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UAB SCHOOL
OF EDUCATION



TEACHERS OF TOMORROW

Shaping Those Who Will Shape the Future

Teacher education has special meaning at UAB. "Nobody in the country has a school of education quite like ours because we are located in a geographic area where social justice is a preeminent theme," says Michael Froning, Ed.D, dean of the UAB School of Education. "The significance of being in Birmingham, Alabama, for educators is extraordinary."

Developing the teachers of tomorrow, who will tackle these issues and others, is an ongoing challenge. But professionals who recruit teachers have at least one big selling point, Froning says. "The nature of teaching, working with children, has a built-in set of rewards. If you are making a good connection with kids, that's a

reward in itself, and it's incredibly energizing to have those moments of connection."

These connections, however, are not always enough to keep teachers in the field. A growing teacher shortage—already being heavily felt in low-income areas and in fields such as mathematics, science, and special education—is evidence of that.

"A recent study showed that 92 percent of elementary-school teachers are satisfied with their jobs after 10 years," Froning says. "But it missed a major point. The researchers talked with teachers who had been on the job for at least 10 years, but we know that many teachers don't stay on the job long enough to answer questions on a survey of that nature."

This presents a challenge for those who train teachers. "The job of teaching has changed over the years," Froning says. "It's the job of any school of education to keep up with those changes and make sure its graduates can compete and survive. We want to make sure our graduates and students understand the rigors of the job and are prepared for them."

How has teaching changed? Froning can cite numerous examples. "I was told as a first-year teacher not to worry about special-needs kids because by the time they got to the high-school level, they were mostly gone. They were put out of school or in an institution by the time they finished middle school. Nowadays, that doesn't happen. Every kid is in the classroom, and teachers need to be skilled at dealing with the entire panorama of student performance and behavior."

That has profound implications for the UAB School of Education. "The environment teachers face today is not the one they will face 25 years from now. We have to build an atmosphere that accepts change and uses it as an incentive to grow professionally."



UAB alumna Pamela Harman, who teaches earth science at Spain Park High School, is Alabama's Teacher of the Year.

{Classroom Teaching} Teachers of Tomorrow

BROOKE DODD

B.S., secondary education (2004)
Seeking master's degree in
blended program
English teacher, National Honor
Society sponsor
Gardendale High School

Brooke Dodd knows what it is like to have a teacher who changes your life. For her, that special teacher was Mike Putman, who taught English, drama, and yearbook at Bagley Junior High School near Sumiton.

"I grew up in a single-parent home, and Mr. Putman was pretty much my father figure," Dodd says. "He would tell you, face to face, how it was. When you were doing something right, he would praise you. If you were doing something wrong, he would correct you, with love. That's what I needed."

"He loved literature, and you could tell that. He could read the dictionary and make it interesting."

Dodd now is following in Putman's footsteps, passing on a love of reading to her students at Gardendale High School. "You have some kids who hate to read, but you might give them an assignment and have them come back and say, 'Wow, I read this part, and it was awesome!' When you see them catching on, it's so rewarding."

Dodd's largest class has 32 students, and she feels the time crunch that comes with juggling teaching, paperwork, and meetings. But perhaps the biggest challenge is dealing with the emotions a teacher experiences.

"Nobody ever told me what it would be like to have a student die or be killed, and I had to experience that on my own," Dodd says. "A girl who was a ninth-grader when I was student teaching an honors English class was killed in a car accident. Then last summer a boy I taught in 11th-grade English was critically injured in a car accident. He's in



a wheelchair, and he's making progress, but he's just now speaking a few words.

"Nothing prepares you for heartache like that. You feel like you become the student's parent, and you want to take care of them."

TAMELA THOMAS

M.A., secondary education (2006)
Science teacher, Leeds Middle School

Tamela Thomas looks out on her classroom at Leeds Middle School and sees a cure for cancer. It's her job to teach her students how to find it.

"We have to teach students how to become scientists," Thomas says. "You don't get that by teaching to tests. The cures for HIV and various cancers are out there. But students have to learn to think first."

The curriculum at Leeds is divided into three components—earth sciences in sixth grade, life sciences in seventh grade, and physical sciences in eighth grade. "These kids are at ages where school often is the last thing on their minds," Thomas says, "and science is a subject they think, 'What will I do with this?'"

"We try to bring everyday scenarios into the classroom, to make it come alive. And we bring in people who have careers in science, and they can tell students why they need to learn this."

Thomas grew up in Opelika and earned her bachelor's degree in biology at Xavier University of Louisiana. "When I was at Xavier, I did a lot of tutoring and mentoring through the housing authority in New Orleans. I got into being with young people, and I understood how important it is to have someone who can help them learn."

