

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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From Normal to Extraordinary

MTSU's College of Education climbs to the top in Tennessee

Unraveling dyslexia

National Teacher of the Year Terry Weeks

Reforming teacher education in Tennessee

The impact of MTSU's \$30 million education building

Graduate studies focus

MIDDLE
TENNESSEE

STATE UNIVERSITY



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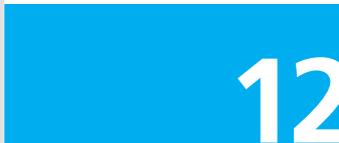
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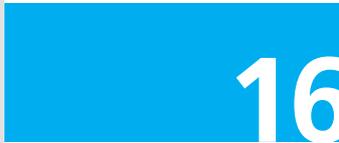
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News from the College



Heart of the Matter

A past National Teacher of the Year shares his thoughts on education in Tennessee and beyond

COVER PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

The Front Line

A recent blog post by *New York Times* best-selling author Glenn Doyle Melton provides yet another argument for why good teachers are vital to our society.

In it, Melton describes visiting her child's fifth-grade teacher to get some pointers on something many of us have struggled with—understanding fifth-grade math homework. Melton tells of a conversation between teacher and parent about how subjects like math are the least important things learned in a classroom when compared to “shaping little hearts to become contributors to a larger community.”

Melton says the teacher replied with the following story. Every Friday afternoon, according to Melton's account, the teacher “asks her students to take out a piece of paper and write down the names of four children with whom they'd like to sit the following week. The children know that these requests may or may not be honored. She also asks the students to nominate one student who they believe has been an exceptional classroom citizen that week. All ballots are privately submitted to her. And every single Friday afternoon, after the students go home, the teacher takes out those slips of paper, places them in front of her and studies them—looking for patterns. Who is not getting requested by anyone else? Who doesn't even know who to request? Who never gets noticed enough to be nominated? Who had a million friends last week and none this week?”

According to Melton, the teacher is not looking for a new seating chart—she's looking for lonely children and children struggling to connect with other children.

“She's identifying the little ones who are falling through the cracks of the class's social life,” Melton wrote. “She is discovering whose gifts are going unnoticed by their peers. And she's pinning down—right away—who's being bullied and who is doing the bullying.”

Melton compared the teacher's weekly social exercise to “taking an X-ray of a classroom to see beneath the surface of things and into the hearts of students. It is like mining for gold—the gold being those little ones who need a little help—who need adults to step in and TEACH them how to

make friends, how to ask others to play, how to join a group, or how to share their gifts with others. And it's a bully deterrent because every teacher knows that bullying usually happens outside of her eyeshot—and that often kids being bullied are too intimidated to share. But as she said, the truth comes out on those safe, private, little sheets of paper.”

Intrigued and impressed, Melton asked the teacher how long she had been using this Friday system. “Ever since Columbine,” the teacher responded. “Every single Friday afternoon since Columbine.”

Goose bumps.

Melton insists what the teacher is doing is nothing short of “saving lives,” adding “what this mathematician has learned . . . [is] that everything—even love, even belonging—has a pattern to it . . . she breaks the codes of disconnection. And then she gets lonely kids the help they need . . . altering the trajectory of our world.”

Comparing such teachers to first responders, Melton concludes by encouraging teachers that parents everywhere support their work and are “whispering together: ‘We don't care about the damn standardized tests. We only care that you teach our children to be brave and kind. And we thank you.’”

As you read this first-ever edition of the new magazine of the College of Education at MTSU, take a moment to consider how crucial teachers are to nearly every aspect of our society, our economy, our culture, and our collective well-being. Perhaps a thanks or a pat on the back the next time you see one wouldn't be such a bad idea, either. @

—Drew Ruble



Drew Ruble, University Editor

View from the College of Education

PHOTO BY DARBY CAMPBELL





a facility for teaching

Sometimes the building itself is one of the most valuable building blocks for an academic program

by DREW RUBLE

Longtime MTSU College of Education faculty member Dr. Aubrey H. Moseley vividly remembers the interview process that led to his hiring at MTSU back in 1966. The Selma, Ala., native, who had received a master's and doctorate at the University of Alabama, first met and interviewed with the Education Department's chair and dean, followed by a visit to the provost. He then made his way to a final interview with President Quill E. Cope. According to Moseley, in the course of that interview Cope said one of the next events to occur in the Department of Education would be the construction of a new education building.



