political parties, education professionals and civic society in devising and supporting educational change. The final speaker, Lithuanian State Secretary for Education Dainius Numgaudis, said: “As organizers, we didn’t want to candy-coat Lithuanian education. We wanted you to see things as they truly are here. Our intent was that you sense and that you

understand our hopes for our country's future." "The reality was impressive. You have quite a lot to be proud of," said State Secretary of the Swedish Ministry of Education Carl Lindberg.

*Lidija Laurinciukiene*

## **2004 SPRINT MEETING SET FOR APRIL 16-18 IN PUTNAM, CT**

Board members and officers are expected to attend the upcoming Annual Spring Meeting set for the weekend of April 16-18. Division Directors are strongly encouraged to participate. All members are welcome. The meetings, lodging and eating will take place in one location: Immaculate Conception Convent, 600 Liberty Highway, Putnam, CT 06260-2503. The total cost for the weekend is \$90.00 + \$10.00 registration fee.

To reach the meeting by car, from Rt. 395 take Exit 97. Take the off ramp east on Rt. 44 (toward East Putnam and Providence, RI). At the traffic light crossing on Rts. 44 and 21 turn north (left) on 21. The Convent is on the left. If you plan to travel by air and arrive on Friday, your destination is Bradley International Airport (BDL), Windsor Locks, CT (860) 623-3000. For Saturday arrivals use Providence, RI Green Airport (PVD). Transportation from and to the airports will be arranged. More detailed travel information will be provided as needed.

Your official invitation and registration will be mailed to you in early March. For all information regarding this meeting, please contact: Ilona Laucius, (973) 278-0737:

e-mail: [laucius@aol.com](mailto:laucius@aol.com)

The theme for 2004 is Communication. Our team of General Lecturers on this theme will be led by Dr. Phillip Taylor and Sister Cathleen Campbell, SPS. They began their planning for this theme during our August 2003 meeting and have been communicating ever since. We all look forward to the presentations that Lithuania's teachers will be fortunate to be part of come July 7, 2004, in Vilnius.

In addition to finalizing plans for the 2004 Summer Seminar, this year's spring meeting will give President-elect Vaiva Vebra an opportunity to outline her plans for the 2005 Seminar. Most of our readers know that Vaiva is a founding member and Past-President of A.P.P.L.E. She is also past Vice-Minister of Lithuania's Ministry of Education and Science. As it happens, Vaiva will be representing Lithuania at an international conference on education to be held in Geneva in January 2004. Following this conference, Vaiva will spend two weeks preparing and chairing a National Education Forum in Lithuania, where she will have the opportunity to inform herself on the latest relevant issues in matters of education there.

## **VILTAS CAMP EXPERIENCE A CHERISHED MEMORY**

In July 2003 the A.P.P.L.E./Viltis team, consisting of Ilona Laucius, Augiene Viliuniene, Myra Goodwin, Rasa Uleviciute, Katie Hoyle, and Vitas Underys, gathered at Akimirka camp in Sventoji, Lithuania, to work with special education teachers, students with special needs, families of the students, and volunteers. Our mission was to present best practices in education and to help build a community of learners in which everyone is a valued and contributing member.

The first few days were dedicated to setting up classroom environments and creating a daily schedule. The day was divided into three parts: opening lecture/discussion and practical experiences with students, and in the afternoon a group discussion followed by a lecture. Some examples of the lecture topics were: A History of Viltis, Child Development, Assessment, Inclusion, and Positive Behavior Supports.

The practical activities with the students were organized around a final performance, a play called "Jurate and Kastytis." One major requirement for the play was that every student would contribute and play a role in the production.

The concept of Project-Based Education is not new, but we felt it would help create a problem-posing system of education vs. a "deposit" system. We wanted to challenge the teachers, volunteers, and family members to use their creativity to find a solution. The challenge was finding a way for every student to be included in the play, and also to be developing some new and functional skills. This problem-posing system helped create a system where everyone learns from each other. Every person is both a teacher and a student. All members of the community need to be listened to and valued.