Thomas returned to her home state and entered the fifth-year master's program at the UAB School of Education. She also took part in the Urban Teacher Enhancement Program (UTEP). "UTEP involves a lot of practical applications," Thomas says. "We did some field work, observing classrooms in the urban setting. You see what works, what doesn't work, and how to adjust."

The process of adjustment is ongoing, Thomas says. "The best advice I've received from veteran teachers is, 'It takes a while.' It's no accident that some of our best teachers have been teaching for 10 years or longer."

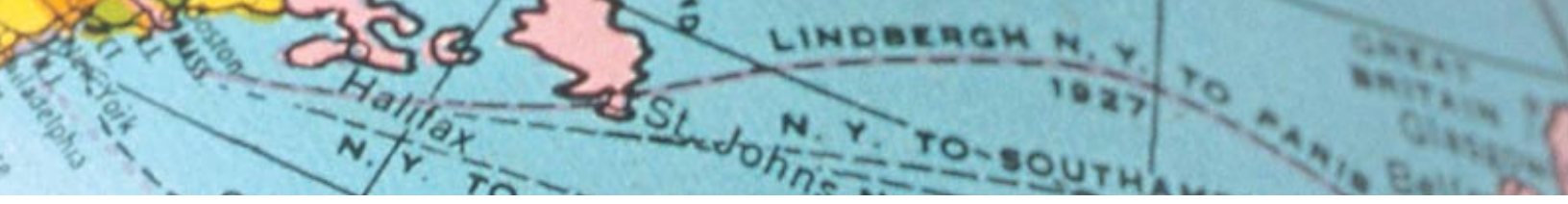


"We have to teach students how to become scientists. You don't get that by teaching to tests. The cures for HIV and various cancers are out there. But students have to learn to think first." —*Tamela Thomas*



WEB EXTRA

Hear Tamela Thomas discuss the need for creativity in teaching.
www.ed.uab.edu/education



AMY ROSATO NOVAK

*M.A., early childhood/elementary education (2007)
Student teacher, Pinson Elementary School
French teacher, Forest Park School*



As a student teacher in a second-grade classroom at Pinson Elementary School, Amy Rosato Novak quickly found out that she had also become a relationship expert.

“You are part counselor, part psychiatrist, part mother, part friend,” Novak says. “The children would confide things in me that I’m pretty sure no one else knew. One child would tell me, ‘I have a crush on so- and-so.’ Another would say, ‘My mom and dad are fighting all the time.’ They open up and trust you so much. You really hold their future in your hands.”

Novak owes her career choice to some wise advice. She earned a bachelor’s degree in English at UAB and worked as a volunteer in the hematology/oncology unit at Children’s Hospital, with plans to get a master’s degree in social work. “My husband, who was my fiancé at the time, said, ‘What do you want to do in your life?’ I said, ‘I want to work with kids, I want more than two weeks off a year, and I want to make a difference.’ He said, ‘Have you ever thought of becoming a teacher?’ I found out about the fifth-year program at the UAB School of Education, and that seemed

“You are part counselor, part psychiatrist, part mother, part friend. The children would confide things in me that I’m pretty sure no one else knew. One child would say, ‘I have a crush on so-and-so.’ Another would say, ‘My mom and dad are fighting all the time.’” —*Amy Rosato Novak*

like the perfect route for me to take.”

Novak was impressed with the curriculum at UAB. “Some people think that getting an education degree is easy. But the program is rigorous; it involves a lot of work and studying a lot of theory.

“For example, you are required to take special education classes. We have inclusive classrooms now, so you probably will be dealing with children who have learning or physical disabilities. UAB has had the foresight to see that teachers need an understanding of special-needs children.”

TROYCE MCCULLAR

*Fifth-year alternative master’s student, special education
Student teacher, Cold Springs Elementary School*

Troyce McCullar was inspired to go into teaching by his son, McKenzie.

“He suffered from ADD [attention deficit disorder], and I saw the trials and tribulations he went through to finish high school,” McCullar says. “There is such a need for special-education teachers, and I wanted to help kids who had the kind of challenges McKenzie had.”

McCullar had earned a bachelor’s degree in business from UAB in 1996, and he thought about returning to UAB for a master’s in education so he could teach while McKenzie was still in school. But like many teens, McKenzie was not wild about the idea of having his father around while he was a student at Cold Springs High School in Cullman County.

So McCullar, approaching his mid-50s, put off entering the master’s program until August 2006. Less than one month later,

McKenzie was killed in an automobile crash. “He was 18 and had just enrolled at Wallace State Community College in Hanceville.”

McCullar’s death has helped confirm McCullar’s move to a career in education. “It’s sort of rough competing with kids who are about half my age,” McCullar says. “But it’s been a totally enjoyable experience. I’m a little computer-illiterate, so it’s been hard to get back into that. And there is quite a bit of work at the master’s level. When I was taking undergraduate business classes, our syllabus would be one or two pages. Now they are 10 to 15 pages.”