PHOTO BY DARBY CAMPBELL

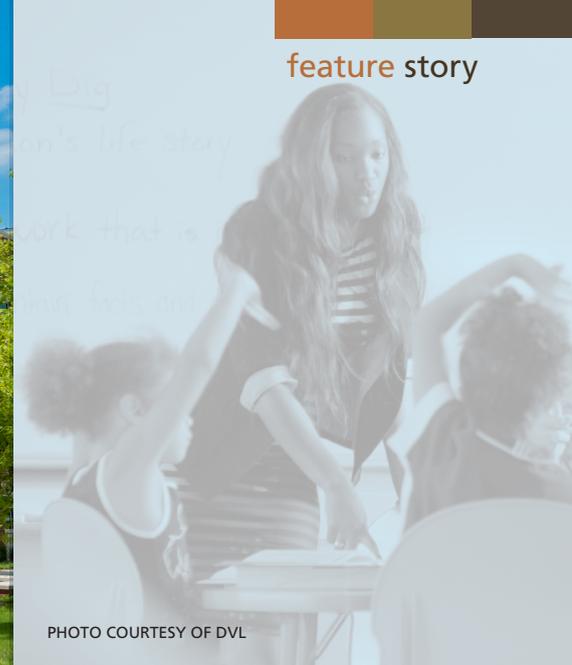


PHOTO COURTESY OF DVL



PHOTO BY DARBY CAMPBELL

Forty-five years later, in fall 2011, Dr. Moseley finally saw that promise fulfilled when the University—on its 100th birthday—opened a brand-new \$30 million College of Education Building. Moseley, a Womack Family Educational Leadership Professor, says the real impact of the new building isn't so much its newness or its myriad bells and whistles (although those are key to the teacher preparation occurring there) but rather that all elements of MTSU's education efforts are together in one spot for the first time.

"We've been scattered all over campus," he says. "This brings the education community together and fosters more of a sense of a community spirit. It can only have positive effects on future growth."

In his remarks at the building's groundbreaking celebration in 2011, President Sidney A. McPhee described the new building and other programmatic enhancements within the college (including the development of new, doctoral-level programs—see related story on page 16) as purposeful reaffirmations of the University's roots.

"Since our founding as Middle Tennessee Normal School, dedicated to the development of our state's primary and secondary school educators, we have never forgotten our roots or our commitment to excellence in education," McPhee said. "From our humble beginnings as a teacher-training school with 125 students on 100 acres to Tennessee's largest undergraduate institution with more than

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PHOTO BY DARBY CAMPBELL



PHOTO COURTESY OF DVL



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

A FACILITY FOR TEACHING *(continued from page 5)*

23,000 students on 500-plus acres, we still hold proudly to our core normal school value as a top producer of teachers in the state of Tennessee.”

“This building serves as proof of the University’s and the state’s commitment to teacher education,” McPhee added, “and to the education of all our citizenry.”

It’s been almost three years since the new building opened. Lana Seivers, dean of the college, says the “potential” and “promise” expressed at the groundbreaking is now “production” and “progress” boosting efforts to improve teacher training statewide.

“I see camaraderie, a professional learning community, among our University faculty and supervisors that didn’t exist at this level before,” Seivers says. “This building has provided that catalyst for enhanced relationships and collaboration, which leads to results.”

The building is the most cutting-edge teacher laboratory in the state of Tennessee—a perfect incubator for preparing students for life in the modern classroom. High-tech learning spaces allow faculty to more precisely model teaching strategies and techniques students will need in the elementary, middle, and high

schools where they’ll eventually work. Other spaces—from two-way-glass observation areas to easily reconfigured classrooms that quickly accommodate large- and small-group exercises—create an environment ripe for teacher candidates to observe and learn.

