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BIRMINGHAM AND BEYOND

New SOE Resources Reach across Alabama



For years Mark Sanders toyed with the idea of going back to school to earn his master's degree in education. But after full days of planning, teaching, and coaching at Riverchase Middle School, Sanders says the idea of driving in to UAB for night classes was always pushed back to just that—an idea. "It was always something that was in the back of my mind," Sanders says. "But when you're teaching and coaching, the thought of having to drive downtown every day for classes can seem too much. You keep thinking you'll do it someday, but then you get so tired with all the other daily responsibilities, it's just easier to put it off."

For Sanders, all of that changed thanks to the UAB School of Education's cohort

concept—an effort by the school to bring master's-level classes to counties and systems away from the UAB campus. Sanders started graduate school with an over-the-mountain high school cohort class at Pizitz Middle School. Today, he is just a few hours shy of completing work on his master's degree in secondary education. "I don't think I ever would have started graduate school if it had not been for the cohort," he says. "I didn't feel that I would be able to do it unless I quit coaching, but this program took a lot of the excuses away from me."

Enhancing Outreach

The cohort model is one of several concepts that illustrate the School of

Education's impact across the state. Even though the school's reputation in urban-education research continues to grow, programs focusing on suburban and rural areas of Alabama show that the school's efforts are more diverse than its urban setting might suggest.

"When you're part of a university that is only 30 years old, there comes a point when you have to decide what the role of the school is going to be," says School of Education dean Michael J. Froning, Ed.D. "The medical school made its decision a long time ago that it wanted to be one of the best in the world—not just a local or regionally significant school. Now we are making that same decision."

There is evidence that the school is well on its way in that direction, having announced in the past few months more than \$10 million in grant money for new projects, including efforts in teacher mentoring, special-education support, and teaching and retaining urban teachers. These projects complement existing programs, such as the school's cohorts and its involvement in the Rural Alabama Diabetes and Glaucoma Initiative—a partnership with the UAB School of Optometry in which the School of Education provides vision screening for schoolchildren in the Black Belt region of Alabama.

"We have a lot of exciting things happening with regard to our work in urban education, but it's important to us that people recognize that we are more than an urban school of education," Froning says. "There are other things layered with it that we are heavily involved in, all of which contributes to our overall goal of advancing education in many different settings and environments."

Calling All Cohorts

Of all the statewide and regional efforts involving the School of Education, the cohort concept is the most established, having offered courses over the past several years to graduate students working in rural areas, such as Cullman, Walker, and St. Clair counties. More recently, cohorts have been started in



maximizing
human potential



suburban, “over-the-mountain” school systems.

“Mainly, these courses capture specific audiences in places where the teachers want to work together as a group, and where travel to UAB can be problematic,” Froning says. In order to gauge interest in a particular area, the school arranges a meeting at a prospective site and gets feedback from potential participants.

Sanders says an e-mail from a fellow teacher told him of one such meeting being led by Cecilia Pierce, Ed.D. “She really gave the

systems can come together,” Froning says. “The important thing is that the schools be similar so that the teachers all deal with similar issues, and we can address their needs more specifically. For example, I recently taught a couple of courses in a cohort where we drew teachers from Hoover, Shelby County, Vestavia, and Mountain Brook—so we had several different systems, but we were still able to tailor the material to specific needs. That really is the strength of the program.”

By regulation, schools can only award stu-

something that was unproven. We dealt with issues that were relevant to our schools.” No Child Left Behind legislation, immigration, and problems with sex, drugs, and violence were all issues Sanders says were discussed freely. “I think everyone in my classes had similar experiences with all of the issues, which might not have been the case if some of us had taught in inner-city or especially rural schools,” he says. “In Shelby County, the schools are in higher-income areas, but there is also a lot of diversity with kids of different backgrounds



Mark Sanders goes over a project with School of Education associate professor and cohort teacher Cecilia Pierce.

impression that this program was designed for our benefit,” he says. “I still had questions about how they would work with coaches, but she let me know that they would work with me on scheduling as long as I kept up with the work everyone else was required to do.”

Once in the class, Sanders says he found he was one of several coaches, and the program did indeed make the concessions needed for them to manage all their different responsibilities.

“For a lot of teachers, that convenience is what draws them into the program,” says Pierce. “They don’t have to travel and they don’t have to come in on multiple days of the week. The advantages beyond that come from the fact that they form a sort of community. They know what goes on in one another’s working situations, and they network and build on that as they move on through future classes.”