McCullar’s wife is an accountant, and they live on a farm near Smith Lake. He served in the U.S. Army and worked in sales before starting a car-restoration business called Car Farm. He also raises cattle.

McKenzie played a major role with the business and farm chores, and McCullar says his son’s spirit will be at the heart of his work in special education. “For my wife and me, he’s the inspiration for everything we do.”

{Classroom Teaching} Teachers of Tomorrow



DIANNA BUSH

*M.A. student, elementary education
Fourth-grade teacher, West Blocton
Elementary School*

When Dianna Bush feels overwhelmed in the classroom, she remembers her grandmother. “My grandmother, before the Depression, was paid by the government to go to the University of Florida during the summer to get a training certificate,” she says, “and she would walk from farmhouse to farmhouse at night after the labor in the fields was finished and teach people how to read. Then she had a one-room schoolhouse, and she taught the smallest kids right up to about eighth grade—though most boys dropped out around fourth or fifth grade because they had to work in the fields.”

Bush says that hearing these stories made her realize what an honor and a privilege it is to be part of the education system in America. “Many people put down public education, but we live in a country where everybody can go to school,” she says. “I tell my students all the time that in some other countries, if you’re a female, you don’t get to go. If you don’t have enough money, you don’t get to go. It’s not a matter of choice—but in America, people have died so that we have these rights and freedoms.”

As an educator in the rural community of West Blocton, Bush spends a lot of time

“Many people put down public education, but we live in a country where everybody can go to school. I tell my students all the time that in some countries, if you’re a female, you don’t get to go. If you don’t have enough money, you don’t get to go.” —*Dianna Bush*



WEB EXTRA

Hear Dianna Bush talk about the inspiration she received from her grandmother.
www.ed.uab.edu/education

teaching her students about technologies and resources that, at least for now, they may not have as much access to as students in larger cities. She got a boost when her school was one of 20 chosen to receive a 21st-Century Technology grant from the Alabama Best Practices Center earlier this year. “In February I did a whole day with my kids where we didn’t use any textbooks,” she recalls. “We used the Internet for everything—for math, for science, for social studies, for English, for poetry, for reading, everything we did that day. The other fourth-grade classes got mad because they wanted to do it, too, so I spent that whole day with them, and I ended up teaching that same class three times.”

“I feel as though the technology grant presents a big responsibility—there’s more that I have to teach, because it’s going to make a difference for these children in 10 years. I’m teaching children whose jobs may not have even been created yet. By the time my fourth graders are two years out of high school, they’ll be doing jobs that aren’t even thought of right now. That makes it that much more important for my kids, who are already underexposed, to get this training.”

Bush taught in Shelby County for several years after getting her undergraduate degree from Troy University, but took a break when she and her husband decided to start a family—“and one year became nine years,” she says with a laugh.

Then she heard the call to return to the classroom, and Bush began a lengthy journey to update her teaching certificate and get her master’s degree in elementary education from UAB. It hasn’t been easy—over the course of

that journey, Bush briefly had to serve as her family’s breadwinner when her husband’s job was downsized by his company; she juggled a teaching job and three young children, and her mother also passed away during that time.

“I wish she would’ve been able to see me graduate with my master’s degree,” says Bush, who is scheduled to complete her studies this December. “But God always provides. There’s a light at the end of the tunnel, and we’re about to come out on the other side.”

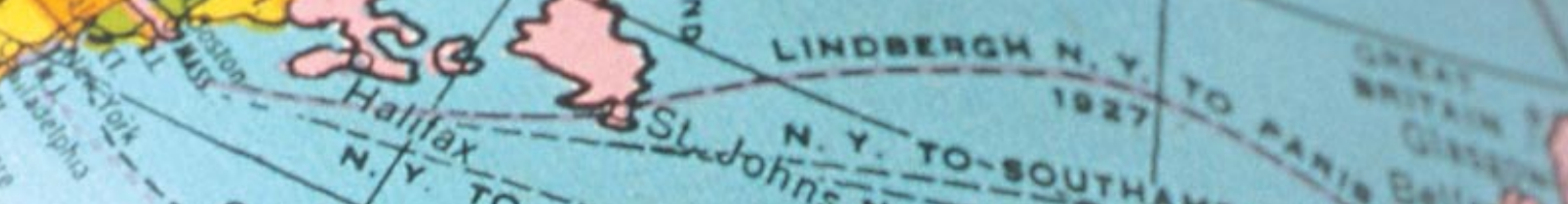
AMELIA HATTAWAY

*B.A. student, early childhood/
elementary education*

“I wanted to help people, but I knew I wasn’t good with blood, so I didn’t want to be a doctor,” says Amelia Hattaway with a laugh as she recounts her decision to go into teaching.