The building also serves veteran teachers who are already working in Tennessee schools. With its modern space, Murfreesboro’s central location, and the strong relationships with educators that Seivers possesses as a former state commissioner of education, the new building has quickly evolved into a focal point for K–12 educational research and professional development. One sterling example would be the CREATE conference, sponsored through the Tennessee Arts Commission. In each of the past three years, MTSU has hosted more than 400 educators from across the state and nation at the conference, which focuses on student achievement and the arts. (See sidebar on page 7 for other event examples.)

Such professional development opportunities will only increase. The college will soon occupy another large space to be renovated in the nearby McWherter Learning Resources Center (LRC). Already home to the college’s satellite uplink operation and its educational media branch (among other entities), the LRC will also soon house a large professional development center for use by veteran teachers and teacher candidates alike. Set to open as early as this fall, the space will seat up to 150 people—twice the size of the room now used for such activities—and serve as the first meeting space of its size on campus primarily for the College of Education.

“It offers even more of an opportunity to expand our outreach and extend our hand to K–12,” Seivers says. “We always have our hand out to them to ask, ‘Would you take a student in residency?’ But now we can offer this back to them in a larger setting than in the past.”

Such enhanced partnerships and relationships expand the value of the \$30 million building beyond bricks and mortar, making the College of Education a true

bricks & mortar

Total Classroom Seats: 993
(677, 1st floor; 316, 2nd floor)

Total Faculty and Program Offices: 83

First Floor:

- 150-seat auditorium
- 75-seat classroom
- Four 50-seat classrooms
- Three 24-seat collaborative classrooms
- Two 20-seat collaborative classrooms
- Two 24-seat classrooms
- 20-seat classroom
- 24-seat wet lab methods classroom
- Two 24-seat adaptive technology demonstration computer classrooms

Second Floor:

- Four 36-seat classrooms
- 24-seat classroom
- 20-seat classroom
- Three 24-seat computer classrooms
- Two 24-seat observation classrooms
- 8-seat observation room
- 12 program offices
- Gathering areas in lobby and on terrace
- Dean's suite
- Dean's office
- 1 associate dean's office
- 3 administrative support offices
- 20-seat conference room
- 12-seat conference room
- Archival storage room
- Reception area and work/supply support spaces

Third Floor:

- 71 faculty and program offices
- 10-seat seminar room
- 18-seat conference room
- Chairs' suite
- 2 chair offices
- 4 administrative support offices
- 2 archival storage and file rooms
- Reception area and two work/supply support spaces

There are gathering areas in the lobbies of all three floors. Exterior gathering areas are in the courtyard and the adjacent quadrangle and at the main entry.



PHOTO BY DARBY CAMPBELL

think tank for the efforts by those in the statewide K–12 education family to improve schools.

Walking through the hallways of the building, one gets a strong sense of purpose. Since most or all of the college's faculty and staff members (Seivers included, as a former teacher, principal, and superintendent in East Tennessee) have worked in the "real world," they know what it's like in the trenches and approach their work as an opportunity to improve the situation for teachers in the field. Faculty and staff are not, as the cliché goes, living in ivory towers.

"We all taught in K–12," Seivers says. "We know the importance. I really do think that in this college our faculty and administrators model what good schools do. It's an incredible group of people."

Leaders in the College of Education are also intent on listening to what the current crop of educators who are working in schools have to say about instructional strategies, new policies, and proposed reform. The building provides the highly professional, dignified environment for important conversations to be held and effective solutions to be achieved.

"We are here to prepare school leaders. That's what our job is. So it's kind of a gift. A singular focus," Seivers says. "Our goal is to get every student licensed and also to help all teachers acquire the skills they need to succeed."

Such devotion to teachers, whether they are leaving for a first job or returning for professional development, leads Seivers to note her favorite architectural element of the College of Education Building: the spiral staircase that winds upward just inside the front doors. For Seivers, it's symbolic of the work the college is doing to help teachers and prospective teachers step up and reach for their dreams. @

A Place for Collaboration

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Since opening in 2011, the College of Education building at MTSU has hosted hundreds of conferences, meetings, and workshops that directly serve the Tennessee educational community. Here is a sample listing of events hosted in 2013 alone!