Tailor Made

The “community” that develops in the cohort is no coincidence. Even though the convenience of taking classes closer to work may be a strong selling point for most of the participants, Froning says the method was designed so that participants would all share similar working environments. “Sometimes we will draw teachers from a particular school system if the system is very large, but we also pick locations where teachers from multiple

dents a certain amount of credit hours for classes taken off campus, so participants in cohorts still take more than half of their classes on campus at UAB. Still, says Sanders, the convenience of cohort classes may have been the impetus for him to start graduate school, but the effectiveness was what carried him through.

“The first thing that impressed me was that everyone in the class was experienced; some of them had been teaching 20-plus years,” says Sanders. “So we weren’t dealing with theory or



“These courses capture specific audiences in places where the teachers want to work together as a group, and where travel to UAB can be problematic.”

—Mark Sanders

and different cultures coming in. How we deal with ELL [English Language Learners] was something that was discussed extensively.”

Cultural Divide

Of all UAB’s educational efforts across the state, perhaps none are more timely than its English as a second language (ESL) programs.

Just like with the other cohorts, the School of Education has been involved with ESL certification programs at sites across the state, from Baldwin County in the extreme south to Dekalb County



Despite coaching duties that take up much of his after-school hours, Mark Sanders plans to earn a master's degree from the UAB School of Education later this year.

near the northeast corner.

"When you mention ESL, people think predominantly of Spanish-speaking immigrants, but for the teachers, the issues are the same no matter what the language. And the skills we teach in our certification courses work the same, regardless of the student's native language," Froning says.

Much of the certification training is done through distance learning, Froning says, but the school also sends faculty members out to lead sessions at the various sites. "Similar to the other cohorts, part of the strategy is to bring teachers together so that we can tailor the coursework to what is happening with their schools," he says. "That way, the effect is immediate, and in those ways we are able to help systems sort through some of their problems."

The School of Education currently is partnered with the UAB Graduate School and the Shelby County School System in Project Equal, an ESL-centered initiative that is funded by a five-year, \$1.3-million grant from the U.S. Department of Education. "Very few mainstream teachers are prepared to work with English-language learners," says Julia Austin, Ph.D., director of educational services for the Graduate School. "Even after children make the transition from ESL classes to the regular classroom, many still won't be able to function completely without support. So it's important for all teachers to learn to work with English-language learners."

Project Equal has several points of emphasis: Teachers who work with non-English-speaking students are taught how to incorporate those students into their classes. Bilingual teachers' assistants and aides who have been hired specifically to help teachers communicate with their students are provided support. School administrators receive instruction on laws involving resident immigrants, as well as pointers on how to interact with students and how to assist them most effectively.

Through all these efforts, Austin says the program seeks to develop new techniques for teachers to accommodate students whose English is limited. "We're putting together a program that addresses immediate needs and helps build for the future," she says.

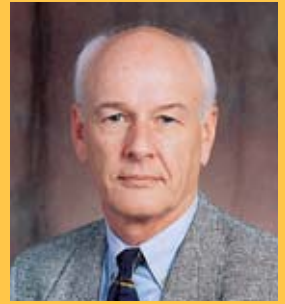
Reaping Rewards

Like so many efforts in education, rewards for some of these statewide efforts may not be apparent for years to come, but already the effects can be seen both in individual teachers and students and in the growing visibility of UAB in communities across the state.

"It really is a sign of how far we have come as a university," says Froning. "Our success can be attributed wholly to the spirited faculty and students who have not been content to allow this to be a one-dimensional school."

Cohort classes provide opportunities for teachers from similar working environments to share their experiences and solutions to common problems.

Pardon Our Progress



In this issue of *Outlook* readers can see just a few of the many opportunities we have in the School of Education to "show our stuff."

Our school is just a little more than 30 years old. For us to have national aspirations at such a young age may seem pretentious, but, nevertheless, we have them. In so many cases schools of education hold themselves back because they see themselves only as training grounds for the next generation of educators. That training is the most important thing any of us do, but it is not enough for the spirited faculty in our school.

Nearly all the scholars that we have on our faculty are involved in major contributions locally, across the state, and across the nation. Several are established national figures, known everywhere in their disciplines. Others are statewide leaders who have made significant contributions to Alabama's health and education scenes for years. All of us are involved locally on committees, in schools, and in teaching that next generation. Increasingly we are seeing our graduates make immediate national contributions. For example, UAB graduates have been National Association of Biology Teachers' First-Year Teacher of the Year for 2004, and the 2003 Outstanding New Professional in Health Education national award of the American Association for Health Education.