But there were other reasons besides the red stuff. “I’ve wanted to be a teacher since I was younger. I had a second-grade teacher I absolutely adored, and she inspired me. She





was just really open and loving and made everybody feel comfortable. I can remember more from her class than just about any other—she was that kind of person.”

Hattaway has a special interest in educational psychology and is taking courses under Maxie Kohler, Ph.D. “I’m in the honors program in the School of Education, and I’ll probably do my thesis project with her,” she says. “This field is all very new to me—it’s less about what a student is actually learning than about how that student develops educationally, intellectually, and even with their peers. It’s a more in-depth study of that kind of thing.”

Hattaway hopes to eventually become principal of an elementary school. “A principal can make or break a school,” Hattaway says. “Respect is a big thing—the students have to respect a principal in order for everything to go smoothly. The hardest thing is to decide both what’s best for the students and what’s best for the school.”

A focus on individual students is important, Hattaway recognizes, in a day and age where teachers and principals are called upon to play bigger roles in their students’ lives than ever before. “That’s actually one of the most exciting parts about being a teacher—there’s so much you can do for a child,” she says. “Teachers are the people who make kids really want to learn or to further their education.

“And it goes beyond the classroom. To take care of latchkey children, for example,

“I had a second-grade teacher I absolutely adored, and she inspired me. She was just really open and loving and made everybody feel comfortable. I can remember more from her class than just about any other—she was that kind of person.”

—Amelia Hattaway

principals really need to find ways to fund after-school activities for their kids. There are so many things you have to look at.”

J.T. GOSNELL

*B.A. student, secondary mathematics education
School of Education orientation leader*

Inspiring enthusiasm in others has never been a problem for J.T. Gosnell. He got involved with the Ambassador Program as a freshman, joined a fraternity, became a UAB



“When I was in grade school, I really struggled with fractions. But a special teacher worked with me until I finally grasped the concept. I want to help my students experience that kind of ‘a-ha’ moment.” —J.T. Gosnell

cheerleader, and was even the first runner-up in last year’s Mr. UAB competition. “That’s just my personality,” he says with a chuckle. “I love being involved. I like to become a part of something and just dive right in.”

Gosnell also got the opportunity to do some teaching of sorts as an orientation leader last summer. “It was a lot of fun, and I met so many people—not just other orientation leaders, but new students,” he says. “There were probably about 1,500 freshmen that I got to meet. I couldn’t memorize every single one of their names, but it’s kind of cool when

someone comes up to you and says, ‘Hey, you were my orientation leader.’

“I’ve just really enjoyed the chance to present UAB to people and tell them all the things I love about it.”

A School of Education student focusing on secondary mathematics, Gosnell hopes someday to get students just as excited about numbers as his incoming freshmen were about UAB. “I really enjoyed math in high school, particularly algebra,” he says. “I had a teacher who made sure it wasn’t boring—and he challenged us to do better, rather than just getting it done.

“We got to do things that were a little bit out of the ordinary, even getting into physics a little. We dropped an egg in a crate to test our ability to design a crate that would protect the egg; he presented a lot of different projects, even having students competing against each other, so that it wasn’t just lessons and taking tests.”

Gosnell’s goal is to capture the interests of high-schoolers in much the same way. “Everyone I’ve talked to pretty much hated math in high school,” he says, “so I thought that would be something worth doing—to try to help people enjoy it and make it something interesting rather than something you just have to get through.”

{Leadership} Teachers of Tomorrow

DONNA MITCHELL

*M.Ed., educational leadership (1990)
Principal, Inglenook K-8 School*



Donna Mitchell enrolled at Alabama A&M to become an engineer, but she left as a teacher.

It all happened one day after band practice, when Mitchell stopped to watch a group of special-needs children and their teachers. “I used to walk past them all the time, but one day I sat down on top of a hill and watched for two hours. I saw how the kids interacted with the teachers and how the teachers responded. I had an aunt who had special needs, and these children reminded me of the behaviors my aunt had displayed.”

That experience convinced Mitchell to change her major. But she still had a lot to learn. “When I started teaching in 1977, there were so many things we didn’t understand about special education,” says Mitchell, who is now in her 31st year as a teacher. “I learned so much in my undergraduate program, but nothing prepared you for what you would run into in the classroom. This was uncharted ground.”

Considerable progress has been made during her career, Mitchell says. “The teaching methods have changed, so we now can recognize a student’s deficit area and give them immediate help. When I started, no one understood the timelines involved with special

“I got into leadership because there was so much I wanted to see done with special education. One of my mentors told me that the only way to effect change is to become a leader.” —*Donna Mitchell*

needs. It might be two years from the time a student was identified until he received services.”

