First-grader George Howard is struggling to flatten a lump of clay into a “pizza.” The clay is so hard that he lifts his knee onto his desk and kneels on the lump. Then, he jumps down again and begins punching it with his fists. Finally, George lugs a large pumpkin to his desk in hopes of smashing the clay under its weight. “Jump, jump, jump, Jim Joe,” Joan’ay Rhodes sings. She’s sitting diagonally across from George at the clay station. Using a gourd to pound her clay, she beats out the rhythm of her song, singing, “You shake your head, you nod your head, you tap your toe.”

Welcome to the new University of Hartford Magnet School, where learning is a hands-on activity that involves all of the senses and draws on each child’s innate talents and abilities.

by Mary Anne Lynch
On Sept. 4, the magnet school, which is believed to be the nation's first public elementary school built on a private university campus, opened its doors to 263 students from Hartford and six neighboring towns. Half of the students are from the city of Hartford, and half of those students are from the city's North End. Eventually, the school will serve about 400 children from prekindergarten through fifth grade.

Located in the southeast corner of the Bloomfield Avenue campus, the magnet school has access to the University's extensive resources and faculty expertise, and it provides a unique, hands-on “learning laboratory” for University students studying education and a variety of related fields.

The school’s innovative curriculum is based on the theory of multiple intelligences, developed by Harvard University psychologist Howard E. Gardner. Gardner's theory recognizes that many children, rather than learning in the traditional linear-logic approach taken in most classrooms, have innate learning styles, or intelligences, which Gardner defines as “linguistic,” “visual-spatial,” “naturalistic,” “logical-mathematical,” “bodily-kinesthetic,” “interpersonal,” “intra-personal,” and “musical.” In applying Gardner's theory, magnet school teachers present curricula in ways that support each child’s individual learning style.

While there are a handful of other schools that utilize Gardner’s theory, the University of Hartford Magnet School is the first in the country that has been architecturally designed and built specifically to employ the theory of multiple intelligences.

In Lynn Gaumond’s first-grade room, there are four different learning stations. At the logical-mathematical center, students are asked to sort objects that share the same two attributes of size and color. When that is mastered, they will sort objects using three attributes. “We don’t rely on our textbooks to teach curriculum,” Gaumond says. “We teach the standard state curriculum, but we use our multiple intelligences. I take each child where he or she is and it’s my responsibility to move them along by [identifying and] using their preferred multiple intelligences.

“There is a heightened awareness of the multiple intelligences for teachers and students,” continues Gaumond, who taught for 25 years in Simsbury, Conn., and was a teacher-in-residence for the state Department of Education last year. Jaime Feller, a University of Hartford student teacher in Gaumond’s first-grade classroom, agrees that the magnet school approach is very different. Last semester, she worked at a traditional school in Bloomfield, where the curriculum focus was on worksheets and folder work. “Here, the students are making choices and exploring,” she notes.

When asked what her favorite intelligence is, Joan’ay stops pounding, looks up, and says without hesitation, “Musical.” She smiles and resumes the beat: “You shake your head. You nod your head. You tap your toe…. .”

“This school is a teacher’s dream,” says Lillie Feierabend, the musical intelligence teacher. “Every other day I get to see my
students for 45 minutes,” Feierabend explains that in many school districts, students may have music only once a week for 20 minutes. “It is very exciting because they actually remember what they learned in the last class when they come back,” she says. Joan’ay and her classmates had just learned “Jump, Jim Joe” in Feierabend’s class the day they pounded clay.

Joan’ay’s classmate, Jack Rubino, says his favorite intelligence is “bodily-kinesthetic, ’cause I get to do all these movements, jump around, and stuff.” All students have bodily-kinesthetic class with specialist Patti Mascetti. She teaches children to be “body smart” through gross- and small-motor movement activities. Classes meet in the large, circular agora (Greek for “marketplace”) or the smaller bodily-kinesthetic rooms, one of which is equipped with climbing equipment, while the other resembles a dance studio.