We believe that we can only do our best work locally if we are connected to broader communities across the nation. This fall that attitude has paid off for us wonderfully in that we have been successful applicants for very competitive national grants. This would not have happened if our faculty scholars were not able to make their cases believable to national reviewers. We always have several national class awards, but this fall, the results have been phenomenal in their scope. Some examples:

- Jennifer Kilgo put together a widely diverse team of scholars who will design training for professionals who deal with children facing multiple challenges related to special education.

- Debbie Voltz wrote a brilliant design for training a new generation of urban teachers and helped pull together a groundbreaking partnership of the National Urban Alliance, the College Board, and the Birmingham City Schools to support her vision.

- David Radford designed a state-of-the-art field research project to assess the qualities of the most successful mentoring styles for urban math and science teachers. Three urban universities (UAB, Houston, and Memphis) will partner with their local urban school districts.

As our success and reputation grow, our school will finally, collectively, match the contributions that so many of our individual faculty, past and present, have already made to the important national conversations in their fields. It is a pleasure to be here to support these great efforts.

Believing in the Black Belt

Bell Ensures Education Will Have Voice on Commission

WHEN ELLA BELL decided to serve on the state Board of Education, playing the role of tour guide was not on her list of priorities.

Since her appointment last year to the governor's Black Belt Commission, however, that's exactly what Bell hopes to become. After all, she can talk all day about the need for increased funding in her schools, but she says that until people see those conditions firsthand, some of the situations are hard to believe.



As a member of the Black Belt Commission, Ella Bell is working to make sure the educational needs of the region are not pushed aside.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind

"I have traveled throughout the district to all 20 counties, and I have seen some things that literally made me cry," says Bell. "I don't want to go into this commission like some begging wimp with my hand out. I want to actually show people what these students and teachers deal with so that we can talk knowledgeably about the problems and get things to a point where we can move forward."

Bell's district includes schools in all of the counties in the Black Belt region except Hale County. When Bell learned that the governor was putting together a commission that would work toward improving the economic infrastructure of the area, she says it seemed natural for education to be a major factor. But with so many schools in such remote locations, Bell knew it would be a challenge to make people understand the extent to which some necessities are going unmet.

"I want to do a documentary of sorts," says Bell. "I want to go through this district, and I want to show them every school that is being used that needs significant renovation and restoration upgrades. I don't want to go in and complain that these schools are poor or forgotten, or to seem to be accusing someone else of letting these schools go. Instead, I want to put it there in front of them and let everyone see what the specific problems are."

Seeing, Believing

This won't be the first time Bell has used visual aids to make a case for improving her schools. When she discovered that one of the counties in her district still had schools using outdated coal-burning furnaces, Bell had a PowerPoint presentation put together showing the furnaces with information about the potential for negative health effects.

"When I found out about that, my number-one goal for that county was to remove all the coal-burning furnaces," Bell says. "With all the research we have showing the correlation between these furnaces and rates of respiratory infections, there is no way teachers and students in our state should be required to teach and learn in that kind of environment."

There are many other areas in need of improvement, Bell says, and the needs vary greatly throughout the district. In well-populated counties such as Montgomery, for example, there are new schools with modern library resources and the kind of attractive outer appearance that she says should be the standard for all schools. In other places,

however, one finds the opposite.

“I’ve seen schools that, for all practical purposes, have no business standing, they are in such states of disrepair,” Bell says. “I’ve seen libraries for 12 grades that are as small as this little office I sit in, and I’ve seen libraries with tattered and torn paperback books with no significant depth of research materials.”

Through the efforts of Governor Riley and senator Hank Sanders, Bell says she was able to ensure that all the coal-burning furnaces were removed from the schools by this winter. But not all the issues facing these schools can be so easily rectified.

Heart of the Matter

“The lack of funding is always a big issue,” Bell says. “There are so many things that could be improved through better funding.”

For that to happen, Bell says, it’s imperative that education be a major point of emphasis for the Black Belt Commission. “When schools are so far removed from urban areas, there are different issues that teachers have to face,” Bell says. So even though schools such as the UAB School of Education are making efforts to train teachers for specific teaching environments, there still is the challenge of bringing such highly trained teachers into poorer areas of the state.