Mitchell moved into administration after teaching at six Birmingham schools. “I got into leadership because there was so much I wanted to see done with special education. One of my mentors told me that the only way to effect change is to become a leader.”

Retirement is not on the immediate horizon for Mitchell. She particularly enjoys working in the K-8 environment at Inglenook. “The thing I love about it is that you have your children from K-8, and you can effect change because you have them that long. In the K-5 format, they leave you and get indoctrinated into something else and start all over again.”

Training in special education is valuable for all teachers, Mitchell says. “Special education taught me that each child is unique. You need to find their successes and build off those.

“You can see those successes down the line. I recently saw a young man I had taught at Center Street Elementary. He works in housekeeping at UAB Hospital, and I ran into him at Wal-Mart. He still lives at home, but he works at UAB, and his parents are so proud of him.”

MARTIN NALLS

*Administrative certificate (2000)
Ed.S. (2004)
Ed.D. candidate
Principal, Hoover High School-
Freshman Campus*

The ninth grade is a pivotal time for many students, and Martin Nalls has a special opportunity to help shape freshman education.

“The ninth grade is the first component

of your high-school resume,” Nalls says. “If you perform poorly in the ninth grade, it will reflect on your high-school transcript forever. Some national studies have connected high dropout rates to poor performance in the ninth grade. If you get off to a good start, it’s much easier to complete high school.”

Nalls is principal of Hoover High School-Freshman Campus, which opened this fall with about 650 students. The new facility is about two miles from the main Hoover campus.

“There has been a movement to address the transition from middle school to high school,” Nalls says. “Some students have trouble, especially at a mammoth high school like

“Some national studies have connected high dropout rates to poor performance in the ninth grade. If you get off to a good start, it’s much easier to complete high school.” —*Martin Nalls*



Hoover, with more than 2,000 students.”

Concerns about that transition led to the freshman-campus concept. “Ninth-grade campuses are very popular in Texas, and we visited three or four campuses there,” Nalls says. “Several articles have talked about key transitions in the education process—from fifth to sixth grade, from high school to college. But the ninth grade is seen as a potential bottleneck.”

Nalls earned a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice at UAB in 1993, with plans to become a police officer. But after six weeks at a police academy, he realized law enforcement was not the career for him. “I thought about my K-12 years and realized I had only missed two days of school, and that was because I had the chickenpox in second grade,” Nalls says. “That demonstrated that education was at the forefront for me.”

Nalls taught social studies at Pleasant Grove High School before becoming assistant principal at Fairfield High School. He is in his seventh year at Hoover and is in the dissertation stage for his doctorate at UAB.

“I want to look at the impact of interdisciplinary teams on student achievement at the high-school level,” Nalls says. “Hoover is one of the few schools in the Southeast that has interdisciplinary teams at the ninth-grade level. I want to compare our academic achievement to a school with similar demographics but without interdisciplinary teams.

“We have a team of core teachers—in English, math, social studies, and science—and they teach the same group of 100 to 120 students. They develop lesson plans that are connected among the disciplines, rather than teaching the concepts in isolation.”

MICHAEL MANNING

B.S., secondary education (1991)
M.S., educational leadership (2007)
Ph.D., student, leadership
Assistant principal, Corner Elementary School



“I like to take on a lot of challenges—that’s just how I was raised. Maybe it’s also one of my problems. I just don’t know how to say no.”—*Michael Manning*

Michael Manning can’t resist an opportunity. From the moment he started his teaching career at Warrior Middle School in 1991, he was handling some administrative and disciplinary duties. At Warrior, Bagley Junior High in Dora, and Corner High School, he taught English and drama courses, in addition to coaching football, baseball, and basketball.

“I like to take on a lot of challenges—that’s just how I was raised,” Manning says. “Maybe it’s also one of my problems. I just don’t know how to say no.”

Now the assistant principal at Corner Elementary School, Manning says he’s been motivated by the chance to affect children’s lives both inside and outside the classroom. “I was taught early on that learning is a very personal thing,” he says, “and the more you

can be involved with students outside the classroom, the better the classroom environment will be.”

Corner’s high school and elementary school are right next to one another—with just more than 1,000 students total—and Manning says the wide range of ages, while challenging for an administrator, has also opened doors to a number of promising opportunities.

“We had more than 110 high-school sophomores and seniors come into the elementary school over the course of the past year as part of our peer-helpers program, and they were invaluable in providing quality reading instruction for our kindergarten through fourth-grade students,” he says. “Our teachers absolutely love that about having the high school here. Our peer-helper program also helps with the physical-education program, and those students provide role models and mentors for the younger students. They do

a great job—many of them have decided to become teachers themselves as a result of the work they’ve done in the classroom with the younger children.”