- Retention Conference
- Changing Mindsets, Motivating Students workshop
- BEP Middle School student workshop
- Critical Thinking with Common Core workshop
- EDTPA Seminar
- Global Entrepreneurship Speaker Series
- Institute for CTE Educators workshop
- K–12 Holocaust Studies Conference
- K–6 Integrated Curriculum Conference
- Master Teaching Fellows Seminar
- Project UC STEM meeting
- Seminar for Principals
- Superintendents' Common Core meeting
- Teaching for Autism workshop

UNRAVELING DYSLEXIA

An MTSU center helps students and parents recognize and overcome obstacles posed by a common reading disorder

by PATSY WEILER

Envision standing near the entrance to a walled garden. Inside is a fascinating place where letters and words take root and bloom into meaning. People happily come and go at will through the gate, but not you. No matter how many times you try or how hard you push, it won't open. It is embarrassing to have others watch you. You feel discouraged. Eventually, a sense of failure takes root, and you walk away.

While metaphorical, this is a picture of what those with dyslexia regularly experience when trying to read, write, or spell.

Although most of us take it for granted, reading enables us to step outside our own experience, see the world through different eyes, and gain new perspectives that inform our worldview. It isn't any wonder, then, that a person's reading ability can prove to be a significant barometer of success in life, whether in academics, a career, or even one's health.

Dyslexia—which has nothing to do with a child’s intelligence and desire to learn (or even good teaching)—is like the garden wall described above: a barrier to literacy. Failure to clear that barrier can produce negative consequences not just for students but also for society as a whole. Illiteracy often leads to undesirable social outcomes ranging from unemployment to homelessness and poverty.

The good news is, students with dyslexia can learn to read, and they can do so through the types of specialized instructional approaches employed at the Tennessee Center for the Study and Treatment of Dyslexia at MTSU.

A Model Organization

Mention dyslexia and most people have some awareness of the term but no clear understanding of its meaning or its impact. Dyslexia affects 10 to 20 percent of the population.

In 1993, the Tennessee General Assembly established the Tennessee Center for the Study and Treatment of Dyslexia, which is part of the MTSU College of Education, to assist K–12 students and their families, teachers, and other professionals grappling with the problem. The work of the center has touched the lives of thousands of people—helping them find new keys to open the gate—in 94 of the state’s 95 counties.

Dr. James Herman, the center’s director, is enthusiastic about the work being done.

“This is an exciting place,” he says. “We are constantly moving forward. The staff regularly meets to discuss the latest research and cutting-edge technology. We are all working to make dyslexia known for what it is and what it isn’t.”

What it is, according to the International Dyslexia Association, is “a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin, characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.” Struggling to read hinders vocabulary growth and reading comprehension and can lead to low literacy and poor self-esteem.

It’s important to understand that dyslexia is not a disease; it cannot be cured. Nor does it equate to intelligence; many dyslexics function at an average to above-average level. However, when detected early, dyslexia can be successfully addressed with education, training, and patience.

An example of someone who refuses to let dyslexia define him is Justin Lowe, 22, an MTSU junior from Murfreesboro majoring in anthropology. Lowe’s second-grade teacher at Homer Pittard Campus School recognized his student’s struggle and sent his family to the center for help.

“The people at the center helped me realize I should not focus on my weaknesses but rather my strengths,” he says.

“I can get the same thing achieved by taking a different route, but the outcome is the same. You learn to think outside of the box.”

Lowe remembers being motivated when he learned that celebrated military general George Patton had dyslexia.

“It made me realize that if I put my mind to it, I could do anything I wanted and dyslexia was not going to hold me back,” he says.

Other well-known Americans who have this disability include Jay Leno, Henry Winkler, Tom Cruise, Cher, and Anderson Cooper. Most struggled in school and couldn’t read well and were told they were not living up to their potential or, even worse, that they should quit school.