“Communities have to understand that without a strong economic base, it’s hard to attract teachers who have expansive knowledge in specific subject areas,” Bell says. “When you can’t pay the salaries that some of the more affluent suburban school districts can pay, it’s difficult to attract the numbers of quality teachers that are needed to improve these situations. I’m hoping, of course, that the education committee of the Black Belt

If we’re talking about bringing monumental economic infrastructure to this region, then certainly we can begin the process of building the communities that are needed to support these educational advances.

With barely a thought, Bell can rattle off a long list of such needs. “We could talk about inadequate facilities; the absence of specialized teachers in some of the higher levels of math, science, and foreign languages; or the need for more advanced technology and training. And we could certainly talk about the inclusion of the Alabama Reading Initiative in most of the schools. But along with all that, there should be an emphasis on the need for communities themselves to put a higher premium on education. When people in the community begin to recognize the importance of higher-quality education in their schools, that’s when you see the system begin to work aggressively to change laws so that local funding can be increased in a significant way.”

Commission will come up with some innovative ways to attract teachers to these areas. If we’re talking about bringing monumental economic infrastructure to this region, then certainly we can begin the process of building the communities that are needed to support these educational advances.”

The UAB School of Education has long been involved in efforts to improve quality of life in the Black Belt region. In addition to the graduates who have gone on to teach in Black Belt school systems, the school also has helped organize eye exams for school children as part of the Rural Alabama Diabetes and Glaucoma Initiative, as part of a partnership with the UAB School of Optometry.

ELLA BELL RESUMÉ

Currently employed with the Drop Out Prevention Center, Alabama State University	the City of Mosses in Lowndes County
B.S., Tuskegee University, 1969	Three Citations from the governor for State Combined United Way Campaign
Master’s degree in educational supervision, Alabama State University, 1974	Montgomery Area United Way record-setting fund-raiser for the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation
Doctoral work in educational leadership (completed everything except dissertation), University of Alabama, 1974-1977	Certificate of Appreciation from Alice McKinney, chair of United Way
Tuskegee University Alumni Association	Certificate of Appreciation from Day Street Baptist Church for Women’s Day Observance
Montgomery Area United Way Board	Outstanding Leadership Award from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SISTAS Inc. (support group for women surviving breast cancer)	Outstanding Leadership Award from the Montgomery Community Action Agency
Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Montgomery Board Member	Certificate of Appreciation from SISTAS Inc.
Delta Sigma Theta Inc.	Certificate of Appreciation from National Tots and Teens Inc.
Trinity Lutheran Church, Co-Chair of Board of Stewardship	Certificate of Appreciation from Alabama Volunteers and Corrections
Chamber of Commerce National Government Committee	Leadership Award for serving as president of the PTA from Carver High School
Montgomery County Democratic Conference, Vice-Chairperson for Women’s Affairs	Outstanding Leadership Award from Trinity Lutheran School
Alabama Democratic Conference	
Spirit of Freedom Award from	





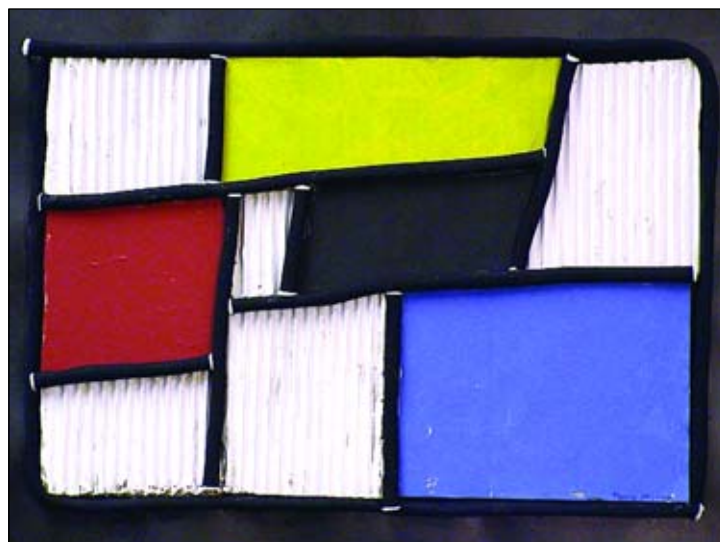
INSPIRING VISION

Visually Impaired Artists Create Lasting Images

Perfect eyesight is not always the best indicator of great vision. That's the lesson learned every year by people all over the world, thanks to a pair of art contests sponsored by the UAB School of Education that solicit art from visually impaired students.

