



# Women Education Leaders in Virginia May 2013



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*Lori Bridi and Katya Zabloutney*

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## President's Message



As we close another school year and take time to reflect, let us be mindful of the magnitude of our long-term, generational impact as educators. Our schools, more specifically our children, need our attention and support. We know that an educated populace lends itself to an active citizenship, good stewards of our resources, functional members of society, and provides footing for personal success in a college and/or career path. We know that children who leave our schools with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed are more likely to give back to the community that supported them. The long-term, positive implications of a quality educational system have been researched and well documented – not easily argued.

So, what does that mean for you, as a leader? It means this:

- We must insist that our educators have the vision, energy, and commitment to create a system that prepares our children for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and trust them to do so;
- We must have quality teachers in front of our children every day;
- We must create a culture of "solution-finders" who focus on children and their needs;
- We must advocate for our community to invest time and money in public education;
- We must engage our community and define what a quality education means for their lifestyle, whether they have children in the system or not; and
- It means that we must talk with each other about our vision for our school system.

WELV offers a unique opportunity for women to interact, engage in passionate dialogue, and to learn from each other. The face of public education is changing and it behooves us to be in the forefront, leading the transformation.

My best to each of you,  
Gena Cook Keller, Superintendent  
President, Women Education Leaders in Virginia



What participants had to say about the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual WELV Conference

*"The entire conference was filled with highlights! I enjoyed the DuFours, and Dr. James, and the networking opportunities were incredible!"*

*"Impressed by collegiality!"*

*"Enjoyed having the chance to interact with so many women who share a passion for education. "*

*"Validation! Hearing other women in positions of power sharing the same ups and downs as me as a working mother!"*



*"My highlight was meeting women leaders from across Virginia. Very inspiring to a future leader!"*

*"Panels were excellent!"*

*"My highlights were the two keynote panels and the breakout session "How Remarkable Women Lead: What Works." These women's honest, realistic but optimistic perspectives on their jobs were inspiring and grounding."*

*"I am thankful for opportunity to network."*

**Mark your calendars!**

**Women Education Leaders in Virginia**

**National Women's Leadership Conference  
American Association of School Administrators and WELV  
October 25-26, 2013  
Hilton Hotel, Alexandria**

**15th Annual WELV Conference**

**March 20-21, 2014  
Doubletree Hotel, Charlottesville**

*More information coming soon to our website at [www.welv.org](http://www.welv.org)!*

**SUPERINTENDENT PROFILE**

*Each quarterly newsletter will feature a profile of a Virginia superintendent.*



*Katrise Perera and I met in the breakfast line during the Annual WELV conference in March. When I later contacted her about being featured in the WELV newsletter, she recalled our meeting and was happy to oblige, but requested that a phone call would be a more effective way to gather the information I needed. I talked with Katrise on a Monday afternoon following a busy day of work for both of us. I enjoyed her genuine enthusiasm for her role as superintendent as well as her willingness to speak candidly about her position and her journey.*

*- Lori Bridi, WELV Newsletter, Co-Editor*

**Name** A. Katrise Perera

**Current job title and location**

Superintendent, Isle of Wight County Schools

**Education**

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,

Candidate for Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Study, Fall 2013

Virginia Commonwealth University,

Post-Master's Degree in Administration and Supervision

Mary Baldwin College,

Master of Arts Degree in Teaching

University of Louisiana,

Bachelor's Degree in Merchandising/Marketing

**How long have you been a WELV member?** Since returning to Virginia in 2011 (apprx. 2-years)

**What led you to select a career in education?**

Katrise did not plan to become a teacher. In fact when she left for college, she promised herself that she would not go into education. However, after graduation, circumstances in her chosen field required her to look for temporary financial relief, which prompted her to apply for substituting opportunities in the Charlottesville area school district(s). She admitted that she fell in love with serving kids and facilitating their learning. Katrise returned to graduate school, pursued a master's in education, and in her words, "The rest is history... Never say never."

*Perera Profile: continued from page 3*

### **What is the most rewarding part of your current job or position?**

Katrise cites that being able to have a positive impact on a larger number of kids beyond the classroom itself as the most rewarding part of being a superintendent. She is able to put the division in a position to maximize the best potential for students. Her goal is to equalize the playing field for all students. While serving as superintendent for Isle of Wight, she has been able to obtain an iPad for all 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Perera notes, "iPads are the great equalizers. It's now every kid-- no longer the haves and the have nots."

### **Of what accomplishment are you the most proud?**

Katrise is proud of her accomplishments with the exceptional students in her district. A priority is to have these students access community based instruction. Recently, a local hotel was recognized for its cleanliness. The hotel staff noted the level of service required to earn such an award would not have been possible without the efforts of the students in the community based instructional program. Another example of this outreach is the "Fill the Bus" program where the exceptional students solicit donations for needy kids in the community. These students are positively giving back to the community while learning job skills. Katrise says these students inspire her. "They are constantly impacting our community... they are truly an example of how community citizens can contribute and not just take... Like these kids, I can do more. They make me feel inadequate."