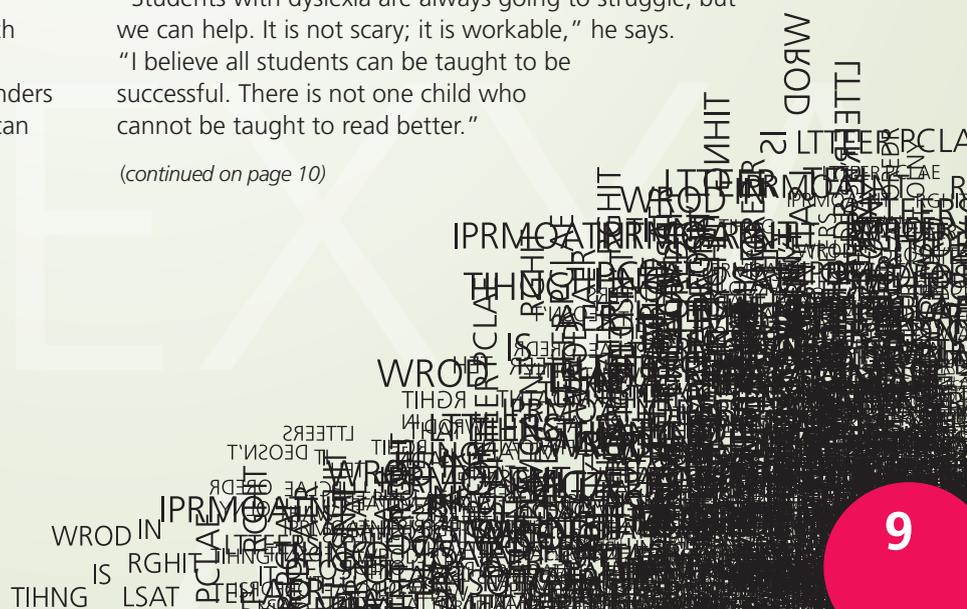
Such thoughts make Herman bristle.

“Students with dyslexia are always going to struggle, but we can help. It is not scary; it is workable,” he says.

“I believe all students can be taught to be successful. There is not one child who cannot be taught to read better.”

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It’s important to understand that dyslexia is not a disease; it cannot be cured.



Struggling to read hinders vocabulary growth and reading comprehension and can lead to low literacy and poor self-esteem.

Creating the Template

The same passion to help children succeed is the motivation that led Murfreesboro resident Kitty Murfree to lay the foundation on which the center was built. In the mid-1980s, she became keenly aware that the needs of students with dyslexia were not adequately being met in Tennessee.

“Dyslexia was a hidden element which families tried to quietly work with at the time,” said Murfree. “Testing was available at Vanderbilt, but after talking with teachers it was evident there was no real place to go for help.”

She responded by endowing the Katherine Davis Murfree Chair of Excellence in Dyslexic Studies at MTSU in 1988.

“Children are my first love. It became evident to me we had a big problem, with few resources,” said Murfree, who has served for years on the board of the Monroe Carell, Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt. “I have always been a person that if you have a problem, you go after it.”

After a national search, Dr. Diane Sawyer, who was a professor in the Reading and Language Arts Department at Syracuse University, started as the new chairholder and faculty member in January 1990.

“Diane did an absolutely magnificent job,” said Murfree. “This is one of the things that put MTSU on the map. It is a great asset. Nobody else in the state had anything else like it.”

Reminiscing about the program’s humble beginnings, Sawyer says, “My first ‘office’ was half a dorm room that I shared with a part-time secretary and graduate assistant

that actually sat on the heating and air unit located on the wall.”

Shortly after arriving, the new chair was asked to testify before the Tennessee State Committee on Education about dyslexia. Later, to help address the challenges she was encountering across the state, she asked the General Assembly to provide funding to establish the center.

With the assistance of then–state senator Andy Womack of Murfreesboro (who chaired the Senate Education Committee) the money was appropriated in 1993. In January 1994, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission gave the final stamp of approval for the center to be a permanent part of MTSU. Its first home was at what was then Central Middle School on East Main Street. Sawyer became the first director while maintaining her chair responsibilities.