The school is designed to look “more like a neighborhood, not an institution,” says Associate Professor Regina Miller, chair of the Division of Education in the University’s College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions (ENHP). She was part of the design team that met with the architects, discussed Gardner’s theory, and crafted the innovative space. “We wanted people to be able to observe the students, but we didn’t want them to be in the classroom,” says Miller. To prevent distractions and interruptions, each classroom has an observation room with a one-way window onto the classroom activity.

In the foyer of the magnet school, students and visitors are greeted by a scarecrow holding a fishing pole. Farther down the hallway to the left, one scarecrow is sitting on another scarecrow’s shoulder. Additional scarecrows may be found throughout the school, in a variety of poses and costumes.

Throughout the school are scarecrows, made by third graders, that are posed to represent the “multiple intelligences” on which the curriculum is based.

A sign next to each scarecrow asks, “Which intelligence do I represent?” Small groups of third-grade students in Elizabeth Crowell’s visual-spatial intelligence room made the scarecrows using visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalistic, and interpersonal intelligences. The magnet school students also pointed out that the band members were using musical and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences. The magnet school students also pointed out that the band members were using interpersonal intelligence to work as a team and not bump into each other and visual-spatial intelligence to know the pattern they were making on the field.

Intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences are taught by school psychologist and counselor Kathy Neuhause. She guides children to make pictures of each scarecrow and posted the students’ masterpieces on the site.

“When teachers plan lessons, they think about the multiple intelligences in those lessons,” says magnet school Principal Cheryl Kloczko, the former principal of Cherry Brook School in Canton, Conn. “Maybe a child needs to trace out letters in the sand, or to manipulate the letters on a magnetic board, or to make up songs about them to help them remember what they’ve learned.”

In Patricia Sward’s prekindergarten classroom, two children play happily with uncooked popcorn at the sensory table. Next to them, a boy is concentrating on building a fence at the sand table. Nearby, a girl traces stencils, folds her paper, and writes “Mom” on it. Two paraprofessionals and one parent help the 18 children in Sward’s class. Sward, who earned her early childhood education degree as a nontraditional student at the University of Hartford and is halfway through her master’s studies, says her three- to five-year-old students are hands-on learners. “That’s what good, solid pre-K is…anything hands-on,” she says.

In the first weeks that the school was in session, students learned to analyze the myriad intelligences in any given task. When a visiting university band held a dress rehearsal at the school, students immediately recognized that the band members were using musical and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences. The magnet school students also pointed out that the band members were using interpersonal intelligence to work as a team and not bump into each other and visual-spatial intelligence to know the pattern they were making on the field.

Intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences are taught by school psychologist and counselor Kathy Neuhause. She guides children to make
good choices and to be responsible for the choices they make. If students make mistakes, they are asked, “Were you ‘people smart? Did you use your interpersonal skills?”

“IT’s really a laboratory school,” says Gaumond, and the learning is two-way between University faculty and students and the magnet school faculty.

“Here, we have the marriage of theory and practice,” says Kloczko. For example, students from Mary Ann Montano’s first-grade class and University of Hartford Associate Professor Ann Courtney’s undergraduate reading course are penpals, writing weekly to each other. The University students are learning how children develop writing and spelling skills, while the first-graders are learning to write letters, says Courtney, a faculty member in the Division of Education. Students from Courtney’s other courses work in the classrooms with magnet school teachers once each week.

“It’s wonderful.” Courtney says. “My students are hearing the theory and immediately get to turn around and see the practical application in the classroom.”

Parents, too, seem to think the magnet school is a wonderful place. Jim Sanderson, a graduate of the University of Hartford’s Barney School of Business, says his kindergartner, Nicholas, loves the magnet school. Nicholas’s mom, Jackie, who is an early childhood educator, says Nicholas “has been coming home singing. He’s mad on the weekends when he can’t go to school.”

Mary Beth Tryon, vice president of the school’s Parent Teacher Community Association, agrees. She has both kindergartner Abigail and second-grader Kelsey enrolled in the magnet school.

“We have seen an incredible, incredible increase in Kelsey’s self-esteem. She’s showing initiative to do things on her own. She loves it!”

Every activity centers around the multiple intelligences, including the before- and after-school programs. After Thanksgiving, students began spending the last hour of their 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. school day in activities centered on the intelligence of their choice.

