The dining hall was buzzing with tables filled with engaging conversations as participants had the opportunity to chat with strand coordinators about a variety of topics over breakfast on our final morning at Confratute. With such a wide range of expertise, the conversation was rich and personalized. Some participants were seeking more information specifically about the strands they took this week. Others focused on chatting with coordinators of strands they hadn’t been able to fit into their schedules, to help round out their week of learning. And some took the opportunity to seek out professional advice and general life wisdom from our experts.

I overheard Joe Renzulli sharing the history of his work at UConn and the changes in the field over time. He also talked about how much pride he takes in seeing how his former students have gone on to begin their own programs and find their own areas of specialization. When I stopped by Rachel McAnallen’s table she was using the analogy of a golf game to explain the importance of encouraging each student’s personal best. At Brian Housand’s table they were discussing the role of technology in education and how to make it intentional and purposeful. Carla Brigandi was asked how to begin the process of getting SEM introduced into a school. She underscored that while the triad is at the heart of the program that you can be flexible with the surrounding puzzle pieces based on your students, your resources, and your school culture. Her advice was to just “do something,” to find something small you can start with to avoid overwhelm.

I also took the opportunity to ask several of our experts for any final pieces of advice or reflections from the week. Richard Bothmer said that he was feeling so happy and felt that this was the “happiest, most cheerful group” that he’s worked with, which is high praise since this is his 42nd Confratute. Vidabeth Bensen had similar praise for the friendliness, persistence, and creativity of the screen printing students and proudly showed me pictures of the amazing prints they had created this week.

Several of our experts focused on life after Confratute. Thomas Hebert wants Confratuters to remember that when it comes to social-emotional needs that teachers need to remember to take care of themselves if they want to help others, “Self-nurturing is critical.” Jann Leppien encouraged everyone to “Carry the light forward. Be the change agent you were meant to be. Think big, start small.” Marcia Gentry offered that everyone should “Take the positive energy home and make changes for your kids.” She noted that no matter what role you have that you have a unique opportunity and responsibility for improving the lives of the children we serve. Gil Whiting reflected on his experience of teaching his strand and how the last day was challenging because it’s the moment where participants begin to engage in deeper conversations and topics that can be divisive. His takeaway is to remember that “Growth is pain, ignorance is bliss, knowledge hurts — stick with it, because the other side is learning.”

Everyone walked away from the event grateful for this one-on-one time with our experts as they prepare to return home after a full and powerful week of learning and making connections.
Thank You!

As always, we were blown away by the assortment of acts at the Confratute Variety Show. Confratute gives a huge thank you to those who shared their talents and to Ben Lacina and Gail Herman for their work in organizing our evening.

THE END IS HERE...

Confratute ends at noon today. Lunch will be served today from 11:30 A.M.-2:15 P.M. Check out between 7:30 A.M. and 12:00 Noon.

THINGS TO DO BEFORE LEAVING CONFRATUTE:

- Return keys to the Conference Housing Desk (or pay $100 per lost key charge)
- Apply and pay for graduate credit
- Sign up to complete micro-credentials
- Pay Airport Shuttle fees
- Drop off forms or surveys
- Drop off Planning & Documentation Guide for Contact Hours

Our 43rd year of Confratute will be held July 12th - 17th, 2020

We hope to see you then!

Buses will leave on time for the airport!

If you are taking an airport shuttle you should allow for enough time to pick up your luggage and meet the shuttle at the parking lot outside of Rome Dining Hall.
CONFRATUTE REFLECTIONS

What will follow you home at the end of this intense week of learning?

What kinds of beautiful risks will you take? How will you strive to recruit and retain students from diverse backgrounds?

Will you share your learning with one—or two—colleagues in your community?

How will you strive to make a difference for the students you work with?

Take some time over the next few weeks to reflect so you can let what you learned at Confratute fuel your flames over the coming year. Reach out to someone you met here for help and encouragement. YOU are now part of the family.

Don't forget to stop by the UConn bookstore before leaving today!

Stock up on summer reading, and be sure to check out the "Susannah's Picks" table for great recommendations in a variety of levels, genres, and formats.

Save the Date: CreativityCon, October 18, 2019

Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport
A Going Home Message from Joe and Sally --

Leon Lederman, the Nobel Prize winning physicist, said, “Once upon a time, America sheltered an Einstein, went to the Moon, and gave the world the laser, electronic computer, nylon stockings, television, and the cure for polio. Today, we are in the process, albeit unwittingly, of abandoning this leadership role” (Berger, 1994). Every school and classroom around the world has young people who are capable of continuing this remarkable tradition of discovery and innovation. The tradition, however, will not survive without both resolve and bold action on the parts of policymakers at all levels to change the pedagogy that drives instruction in classrooms that serve all of our young people. You don’t produce future scientists and inventors, such as Jonas Salk, George Washington Carver, Thomas Edison, Sally Ride, or Marie Curie, by forcing them to learn in a one-size-fits-all, drill-and-practice curriculum or by spending hundreds of hours preparing for state achievement tests. You don’t develop the potential of thousands of Leonard Bernsteins, Aretha Franklins, or Miles Davises without providing them with highly engaging opportunities in music that typically are only available in out-of-school opportunities and mainly to the children of the well-to-do. You don’t develop world leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Golda Meir, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Mahatma Gandhi by having them memorize endless lists of facts that today’s technology-savvy kids can find when they need them with a few clicks of their computer keyboard or iPhone. You also don’t produce the next generation of talented writers, such as Rachel Carson, Langston Hughes, and Tennessee Williams, by having them spend endless hours completing mindless worksheets in preparation for the next round of state mastery tests. It is only through expanding our pedagogy, engaging all students, and making imaginative uses of technology that schools around the world can truly engage our children and develop their creative potential, and love of learning. And remember our most important theme: It is what you do back home and what you share with your colleagues that will increase the reservoir of creative young people that will help to make the world a better place.

Best wishes for a safe trip home and joyous year of helping to change the world, one classroom, school, or district at a time.

Joe and Sally