Manning earned degrees in both teaching and school administration at UAB and is currently working on a doctorate in educational leadership. Eventually, he says, he’d like to be the principal of his own school.

“One of my UAB professors, Foster Watkins, continually encouraged us to stir the pot, not to settle for second best, and challenge the status quo,” he says. “I have some very definite ideas about some of the things I’ve learned—as a teacher, coach, and administrator—and I would love to see how those things might pan out in my own school.”



WEB EXTRA

Hear Martin Nalls talk about his new position as principal of Hoover High School-Freshman Campus.
www.ed.uab.edu/education

{Counseling} Teachers of Tomorrow

CINDY WILEY

M.A., secondary education (1990)

M.A., counseling (2004)

Counselor, Oak Mountain High School

Cindy Wiley came from the right bloodlines to be an effective school counselor. Her mother was a teacher, and her father was a minister and then a pastoral counselor. “He had the counseling part of it, and my mom had the education part, so in a sense I really followed in both of their footsteps,” she says.

Wiley now counsels 10th-, 11th-, and 12th-graders at Oak Mountain High School in Shelby County. She originally taught French for 18 years, but then earned her master’s in counseling from UAB, and when a counseling position came open at Oak Mountain, she decided she was ready for the challenge.

And it is a challenge, she says. “It’s amazing, the difference between these kids when they get here as ninth-graders and when they leave as graduating seniors,” she says. “In between, you’re trying to help them make wise decisions and learn that they’re going to fall on their faces at times and make some bad decisions, but that doesn’t make them bad people.

“Also, academically we’re trying to help them make wise choices with respect to keeping their grades up while remembering that they still need to be well-rounded people. We’re trying to find that mix so that they can mold themselves into balanced people who have more to offer than just book smarts.”

That’s where counseling comes in, and while school counselors frequently face long odds in getting students to overcome academic issues and problems at home, Wiley says she has never lacked for on-the-job rewards.

“Counselors and teachers see students more than the parents do sometimes,” she says. “And I’ve had a couple of students whose parents have died—my mom died



when I was 17, when I was a junior in high school, so I can very much empathize with these kids.

“There was one child specifically who really didn’t have a lot of family support—she and I got to be very close, and we had a very special relationship where she felt like she could come to me and talk about anything. Now she’s gone off to college on her own merit and taken care of herself completely. I’m so proud of her.”

MELBA HOLLOWAY

*Student-affairs specialist,
UAB Undergraduate Admissions
M.A. student in counseling*

Melba Holloway realized she wanted to work with students while she was still in an unrelated field—public relations.

Holloway was working in a communications role at the School of Business at Miami University in Ohio. She filled in for a sick coworker who was director of a leadership program and led an honors banquet in her absence.

After coming to UAB and coordinating the Connections program for at-risk students, Holloway had a particularly memorable conversation with a student.

“I was trying to help her figure out what she wanted to do in her career, and we were able to help her get on the right path,” Holloway says. “She said, ‘Thank you for encour-

aging me. I had felt down because I didn’t know what to do, and the time you spent with me made me feel more confident.’

“She was 19, and I thought, ‘What if I could help reach children earlier? That’s the moment when I decided I wanted to work with younger children and that counseling, rather than teaching, would be the best fit for me.’

Holloway grew up in Florida and earned a bachelor’s degree in communications at Loyola University New Orleans. After working in public relations in Louisiana and Ohio, Holloway moved with her family to Birmingham. She quickly turned her attention to UAB, landing a job in the Undergraduate Admissions office and enrolling in the master’s program in counseling at the School of Education. She expects to graduate in fall 2008.

“I think working in communications helped me realize I wanted to go into education,” Holloway says. “Whenever I was putting together a campaign or an event, and we would meet with the client or target group, I realized I wanted to work closely with people.



And I thought it would be very rewarding to work one-on-one with students.”

Counseling involves more than college guidance, Holloway says. “The most important thing we do might be helping students see the specific path that is right for them. And college might not be it for everybody. There are many trade opportunities.”



WEB EXTRA

Hear Cindy Wiley talk about the impact a counselor can have on high-school students. www.ed.uab.edu/education

{Research} Teachers of Tomorrow

TSUGUHIKO "HIKO" KATO
M.A., early childhood education (2003)
Ph.D. candidate
Graduate research assistant, UAB



The inspiration for Tsuguhiko "Hiko" Kato's research comes from the work of Jean Piaget, the Swiss developmental psychologist.

Piaget suggested that children construct their knowledge through interacting with the environment. He found that play, once seen as aimless and of little importance, was an important and necessary part of cognitive development.

Kato is conducting research at UAB that builds on Piaget's theories. "I was introduced to Piaget in Dr. Constance Kamii's class at UAB," Kato says. "In studying his work, I came across ideas I had never thought about before. His ideas made sense to me, and I knew this was an interest I wanted to pursue in my graduate work."