“When you ask children to apply their multiple intelligence of choice, you are telling children there are many ways to feel smart…. It is not only a way that we learn, but a way that we feel better,” says Kloczko.

“And they are actually having fun learning,” adds Tryon.

Third-grader Celia Sobelman officially opened the University of Hartford Magnet School by cutting red and white ribbons stretched across the school’s main entrance, it marked the culmination of a decade of effort by state, municipal, and University officials working together in a unique partnership.

Construction of the $21.5 million school was funded by the state of Connecticut. The school is managed by the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), and it is overseen by a governing board that includes the superintendent and a school board member from each of the seven participating school districts. Situated on the University of Hartford main campus, the school’s curriculum and design were developed with significant input from faculty in the University’s College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions (ENHP).

“This school really is a symbol for what can happen when people work together,” said University President Walter Harrison.

On Aug. 30, representatives of the many partners involved in the project came together officially to open the magnet school with a colorful ribbon-cutting ceremony. Guests included former University President Humphrey Tonkin, under whose leadership the project began, and people who were involved at every stage of planning, developing, and construction.

“This 10-year gestation period guarantees that this school will be something extraordinary,” said Connecticut Education Commissioner Theodore Sergi.

Several hundred people gathered in the bright, late-summer sunshine to celebrate the opening of the highly anticipated school. Many of the same people had come together at the site just 16 months earlier for the project’s groundbreaking, when all that existed at the site was a small pile of dirt.

Faculty and staff of the magnet school stood proudly in front of their new home, as speakers shared their excitement about the project.

Continued on page 32
Zeiser from page 8

Division, under Zeiser’s leadership, has successfully addressed the majority of the state’s concerns.

Among other things, the University conducted a detailed review of its teacher certification programs and ultimately eliminated a number of programs so that the Education Division can focus its resources on its areas of greatest strength. The division, under Zeiser’s administration, also hired new faculty and expanded several staff positions from part-time to full-time, renovated facilities, purchased new curriculum materials and made those materials more accessible, expanded opportunities for student field experiences, and implemented a number of other improvements.

Shepherd teacher preparation programs through rigorous accreditation reviews is nothing new to Zeiser. Before coming to the University of Hartford, she oversaw two successful state reviews of teacher certification programs at Saint Joseph College in West Hartford.

With more than 20 years of higher education experience, Zeiser was both an administrator and faculty member at Saint Joseph, having served as an associate professor of education and of nutrition and family studies. From 1994 to 1996, she served as academic dean, a position in which she was responsible for five divisions, including nursing and education. Earlier in her career at Saint Joseph, Zeiser served as chair of the Nutrition and Family Studies Department. She went on to become chair of the Child Study, Education, and Special Education Department, and chair of the Education Division.

Zeiser, who also has worked for the state Department of Education, holds a doctorate from the University of Connecticut School of Education.

“Dr. Zeiser has a strong commitment to, and belief in, the future of the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions,” said Provost Randall. “On a personal level, she is a delightful colleague with a wonderful sense of humor. She’s truly a remarkable dean, and I’m looking forward to working with her closely over many years.”

faculty forum from page 7

continued on page 32

Concerned that the extent of the war against terrorism has not been defined, Kulynych said, we must also consider “how we conduct the war. We have a duty to act justly, moral philosophers would tell us, even if that means losing the war…We cannot respond by obliterating an entire region or an entire way of life. And we must minimize destruction and casualties when we can.”

Kulynych stated that food drops are inadequate to compensate for destruction to a country “on the brink of famine.” Attacks, she said, must avoid, to the extent possible, harm to the populace.

“That’s what made this terrorist attack so wrong in the first place—that it was perpetrated on innocent people.”

“If we wish to give meaning to the lives that have already been lost,” she said, “moral philosophy tells us that we should not allow our actions to be unjust in finding a response.”

James Highland, assistant professor of philosophy, emphasized that “a call to selfless activity” is a tenet of most major religions and was exemplified by the heroic acts of firefighters and rescue workers at the World Trade Center. “We all have this sort of common conscience,” he stated, “that pulls us to selfless activity.” Since Sept. 11, many have been responding to that call by helping others who are going through pain, by advocating for Muslims in their communities, and maintaining vigilance about the actions of our government, he said.