The Helen Keller Art Contests have been a part of the school for the past 13 years and include both a statewide and international competition. The contests were started in 1984 by Mary Jean Sanspree, Ph.D., who at that time was the coordinator for blind programs for the Jefferson County School System. She brought the contests to UAB in the early 1990s when she joined the School of Education faculty.

"People really love this artwork and are amazed that people with vision loss can be such good artists," Sanspree says. "Scott Nelson, an artist who has low vision, once told me that art comes from within your brain. It's not what you see; it's thoughts and imagination and finding a way to express those things in a way that others can see."





For the inaugural state contest in 1984, Sanspree says the works were judged “out on a bench beneath a tree” at Ivy Green—Helen Keller’s birthplace in Tuscomb, Alabama. Soon after that, the show had grown to the point that the Ivy Green Property Board began inviting the winning artist to be the grand marshal of the parade at the annual Helen Keller Festival every June. Today, the winners are picked by a panel of judges, which includes members of the property board.

“Since that first year, the show has just gotten bigger and bigger,” Sanspree says. “Since Helen Keller was such a social activist and fought so hard for civil rights for persons with disabilities, we approached the Civil Rights Institute several years ago about having a show there. Today, they give us a whole gallery every year for our first show of the year.”

Over the years, art from the state contest has been shown in museums all over the state, and even gave rise to the Helen Keller International Art Contest, which also is organized and administered from UAB’s Vision Science Research Center. Typically, the winning pieces are shown for a year and then put up for sale, with proceeds going to help cover the cost of framing and the shipping for the next year’s contest.

Today, pieces can be seen hanging in the UAB School of Optometry’s Low Vision Clinic, as well as in the offices of senators and congressmen across the United States.

“We usually offer politicians the chance to hang the artwork from children in their districts, and people from all over the country purchase the art after the year is up,” Sanspree says. “Right now we have pieces hanging in the offices of Alabama Senators Richard Shelby and Jeff Sessions, as well as in Hillary Clinton’s office and in the U.S. Department of Education.”



“Art comes from within your brain. It’s not what you see; it’s thoughts and imagination and finding a way to express those things in a way that others can see.”

Hands-on Learning

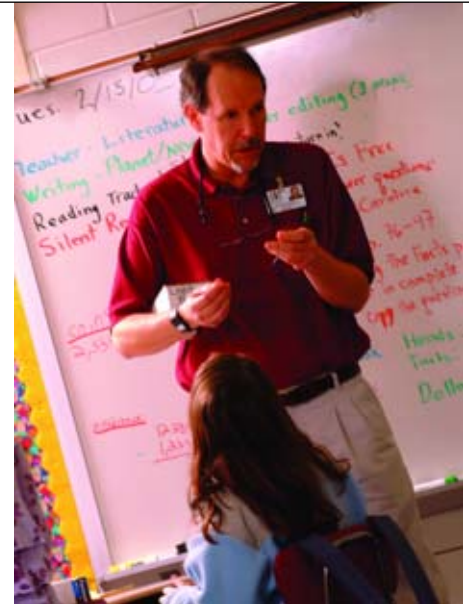
ALAHASP Teachers Make Science Come Alive

Remember the elementary school-era game, “Would you rather?” Imagine you’re back in the fourth grade. Science class rolls around. Would you rather learn about plant growth by reading about it in a textbook, or by creating a miniature garden you tend from seed, to seedling, to plant?

Beverly Radford and Joan Dawson believe that students learn science more effectively—and have more fun—through an inquiry-based, hands-on approach to teaching that gets both teachers and students involved.

The two women, both employees of UAB’s School of Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, manage a progressive, grade-school-level science-education pro-

The idea behind ALAHASP is to teach science to young children using kits that include everything the teacher and students need to learn about a specific topic; electricity, for example. Rather than simply reading about Thomas Edison’s kite in a book, students would study electricity for six to eight weeks, ending the unit by constructing a miniature house complete with working lights. Four