At the heart of Kato's doctoral dissertation are the connections between children's ability to reason and their ability to remember. He is studying a group of 90 children, ages three to five, who are from working-class families in his native Japan. The research hypothesis is drawn from Piaget's constructivist theory: The more developed a child's logico-mathematical knowledge (reasoning), the better the child can remember.

Kato grew up in Hiroshima, Japan, and came to the United States when his father

was a visiting professor at UAB in 1993. He completed his bachelor's degree in political science and worked for a trading company in Japan. During the time in college and in business, he had developed an interest in welfare issues and nonprofit organizations and decided to return to study in the United States. His career path veered in a new direction when he enrolled at UAB and was introduced to constructivist education and Piaget's theory.

Professors Constance Kamii, Ph.D., and Maryann Manning, Ed.D., have been mentors for Kato at UAB. His primary interest is preschool education.

"I had no teaching experience when I came to UAB, but I wanted to be a part of education," Kato says. "By understanding how kids learn, I can help preschool and primary teachers to teach better."

JASON FULMORE
M.S., health education (2006)
Ph.D. student, health education
Educational research consultant

When Jason Fulmore graduated from the University of Florida in 1992, spending more time in a classroom was "the furthest thing from my mind," he says. He followed his wife to Colorado and was planning on working in community or worksite health when he got involved in writing a grant for a coordinated school health program called WellKids.

The program focused on low-income elementary-school students in Denver's inner city. "These kids were not getting any kind of health education at all at that point," Fulmore remembers. "So we got funded to develop this curriculum for a pilot program in four schools, and it was at that point that I realized I enjoyed the interaction with the kids, I enjoyed being able to talk to them about different ideas, and it just felt right."

Fulmore ended up teaching for 12 years before coming to UAB to earn a master's degree and, later, a doctorate in health education and promotion. His research focuses

on working with adolescents, particularly athletes, to educate them about proper health behavior.

It's a tricky subject and a unique audience, he says, so whatever messages a teacher uses have to be finely crafted. "Whether you're talking about anabolic steroids or skin cancer or general nutrition, you really have to be cognizant of the messages you develop and how you frame them," he says. "For instance, I personally try to shy away from 'fear appeals' or trying to 'scare them straight'—in my teaching experience, I've really tried to focus on being positive: 'You want to do these things because of the positive consequences of doing them,' not the negatives."

Eventually Fulmore hopes to teach other aspiring educators how to craft similar messages. "I would like to pair my background in health education with a faculty position and actually teach human sexuality or stress management to aspiring undergraduates and master's-level students who are going to be future health educators."



"I personally try to shy away from 'fear appeals' or trying to 'scare them straight'—in my teaching experience, I've really tried to focus on being positive."

—Jason Fulmore



{Language and Fine Arts}

Teachers of Tomorrow

JEANNE BOOHAKER

B.A. (2005)

M.A., *English as Second Language (ESL)* (2007)

ESL teacher, *Berry Middle School*



When people think of English as a Second Language (ESL), they probably envision a teacher working with a child whose native language is Spanish.

But Jeanne Boohaker, ESL teacher at Berry Middle School in Hoover, says that is not always the case. “This year we had a student from Guinea, and he spoke the Susu language. We’re seeing a lot more immigrants in Hoover who speak Arabic. And there are a lot of families who speak Japanese or German, with a parent working at Honda or Mercedes.”

Boohaker understands what it is like to adjust to a new country. She grew up in Lebanon, and she and her husband were married in their native country before moving to the United States when she was 20. Boohaker focused on raising the couple’s three children, but she decided to return to college (she had two years of college in Lebanon) when her oldest daughter turned 18.

At age 40, Boohaker enrolled at UAB and

earned a bachelor’s degree in French and education. She completed a master’s in ESL in summer 2007. “It was quite intimidating to go back to school at 40, but UAB is such a wonderful place, and it caters to people of all ages.”

Instruction in ESL is critical in an increasingly diverse society, Boohaker says. “You see immigrant children in just about every school system now. In the past, teachers didn’t know how to teach them, and the students often were put into special education. Many of them were very smart kids whose only problem was that they didn’t speak the language.

“You need content presented with a specific strategy that will allow the student to comprehend the material. That’s what we do in ESL. We teach teachers how to teach these kids.”

The majority of Boohaker’s students are from Mexico, but they come from a wide range of educational backgrounds. “Your previous literary skills are very important when you learn a second language. Some of our kids from Mexico have gone to very good private schools, and that helps them pick up English. Some have had very little schooling, so you have to fill in those gaps.”