*Teachers take notes during lecture at 2003 Viltas Camp*

A major shift in the group occurred after we spent a morning doing “team-building” activities. We created a situation where teachers had to not only talk to a new person but also listen to another person without interrupting. To create a community, we needed to connect with others, and the only way to connect is through communicating. These activities created some links between individuals and created an interconnected web, a community.

The final project, the play “Jurate and Kastytis,” turned out to be a celebration of a community working together. The final scene of the play was not a net, but a fabric that represented waves that brought jewels (amber) to the shore. As I reflect on the experiences at the camp, the jewels were not the pieces of amber that the actors tossed at the audience, but the members of the A.P.P.L.E./Viltis camp at Akimirka camp in Sventoji, Lithuania.

*Vitas Underys*

## HOW A.P.P.L.E. HAS CHANGED MY TEACHING

*The following is a first-person account from Lina Stasiunaite sharing how her experience in the Mathematics Strand in July 2003 has affected her teaching. Lina has been teaching at Grigiskes “Sviesa” secondary school for three years. Grigiskes is a Vilnius suburb (about 15 km from Vilnius center). The school is not big. It has about 850 students from grades 5 to 12. There are about 65 teachers in the school. Grigiskes has about 5,000 people, Lina teaches math to 6th and 9th grade students. The average class size is about 28 students.*

It was my first experience with A.P.P.L.E. And I hope not the last. These two July weeks were the highlight of all my 2003 year. I am a mathematics teacher at Grigiskiu “Sviesos” secondary school. I attended the math strand in A.P.P.L.E this year.

The basic motif of our seminar was active learning in math. We learned some strategies for how to interest students in math, as well as new and nontraditional math themes. The success of this course mostly depended on our extraordinary lecturer, Valencia Community College professor Beverly Taylor. Her inexhaustible energy, erudition, experience, and charming smile made a great impression on all math strand teachers.

Beverly presented a lot of math-using opportunities: math in art, modular math, magic squares, Bingo, Jeopardy, and other math games.

When I participated in lectures, I always thought about putting this knowledge into practice in my lessons. Four months have passed, and I can look over my success in using my new information.

This year I am teaching in middle classes ( 6th – 9th grades ). For every lesson I prepare a small quiz for my students. This encourages them to come to class.

Before tests we play Bingo. It is a wonderful discovery, because you can play it in all math classes (algebra, geometry, trigonometry).

I was strongly impressed by math in art opportunities. So the first project my students did this year was based on modular math. Children are very creative. They have done great work. We will have an exhibition of our work in March during the math week in our school.

We have played with 6th graders the Tic-Tac-Toe game and are now preparing for our Jeopardy tournament. We will have more projects using math in art, magical squares, and symmetry in the future.

I may say with confidence that the new knowledge from A.P.P.L.E courses changed my lessons. They now are more attractive and more interesting for my students. Lectures in A.P.P.L.E stimulate me to do non-traditional math projects and share in the World Wide Web to find more interesting math facts and new math teaching ideas, to achieve some active learning methods. The A.P.P.L.E. courses also stimulated me to learn more English, because it was the language in which most of the lectures were presented.

I want to thank our lecturer, Beverly Taylor, and Valencia Community College for the graphic calculators they donated to us. My students like using them. It is a new experience for them. I also want to thank all people who support A.P.P.L.E. You make it possible for us to attend these summer courses in which we can learn new methods of teaching, make new friends and see the world with new eyes. Thank you.

So come to A.P.P.L.E. It will change your classes forever.

