

NH COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION VISITS RIVIER

Dr. Lyonel Tracy discusses Follow the Child initiative with education students

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Dr. Patricia Howson, Professor of Education; NH Commissioner of Education Dr. Lyonel Tracy; Dr. Ann Ackerman, Associate Professor of Education; and elementary education/general special education major Mariclare Pollicelli talk after the presentation.

Dr. Lyonel Tracy, NH Commissioner of Education, addressed more than 275 of Rivier's education students in January 2007. During two professional development workshops, Tracy discussed the "Follow the Child" initiative, which has received national attention.

Divisional Chair of Education **Dr. Charles Mitsakos** told students, "The program you're going to hear today encompasses all that the Division of Education believes about teaching and learning." The Follow the Child initiative asks teachers to commit to a personalized education for each student, documenting individual student progress and examining the physical, personal, social, and academic components of each child's education.

Tracy stressed that Rivier's future teachers must get to know the students they teach. While No Child Left Behind offers a model of educational leaders taking children somewhere and making them into people, Follow the Child puts students at the forefront. "Every student already is somebody. I've got to find out who that somebody is before I can help them," he said.

The Commissioner explained that Follow the Child assesses individual progress. "We're not comparing groups of students against each other," he said. "We've had overwhelming success."

Tracy encouraged teachers to identify resources in their schools and community that can help them, such as working with the school nurse to better understand students with medical problems. The program ended with a question and answer session. Education students had insightful questions, asking

Tracy how best to get to know students on a deeper level, ways to better help students deal with the physical aspects of their education, and how to promote arts programs in schools.

“This was a super opportunity for Rivier students,” says **Dr. Ann Ackerman**, Associate Professor of Education. She said that the Commissioner’s presentation sparked lively discussion in her Philosophy of Education class.■

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