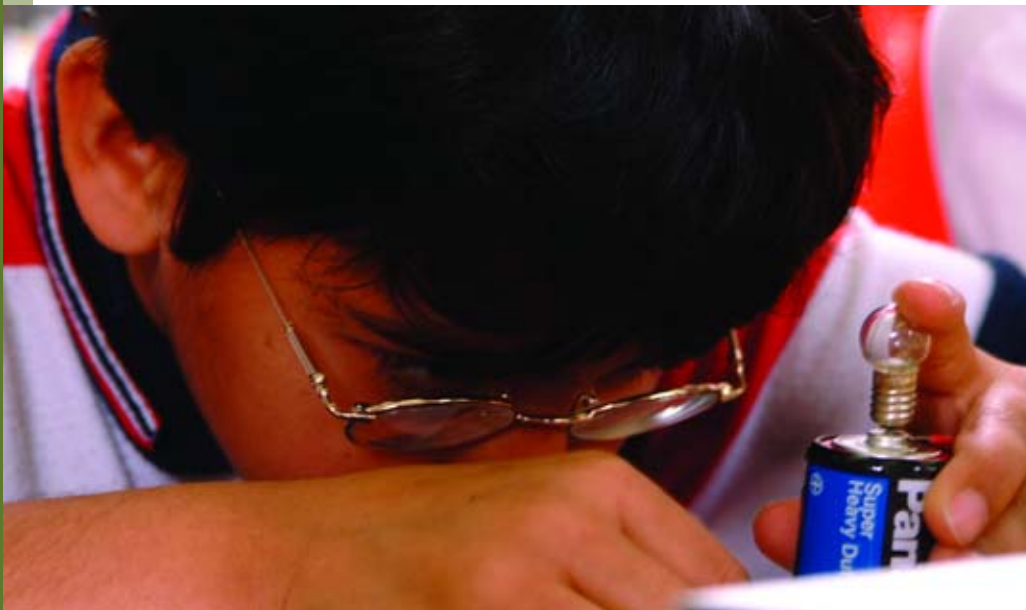


Veteran teacher Bob Rentschler says teachers don’t have to be science experts to be effective instructors with the ALAHASP program.

gram called the Hands-On Activity Science Program, or HASP, to facilitate reform of science education in kindergarten through fifth grade in the Huntsville City and Madison County schools. In 1994, after successfully expanding the program to five additional school systems, HASP provided funding to the UAB School of Education’s Stephen Underwood, Ed.D., an associate professor of science education.

At that time, the Jefferson County Board of Education released a teacher to work with Underwood to establish HASP in six school systems in the county. That teacher was Joan Dawson, a veteran who’d taught fourth-grade science for 16 of her 28 years at Leeds Elementary School. “It was such a great concept, I couldn’t say no,” she recalls.

After HASP’s initial year at UAB, Gary Sapp, Ed.D., joined Underwood as co-director, and they applied for and received a series of grants from the Alabama Commission of Higher Education (ACHE); with its own funding, the program became known as ALAHASP. In 1999, Beverly Radford, a former math teacher and program specialist at the University of Georgia, joined the staff as program manager. In 2003, the staff doubled again as Debbie Pezzillo, retired from Birmingham City Schools, and Kim Smith, retired manager of UAB’s Infectious Diseases Lab, became ALAHASP program coordinators. Also at that time, Underwood and Sapp retired as directors and Joe Burns, Ed.D., an associate professor of science education, became program



A fourth grader in Bob Rentschler’s class at Greystone Elementary learns about electricity by using a battery to light a small bulb.

gram that has expanded over the past decade throughout the state of Alabama. As of February 2004, the Alabama Hands-On Activity Science Program, known as ALAHASP, has served more than 6,600 teachers in 44 school systems, impacting more than 136,800 students from kindergarten through eighth grade.

modules per grade level provide most of the year’s curriculum.

Back in the Day

In the early 1990s, the University of Alabama at Huntsville used a grant from the National Science Foundation to start a pro-



Joan Dawson, left, helped establish HASP in Jefferson County in the mid-1990s. Beverly Radford, right, joined her as the program manager for ALAHASP in 1999.



Leah Boozer, above, works with ALAHASP materials with her class at Pinson Elementary School.

director. Through everyone's efforts, ALAHASP has secured more than \$2.3 million in grants and contracts and leveraged almost \$4 million in additional funds that have been spent on science education around the state.

Ahead of the Curve

Radford defines ALAHASP as nothing more complicated than "learning science by doing science. Alabama is ahead of the curve in science-education reform," she says. "HASP in northern Alabama school systems, ALAHASP in central and southern districts, and the statewide Science in Motion and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) are evidence of statewide commitment to move Alabama students ahead in these areas."

Leah Boozer, a second-grade teacher of 15 years at Jefferson County's Pinson Elementary School, agrees. She volunteered to be trained in the modular teaching curriculum when it was first introduced in the county.

"I felt like there was a different, better way to teach children," she says. "It's wonderful that the kids can do hands-on activities and get involved rather than just use pencils and paper. They glean so much more from it."

Boozer says even children who normally have difficulty staying focused in class are more on task and willing to learn when they are engaged in science activities.