CHARLES HENRY

B.S., *music education* (2007)

Choir director, *Pinson Valley High School*

Charles Henry had plenty of opportunities to go into something other than music. After playing in the band in middle school, he put down his instrument after one semester of high school to play baseball. When he first came to UAB in 2002, he was a biology major looking forward to medical school. But music would not let him go.

“I was in the choir in high school and really had a fantastic time singing in the choir and seeing the passion our director had for both music and teaching,” Henry says. “And I saw the effect he had on a lot of my fellow students. I really didn’t think about teach-

ing when I first started college, but being in the choir in college and seeing what an even more profound effect it was having on my life, I knew that was what I wanted to do.”

Henry graduated this past spring and is now the choir director at Pinson Valley High School. “I feel like being a choir director gives you a chance to express yourself and your personality through the music, and it really gives students a chance to express themselves, too, when a lot of classroom subjects might not give them as much of a chance to do that. Music is so powerful—it just has the capability to change your life.”

It’s also an opportunity to build up students’ confidence, he adds. “I can draw on my own experiences as a singer and an athlete to say hey, it’s OK, you can put yourself out there—that just shows that you’re confident and you’re proud of what you’re doing.”



“Being a choir director gives you a chance to express yourself and your personality through the music, and it really gives students a chance to express themselves, too.”

—Charles Henry



WEB EXTRA

Hear Jeanne Boohaker talk about the rewards of teaching *English as a Second Language*. www.ed.uab.edu/education

{Special Education}

Teachers of Tomorrow

ROD SKEENE

Seeking master's degree in special education

Everything was going well for Rod Skeene. After graduating from the University of Tennessee with a degree in ornamental horticulture and landscape design, he opened his own construction and irrigation business and became successful doing something he loved.



Then retinitis pigmentosa (RP), a genetic disease that causes progressive vision loss, nearly took all that away. "I thought I could see pretty well, I thought I could still enjoy what I was doing in more of a management role, but I was the kind of business owner who liked to roll up his sleeves and do a lot of the actual work," Skeene says. "As my eyesight got worse, I stopped enjoying it, and I had a very unsure feeling about what I'd end up doing next. I stayed confident that I'd find something eventually; I just wanted to find it sooner rather than later."

And find it he did, at the E.H. Gentry Technical Facility for hearing- and visually impaired adults in Talladega. Skeene was taking classes in computers and Braille when his skill in working with other students attracted the attention of faculty members from the UAB School of Optometry. They asked Skeene if he would be interested in becoming a teacher for the visually impaired, and after some soul searching, he said yes.

Skeene estimates that he's about halfway through the School of Education's Visual Impairments program. "I've enjoyed the teachers and staff at UAB—that they make you think," he says. "It's not just 'read the chapters and take a multiple-choice test.' It's a lot of projects, clinical hours, and group work."

Those experiences will come in handy when Skeene goes out into the world of special education, where teachers with visual impairments of their own still are not common. He explains that visually impaired students can't be painted with a broad brush—some have been blind from birth, while others have suffered from progressive vision loss like he has, and still others suddenly lose their eyesight due to accidents. But he believes his own experiences can be valuable in reaching all of them.

"I hope that I can not only tell my students what they need to know to live with their visual impairments but also show them—I think I'll have an advantage because I can say, 'I did that, and this is how you can do it,'" he says. "If I can do it, then there's no reason it can't be done."

KATRINA MCGUIRE

*M.A.E., collaborative teaching (2007)
Special education teacher, Mountain Brook High School*

As a student teacher at Pinson Valley High School this past spring, Katrina McGuire



wasn't much older than her students—which had both advantages and disadvantages.

"Discipline was harder—I think they sometimes saw me as more of a friend than a teacher," she says with a laugh, "but then I could also relate to them. I was into some of the same things that they were into, whether it was MySpace or watching the same shows they watched. It worked—it just took some time."

McGuire could relate to her students on a level that went deeper than Web sites and TV shows. Her mother is a native German speaker, and as a child McGuire was put into a remedial English class for students who needed special help; now, as a special-education teacher, she can share her experiences with students and inspire them in ways that other teachers might not.

"They'll say things like, 'If I'm in special ed, it must mean I'm dumb; I'm never going to get this,' and I'll tell them, 'I was in special ed; it worked for me'—and everything changes," she says. "They're able to talk to me more than they thought they could because I went through some of the same things they're going through."



WEB EXTRA

Hear Rod Skeene talk about his desire to show students how to live with visual impairments. www.ed.uab.edu/education

{HELLOS & FAREWELLS}

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

HELLOS – John Dantzler, Ashley Maddry, Vanessa Vega-Stamper, Beth Smith, Veronique Zimmerman-Brown, Linda Foster

FAREWELLS – Rhonda Shearin, Sandra Keith Hudson, Meredith Beatty, Gary Sapp, Maryann Manning, Anarella Cellitti

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