Media coverage was the discussion topic of Harvey Jassem, associate professor of communication. Prior to Sept. 11, efforts to cut expenses had driven the major TV networks to cut back on international news coverage and viewing of TV news had “gone down dramatically in the past 20 years,” Jassem said. So it is not surprising that “Americans don’t have a terrific grasp of what’s going on in the world.”

Yet “the same media that don’t give us much international news rely heavily on selling their product to the international markets,” he said. This product includes what is “easy to translate,” often “violence and sex.”

The result is “a misconception by the rest of the world of what we are.”

Jassem said he was impressed, though, by the Sept. 11 coverage. “Television brought us together as a culture and as a community in ways we hadn’t [seen] in many years, “ he said. Since that time, the networks have been spending “half a million dollars a day housing their correspondents in and around Afghanistan” and television news ratings have shot up. “Media are a part of this war,” he said.

magnet school from page 13

“Those of us honored to work at the University of Hartford Magnet School know that it is a deep, heartfelt passion that fuels the work necessary to fulfill this dream,” said Principal Cheryl Kloczko. “A passion for teaching and nurturing young children and the belief that we can make a difference in their lives.”

Kloczko noted that the magnet school is designed to serve as a resource for the entire community. The school features an early childhood education center, a family and wellness center, and before- and after-school day care.

“For those of you involved during the past 10 years,” Kloczko said, “the common dream that you shared—the vision of a school for the 21st century that would meet the needs of its students as well as the greater community—is now reality.”

continued on page 32

Concerned that the extent of the war against terrorism has not been defined, Kulynych said, we must also consider “how we conduct the war. We have a duty to act justly, moral philosophers would tell us, even if that means losing the war…We cannot respond by obliterating an entire region or an entire way of life. And we must minimize destruction and casualties when we can.”

Kulynych stated that food drops are inadequate to compensate for destruction to a country “on the brink of famine.” Attacks, she said, must avoid, to the extent possible, harm to the populace.

“That’s what made this terrorist attack so wrong in the first place—that it was perpetrated on innocent people.”

“If we wish to give meaning to the lives that have already been lost,” she said, “moral philosophy tells us that we should not allow our actions to be unjust in finding a response.”

James Highland, assistant professor of philosophy, emphasized that “a call to selfless activity” is a tenet of most major religions and was exemplified by the heroic acts of firefighters and rescue workers at the World Trade Center. “We all have this sort of common conscience,” he stated, “that pulls us to selfless activity.” Since Sept. 11, many have been responding to that call by helping others who are going through pain, by advocating for Muslims in their communities, and maintaining vigilance about the actions of our government, he said.

Media coverage was the discussion topic of Harvey Jassem, associate professor of communication. Prior to Sept. 11, efforts to cut expenses had driven the major TV networks to cut back on international news coverage and viewing of TV news had “gone down dramatically in the past 20 years,” Jassem said. So it is not surprising that “Americans don’t have a terrific grasp of what’s going on in the world.”

Yet “the same media that don’t give us much international news rely heavily on selling their product to the international markets,” he said. This product includes what is “easy to translate,” often “violence and sex.”

The result is “a misconception by the rest of the world of what we are.”

Jassem said he was impressed, though, by the Sept. 11 coverage. “Television brought us together as a culture and as a community in ways we hadn’t [seen] in many years, “ he said. Since that time, the networks have been spending “half a million dollars a day housing their correspondents in and around Afghanistan” and television news ratings have shot up. “Media are a part of this war,” he said.

magnet school from page 13

“Those of us honored to work at the University of Hartford Magnet School know that it is a deep, heartfelt passion that fuels the work necessary to fulfill this dream,” said Principal Cheryl Kloczko. “A passion for teaching and nurturing young children and the belief that we can make a difference in their lives.”

Kloczko noted that the magnet school is designed to serve as a resource for the entire community. The school features an early childhood education center, a family and wellness center, and before- and after-school day care.

“For those of you involved during the past 10 years,” Kloczko said, “the common dream that you shared—the vision of a school for the 21st century that would meet the needs of its students as well as the greater community—is now reality.”