Bob Rentschler, a veteran of the Jefferson County school system who now teaches fourth grade at Greystone Elementary in Hoover, feels ALAHASP also benefits teachers who may be intimidated by teaching science.

"A lot of teachers feel like they have to be a science expert to do it," he says. "The kits show them how to do simple hands-on experiments with the kids, and also give them all the background information they need. It's a complete package."

According to Dawson, "One of the key components of the program is professional development. Inquiry teaching requires instructional strategies radically different from those in textbook-driven science classes. So once we've helped a system decide on the curriculum modules, we conduct workshops to train the teachers in the new teaching strategies and science content, as well as what materials are in the kits and what to do with them."

The workshops are led by classroom teachers who have been teaching the modules for several years and have attended leadership institutes. As one of those teachers, Boozer says ALAHASP has changed the way she teaches. "You look at it from another perspective," she says. "Rather than examining paper-and-pencil test scores, you can assess a student's progress by observing them while they use the modules."

The teachers attending the workshops, under the instruction of the lead teacher, learn the module in the same way their students will in the classroom. "They get to be students and can translate their experience better to what their own students encounter," says Radford. "We want kids to think of their teachers as scientists, and eventually to see themselves that way."

Rentschler, another lead teacher, says ALAHASP has shown him how to integrate any subject into the science lesson at hand. "You can use mathematics, art activities; have them write a science journal," he says.

Another role Dawson and Radford take on is strengthening existing ALAHASP programs at school systems statewide, while offering support to those that are still new to this method of learning. "We hold school systems' hands and stay with them until they can sustain the program themselves," Dawson says.

Because of Alabama's commitment to science-



education reform, systems may purchase modules and refurbishment items with textbook money. However, one of the biggest issues fledgling programs face is keeping kits stocked. "It's not a textbook," Dawson says.

Dawson and Radford stress to the systems that they must develop a plan for how they will handle refurbishment of the kits. Some school systems, such as Jefferson County and Birmingham City, have centralized science-refurbishment centers. Others, such as Mountain Brook and Vestavia Hills, take care of refurbishing the kits in-house at the individual schools.

In the last decade, Dawson and Radford have seen their efforts pay off. "In schools that have embraced this system," Radford says, "students are doing better in math, reading, and other subjects. Kids are excited about learning."

Through the efforts of everyone involved in keeping ALAHASP's momentum building, the program has expanded and adapted to meet the unique needs of students at schools like the Alabama Schools for the Blind and Deaf in Talladega. "ALAHASP is an ongoing success," says Rentschler. "The ALAHASP Leadership Institutes influenced me to pursue and gain national board certification."

Alumni Profile:

CLAUDIA J. WILLIAMS, Ed.S., Ed.D.

Born to Teach



Over the years, Claudia J. Williams has put her first-hand knowledge of the classroom experience to use in her many administrative roles.

Ever since she was a child, Claudia J. Williams, Ed.S., Ed.D., has known where she belongs—in school.

“For as long as I can remember, I always wanted to be a teacher,” she says. “There was never any doubt in my mind what would happen after high school; I would go to college and become a teacher. It was a natural progression.”

That progression led Williams from a Birmingham classroom to an office from which she oversees that city school system’s curriculum and instruction programs. Along the way, she has earned advanced degrees and received numerous honors for her devotion to her profession. One of the places she has received much of her training and inspiration is the UAB School of Education.

While a career in education was a foregone conclusion for Williams, her career path has included some unexpected turns. The first came shortly after she graduated from Birmingham’s Wenonah High School. She was planning to study to become an elementary school teacher, but a training program the summer before she started at Miles College showed her strength in English.

“We had to do a lot of writing, and one of the teachers asked me if I had ever considered teach-

ing English. She said I had a calling for it.”

That assessment proved correct. She excelled in freshman English and soon switched her major from elementary education to English. She graduated from Miles College in 1969 with a degree in English and education, then started her teaching career at Munford High School in Talladega County.

After several years as a high-school English teacher, she enrolled at UAB to work on her master’s degree. She remembers many of her teachers—especially Mary Ann Manning, Ed.D.—as being helpful and encouraging. She received her M.A. from UAB in 1973.

Her teaching career eventually brought her back to Birmingham, where she worked at Jackson-Olin and Glenn high schools. Williams was honored as High School Teacher of the Year by both the Rotary Club of Birmingham and the Birmingham Board of Education.