*Lina Stasiunaite*

## INTERNATIONAL NIGHT A SOCIAL HIGH POINT OF THE VILNIUS SEMINAR

*In addition to presenting high-powered, concentrated professional development work during ten intensive days at the Pedagogical Professional Development Centre in Vilnius, we try to share some fun with our Lithuanian colleagues during several evening events. One of these events is called **International Night**.*

*What this means is that the American lecturers change their usual daytime roles and become **instant chefs-for-a-night**. They aim to show off their varied expertise in any cuisine that is quite different from the ones available in Lithuania. The first example that comes to mind is one of my own efforts. Knowing that muffins do not exist in Lithuania—or in Europe for that matter—I carted two new muffin tins with me, along with a recipe and some ingredients that I wasn’t sure I would be able to get in Lithuania. When the muffins*

were ready, I cut each in half and displayed them right in their original muffin tins. All our foods are served buffet style. The guests walk around and help themselves. The 48 muffin halves disappeared pretty quickly.

What do the other American colleagues prepare? A number of them prepare inventive and unusual salads. They are relatively easy to prepare, present and serve on paper plates. They are certainly different from the salads that Lithuanians make themselves.

Because our seminars always are presented in July and close to July 4, one of our American colleagues once prepared a generous number of cupcakes with a tiny American paper flag planted in each. What a photo op! And what a souvenir keepsake for each of the Lithuanian gourmands!

Where do we prepare all these goodies? Why in the large kitchen attached to the cafeteria. For a couple of days leading up to International Night, we take turns sharing the kitchen with the regular staff who feed us and our Lithuanian seminar participants. Last summer, I recall several of us sharing the kitchen with Religion and Ethics presenter Rev. Jim Halstead from Chicago. He was baking brownies—using mixes that he had “imported” from the U.S. Where they popular? You bet! Another dish that’s completely new to our Lithuanian participants is anything made with marshmallows. And



*A.P.P.L.E. Lecturers show off their culinary creations*

our instructors have a variety of dessert recipes that include marshmallows.

About the only thing we have avoided preparing is anything to do with soups. It would be too problematic with the number of people involved—up to 300—and even that number does not include all seminar participants. But we have certainly never lacked for variety in our array of International Night creations.

International Night is always held in the spacious courtyard of the Pedagogical Centre since this is intended to be an outdoor, picnic-style event. Some stand; others sit; all mingle effortlessly. It is a good venue for camaraderie and also for getting a clear overview of all the colorful foods—with the “chefs” staying close to their contributions to receive the praise from the hungry dinner guests. Many Lithuanian teachers are interested in obtaining recipes for the foreign dishes that they have tasted for the first time.

The International Night has been a highlight of the A.P.P.L.E. Summer Seminar since the idea was first suggested by Wendell Mayo several years ago.

*Irena Ross, A.P.P.L.E. President, 2003-04*

## **A.P.P.L.E. MEMORIES**

One of my favorite APPLE memories occurred last summer. The School LibraryStrand strongly encourages students to attend the morning lecture. When students come into the classroom, we ask them about what they learned that morning. On the first morning of Summer 2003, one of our students arrived with an enormous smile. She had won one of the prizes from the drawing that day. Not only was she pleased to have won, but it was also her 65th birthday. The class, as all classes would have done, jumped up and sang all those wonderful, beautiful verses in three- and four-part harmony to wish her a Happy Birthday. They then turned to Barbara and me who squeaked through, as best we could, our simple rendition of **Happy Birthday to You!** Being wonderful singers as Lithuanians are, they joined in for a second chorus, gloriously drowning out our squeaks.

Another adventure came my first summer as I was waiting for the plane to return me to London and home. I sat next to a gentleman who started telling me why he was in Lithuania. It seems that he and his wife had found the woman who had kept his wife hidden in her home when she was a child. They had been sending money to her since 1991, but this summer they had come over, helped her buy an apartment, bought her new furniture and appliances, and anything that they thought she might need. Now they were returning to the United States. It was certainly small repayment for saving a life. Yet, it was repayment for a wonderful sacrifice that woman

made to save a child when dire consequences could have come to her and her family members.

*Blanche Woolls*

### **MORE A.P.P.L.E. MEMORIES**

I am often asked about my first summer working in Lithuania with A.P.P.L.E. My response always begins with the statement, "It was like having a religious experience." So many memorable experiences, but it was actually the sum of all these memories, against a backdrop of music that created such an impact. My experience began surrounded by singing and dance during the opening ceremonies marking the beginning of the two-week seminars in Vilnius. These ceremonies, filled with wonderful traditional Lithuanian music, enveloped my heart.