“Dyslexia was often described as the hidden disability,” Sawyer says. “I knew that the detail and complexity of the work we were doing at the time was unique. It gave me an opportunity to do something that previously didn’t exist.”

Brick by Brick

Another milestone occurred in 2001, when the current 4,300-square-foot building opened on the edge of campus at the corner of Baird Lane and Elrod Street. The brick building doubled the center’s size and was made possible with assistance from the MTSU Foundation and a \$1 million grant from the nonprofit Murfreesboro-based Christy-Houston Foundation.

After years of groundbreaking research, Sawyer retired from the University in 2010.

Ahead of the Game

MTSU leads the statewide effort to reform teacher education by Allison Gorman



In January, Shiloh Siegle started the College of Education's new residency program with a simple but ambitious goal: "To be the anomaly."

"They say your first year of teaching is disastrous," she explains. "I think all my peers and I are thinking, 'We're not going to be those teachers. We don't want our first year to be disastrous.'"

Ready2Teach (R2T)—which was launched in fall 2013 with the new residency program as its centerpiece—was designed to make disastrous first years the anomaly. That's a critical mission at a time when public schools are under a national microscope and the effects of poorly performing schools are felt not just locally but globally.

Ready to Shape

MTSU had a strong hand in shaping R2T, which reinvents teacher education at all Tennessee Board of Regents schools. Even after the initiative was formalized, faculty and administrators continued to shape it, working in collaboration with area schools to decide exactly how R2T would look at MTSU.

That meant replacing the old model of student teaching with a graduated two-semester residency that would give students more and earlier classroom experience. It meant designing a handbook, seminars, and new, more practical courses to support teacher candidates as they learn their way around the classroom. And it meant dropping theory classes that have been staples of education programs for decades.

The work continued even after the first official semester of R2T wrapped up in December. Faculty visited partner schools, talking to principals and teachers about what went well and what didn't; then they returned to MTSU and fine-tuned the program more. At the end of spring semester, they'll do the same thing again.

"This has been a very time-intensive process, and emotional as much as intellectual," says Dr. Kathy Burriss, chair of the Department of Elementary Education (ELED).

Dr. Robyn Ridgley, associate ELED professor, says the overhaul was tough but imperative. "We absolutely feel the necessity and urgency to make sure that our candidates are ready," she says. "The stakes are too high for our schoolchildren not to try to do it right."

Looks like they're doing it right.

Weeks into the rollout, Dr. Terry Goodin, assistant professor of secondary education, reported that feedback from his students in Residency 1 was "very,

very positive. I really can't say that enough. It's been an absolute home run."

By the end of the semester, students had deemed Residency 1 exhausting—and invaluable. "This is my second bachelor's degree, and Residency 1 was honestly the hardest semester of my life," says Mallory Taylor, an elementary K–6 major. "But it ended up being what we needed, because now, in Residency 2, we can really focus on what we need to do because we're more confident."

That confidence is shining through in the classroom.

Dr. Cheryl Hitchcock, assistant ELED professor, says she began hearing from University supervisors in early February that "hands down, this [Residency 2] group is more prepared than any group of teacher candidates we've ever had. When the supervisors can say that three weeks into the semester, that speaks volumes."

More practical experience and less theory.

Ready to Change

The new residency program is only the most prominent component of R2T, which reflects a longtime trend toward a more pragmatic approach to teacher preparation. Dr. Phillip Waldrop, associate dean of education, says when he came to MTSU in 1989, Tennessee had just rewritten its licensure requirements to eliminate a general education degree in favor of subject-specific degrees for teachers in elementary and high schools. Those changes came at the expense of theory courses, which were further pared down a decade later, when College of Education programs were limited to 120 hours.

Meanwhile, the accreditation process began to change across the country, as teacher prep programs were judged by outcomes rather than input. "Now a very large part of determination of the success of our program is that we can demonstrate that our graduates have a positive impact on student learning in the K–12 environment," Waldrop says.