### **What are some of your hobbies?**

After a moment of laughter when I asked this question, Katrise admitted she loves to dig her toes into the sand and enjoy the sunshine. "A chair, a book, the sun, and your toes in the sand--that's my happy place ...when there are no problems that need resolving." She also enjoys spending quality time with her family and learning as much as she can about what's current in education.

### **What is your favorite quote?**

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

-Benjamin Franklin

Katrise remarks that as educators we can tell, teach, or show. "When you show kids how to do something they learn more. It used to be that we all arrived at the schoolhouse and were told or given knowledge. Today, we are seeing a need for educators to become more facilitators of learning because kids are showing up with knowledge at their fingertips that they can automatically apply. Our students today are no longer the people our educational system was designed to educate. As educators, it is our responsibility to help facilitate their learning because it matters to them.

## Speaker Update

During the March 2013 WELV conference, Noelle spoke about the AASA's position on ESEA reauthorization. Her letter to Senator Harkin recaps her presentation.

Noelle Ellerson, The School Superintendents Association

[http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy\\_and\\_Advocacy/files/AASA%20HELP%20ESEA%20051013.pdf](http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/files/AASA%20HELP%20ESEA%20051013.pdf)



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**GRADUATE STUDENT PROFILE**

*Each quarterly newsletter will feature a profile of a WELV graduate student.*



**Name** Maureen Jensen

**Current job title and location:** Teacher at Burley Middle School in Charlottesville

**Education (starting with most recent)**

I am currently pursuing my EdD at UVA. I have a Master's in Education from West Chester University and a Bachelor of Science in Education from East Stroudsburg University. Both of those schools are in Pennsylvania.

**How long have you been a WELV member?** Since 2012

**What led you to select a career in education?**

Both of my parents were public school teachers so I was adamant about NOT being a teacher. However, I went to a state school (in PA) that specialized in teacher education. I was there studying communications but was interested in the projects and conversations the pre-service teachers were doing/having. I took one course in education, and I was hooked.

**What is the most rewarding part of your current job or position?**

I really enjoy working with other teachers in areas that are new or scary to them. I love when a teacher comes up to me and asks something like, "I think I want to try X, can we meet to talk about it?" Helping a colleague learn, reflect, grow and change is so rewarding. I feel rewarded when I know a teacher in my building is reenergized about teaching. So many kids are going to benefit from that.

**What is one of the most challenging parts of your current position and how do you overcome the challenge?**

Two big hurdles for me:

- 1) Fostering independence in my students
- 2) Finding balance for myself.

I think we need to make student tasks "purposefully messy" some of time. Kids need to learn how to ask questions, solve authentic problems, take risks and experience failures in order to grow. To help kids overcome the belief that they need me for every step of every task, I try to provide my students with open-ended tasks and assessments. I don't do this all of the time, but a few times a week. It's about balance. Provide students opportunities to work on assignments with different levels of independence throughout a unit of study.

I think almost any teacher would agree that he or she could work every minute of every day and still not attain the ideal classroom or ideal lesson. We have to let ourselves off the hook! I am realizing (still working on it) that I am no good to anyone if I am not good to myself. I have decided that once I leave the school building, I am not doing schoolwork until I enter the school building the next morning. Admittedly, I arrive at work two hours before the children arrive and I usually stay one hour after they leave, but that's it. I no longer carry out bags or armfuls of papers and books to my car at the end of the day. I have to make this pact with myself and my family. I believe that I am a better teacher because I don't work around the clock.

*Continued on page 6*

# Stay in Touch with WELV on the Web

We welcome your feedback.

- Is there a book you would like to see reviewed in an upcoming newsletter?
- Do you know a WELV member that we could include in our superintendent or grad student profile?
- Would you like to see a particular topic included in the WELV newsletter?

Email your suggestions to  
welvnewsletter@gmail.com



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happening with WELV?  
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<https://www.facebook.com/womeneducationleadersinvirginia>

*Jensen Profile: continued from page 5*

**If you could be heard by legislators and parents throughout Virginia, what would you share regarding students and learning?**

If we want to revolutionize instruction (or at least make it a bit more innovative), we're going to have to change the way students are measured. Educators at all levels need to be investigating true performance task assessments like the ones created by Collegiate Learning Assessment. If we want students to work like experts in the disciplines they are studying, we have to assess them with tasks that are authentic. Never in my 15 years of teaching have I had to take a multiple choice test, but on a daily basis I collaborate, research, create, and problem solve. Teachers know how to make instruction congruent with assessment. In many cases, instruction is only going to be as strong as the accountability measure attached to it. The assessment needs to be of high quality for the instruction to follow suit.

**What are some of your hobbies or ways you relax?**

My three-year-old son and I like to go to yard sales early Saturday morning. (Toys should always be recycled!) It is a great way for me to unwind and put my life into perspective.

**What is your favorite quote and why?**

It is not what happens to you, it is how you react to it.

I use this quote in my classroom quite frequently. It is great to help refocus kids on the fact that they have control and power over situations as well as their emotions.