The music lingered in my mind as Joanne Hammer and I arrived in what was to be our week of working with teachers at the regional site of Visiginis. On the morning of our arrival, we were ushered into the main hall of the school and given front-row seats. While we quietly waited, a soft bustle filled the room. Suddenly the lights dimmed, and the curtain opened. Our hosts arranged welcoming songs accompanied by an accomplished accordion and piano player. What a warm way to begin a week of working closely with the teachers! It occurred to me that music acted as a cultural bond between teachers, students, parents and now us—foreigners.

The echo of songs once again could be heard throughout the week. One afternoon the group of teachers were engaged in intense work on reading-comprehension strategies. The room became hot with very little breeze that found its way through the open windows. I proceeded to give a mini-lesson about the six different structures found in nonfiction text with use of graphic organizers. To illustrate the compare-contrast text structure, I used the simple example of the difference between frogs and toads. Before I could finish the lesson, the entire class broke out in song about a little green frog. How delightful! The lesson took on a lightness that I imagined permeated these teachers' classrooms on a daily basis. Yes, I thought, these are the voices of angels.

*Nancy Hanssen, 2002 General lecturer, 2003 Elementary Strand*

**Editor's Note:** *A.P.P.L.E. has been mentioned many times in Lithuanian-language publications. But an article by Darius Ross in the **Baltic Times** dated 18 Dec 2003 may be the first article in the English-language press in Europe. To find the article, go to [www.baltictimes.com](http://www.baltictimes.com) <<http://www.baltictimes.com>> and then press Supplement. The article title is: "Educators Take Expertise Overseas." It is issue # 388, dated 18. 12. 2003. Congratulations to Darius for his informative article.*

## **WHAT CAN YOU BUY FOR \$40 IN 2004?**

### **YOU CAN STILL CHANGE THE LIFE OF A LITHUANIAN TEACHER!**

Yes, the cost of change has gone up this year, from \$30 to \$40 per scholarship. The driving factor is the startling loss of the value of a dollar compared to the litas, more so than rising prices in Lithuania (but those also can't be ignored). The cost to underwrite an interpreter is now \$200. Those who receive scholarships will write personal letters to their sponsors, providing a firsthand account of the influence that the Seminar experience has on their lives and professional development.

These letters confirm our hopes—and the promise of our headline.

If you sponsored a teacher last year, you know the value that was received. If you didn't, this is your chance to find out. Consider honoring a friend with this special gift, giving a scholarship in his or her name. You will be making a difference! *Please send scholarship and stipend donations to: A.P.P.L.E., Box 617, Durham, CT 06422. We can reach so many more people with your help.*

PS. We would like to remind you that because of strict Internal Revenue Service regulations, we cannot accept scholarships intended for specific persons. If you would like to support your relatives or friends, please do so directly. This scholarship fund is for those Lithuanian teachers who have no such friends in the United States.

**Reminder:** A.P.P.L.E. membership remains a bargain at \$25 per year, because all this work is still handled by volunteers. If you haven't sent in your renewal, please include it with your scholarship donation.

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2003-2004

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**YES! I would like to join in your efforts toward educational reform in Lithuania.**

I would like to make a contribution to:

**The Scholarship Fund.** (\$40 supports one teacher. You will receive a personal letter from the teacher who receives your donation.)

**The Stipend Fund.** (\$200 supports an interpreter or Lithuanian lecturer.)

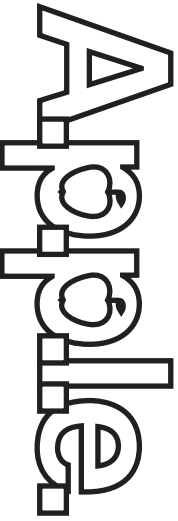
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