While working as chair of the English department at Jackson-Olin, she took another unexpected turn in her career path. The principal of the school offered her a chance to use a BellSouth grant to study school administration. “I intended to return to the classroom and teach English, but I discovered after two years of training with administrators that I had lost my innocence,” she says. “I knew what was happening behind the scenes, and I needed to become an administrator.”

To prepare for her expanded role, she earned an Ed.S. from UAB in educational leadership in 1995—her second specialist degree from the university. She received her Ed.D. from UAB four years later and joined the university staff as an adjunct professor in 1999.

Moving out of the classroom, she became assistant principal of Jackson-Olin High School in 1994. She was named principal of Glenn Middle School in 1994, and she has served as principal of both Phillips and G.W. Carver high schools.

As she moved from one administrative job to the next, Williams learned that her role as an educator took on a wider perspective. “As a principal, you can set a climate and a culture for an entire school, not just a single classroom. You can grow teachers and cultivate excellence; you can set the pace for a school.”

She believes the office of principal gives an educator a unique power. “The power comes from being a servant. It’s a nurturing role. You’re changing the way teachers do their job, making things better.”

However, Williams found that she missed her classroom once she became a principal. She sometimes offered to fill in for her teachers so she could continue having interaction with her students.

HELLOS AND FAREWELLS

The UAB School of Education faculty, staff, and students warmly welcome new faculty and staff listed below.

HELLOS

Yvonne Law, Sandra Sims, Ed.D., Caroline Davis, Jonathan McNair, Andrea Patterson, Srinivas Damaraju, Naveen Koduri, Deepak Premnath, and Melissa Freeman.

FAREWELLS

Tanya Duff, Miranda Harris, Kathy Lowe, and David Luellen, Ed.D.

She continued to climb the administrative ladder of the Birmingham city school system, moving to the central office in 2002 to serve as senior executive director for Area II schools. Soon she was named the system’s administrator for curriculum and instruction. “In my current job, I have the opportunity to orchestrate and organize training for principals—to help them become better leaders.”

She oversees a busy training schedule—especially in the summer, when many people think educators are idle. “School is all about the quality of instruction—to make sure every child receives a quality education.”

Williams says UAB has been a valuable resource throughout her career.

“The people have always made themselves available. We can talk for hours about our ideas for education, and they help facilitate the plans we come up with.”

In her role as a school administrator, Williams has continued to receive professional honors and recognition. She was named the Most Outstanding Educational Leadership Graduate Student at UAB, she received the Trailblazer Award from Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, and she was selected as a member of the National Assessment Governing Board of the U.S. Department of Education. She was also a member of the 2001-2002 class of Leadership Birmingham.

Looking over her various roles as an educator in Birmingham, Williams says one of the biggest challenges she has faced has been finding the resources to make her ideas become reality.

“Sometimes we have had money problems and other resource problems,” she says. “But now we have a board of education that understands what teachers need and is supportive. Things are getting better.”

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SCHOOL NOTES

UAB Associate Professor Deborah L. Voltz, Ed.D., has been named director of the School of Education's new Urban Education Project.

The Urban Education Project is a new initiative to develop research, programs, and policies aimed at raising academic achievement in Birmingham metropolitan area schools. School of Education faculty involved with the Urban Education Project will collaborate with Birmingham City Schools, other metro-area school districts, and several non-profit organizations.

As the Urban Education Project's director, Voltz is coordinating the UAB Training and Retaining Urban Student Teachers (TRUST) Initiative, a federally funded partnership grant awarded to UAB. The partnership includes the Birmingham City Schools, the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education and the College Board. The TRUST Initiative is designed to improve teacher retention and to prepare highly qualified teachers who can promote high levels of academic achievement in the Birmingham City Schools.

Voltz teaches in the UAB School of Education's Department of Leadership, Special Education, Foundations and Technology. Her research

focus is urban education and special education. She has been a member of the UAB faculty since 2003.

Education Outlook recently won the Grand Award for External Newsletters in this year's CASE (Council for Advancement and Support of Education) District III competition. This is the first CASE award for *Outlook*, and it is the top award in the newsletter category.

CASE is the main professional organization for those who work in institutional advancement and communications. Its membership includes more than 3,000 academic institutions in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and 42 other countries.

The last two issues of *Outlook* will be on display at the CASE District III conference in Atlanta in late February and will then be placed in the CASE III archives in Washington, D.C.

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SEND US YOUR NEWS

Do you have alumni news for *Outlook*?
If so, please contact either of the following with submissions:

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