As the top producer of licensed teachers in Tennessee, MTSU had a lot of skin in the game when the call for teacher education reform got serious. Dr. Lana Seivers was Gov. Phil Bredesen's commissioner of education

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At left: MTSU student-teacher Kaci Allison works with elementary students at the Campus School in Murfreesboro.

when stakeholders from across Tennessee gathered at MTSU to discuss how teachers could be better prepared to meet the needs of K–12 students. The consensus? “More practical experience and less theory,” Seivers says. “And what theory we had should be clearly linked to what happens in the classroom and student achievement. And from that, Ready2Teach was born.”

By 2010, when Seivers was appointed dean of the College of Education, R2T had been formalized as a TBR initiative—its mandates built on inherent principles of MTSU’s teacher prep program and many designed with guidance from MTSU faculty.

The college stressed the importance of relationships with schools and worked hard to develop those relationships. When R2T required that teacher candidates spend half their time in the field, K–12 schools were quick to offer clinical opportunities for MTSU students.

The University was also ahead of the curve with R2T’s emphasis on Problem-Based Learning (PBL), a method Goodin helped pioneer in Tennessee. Because many faculty were already using PBL, building it into the new education curriculum—another requirement—was a logical next step, Goodin says.

MTSU stands out among TBR schools for its problem-based approach to Residency 1, says Bobbi Lussier, executive director of the Office of Professional Laboratory Experiences and Teacher Licensure.

At some TBR institutions, Residencies 1 and 2 are similar—essentially two semesters of student teaching. At MTSU, Residency 1 students spend two full days a week in the classroom before teaching full-time in Residency 2, and they are placed in schools as cohorts so they can collaborate on problems assigned in their coursework and share their experiences in the classroom. As a result, students gain a global understanding of the school, Lussier says.

“One of the realities new teachers face when they walk into the classroom is that it’s not just me and my classroom and my students,” she says. “They’re part of a much bigger culture, and it all has to work together for the benefit of the students.”

Ashley Witt, assistant principal at Blackman Elementary School in Murfreesboro, which has partnered with the College of Education for several years, says she saw the benefits of Residency 1 immediately. “It was amazing to see the students begin to form professional learning communities,” she says. “That came from their upbringing at the University.”



Classroom Experience: MTSU student-teacher Krista Cashion reads to elementary students at the Campus School in Murfreesboro.

Ready to Listen

Witt says that Ridgley and Hitchcock, whose students were included in cohorts at Blackman, were “very visible in the building” to get her feedback and address any concerns.

Kara Bishop, an instructional coach at Marvin Wright Elementary in Maury County, says she was impressed by the groundwork done by Dr. Terri Tharp (ELED) even before her Residency 1 students entered the school.

“Dr. Tharp spent a significant amount of time talking with me about current education and how she needed to best prepare her students to be successful in this profession,” Bishop says. “She spent hours in our teachers’ classrooms observing and interacting with the students in order to get a true understanding of how to best prepare her students.”

Classroom teachers have reciprocated by providing opportunities for residency students to participate in data team meetings, workshops, and similar activities, Tharp says. “We’ve received positive feedback from teachers who want to continue as Residency 1 cooperating classroom teachers and collaborate with us to provide the best possible learning experiences for our teacher candidates,” she says.

Debbie Seigfried, a kindergarten teacher at Homer Pittard Campus School, says the residency program is benefiting teachers, too, especially because College of Education faculty have been quick to calibrate it based on feedback.

“They listened to what we as classroom teachers said would make the residency better, and now I feel like

I'm coteaching with my [Residency 1] student," Seigfried says. "She knows exactly what she's supposed to do, and when somebody needs me, she takes right over with the students."

Methods and practicum hours don't allow teacher candidates enough continuous time in a classroom to manage it effectively, Seigfried says.

Gayle Gillespie—a longtime teacher at Campus School—says there are mutual advantages to having University students in the classroom all day long. "The children learn to respect them and don't just think of them as my helpers," she says. At the same time, she notes, residency students have more time to practice different strategies and hone their skills based on the classroom teachers' input.

Ready to Go

The beauty of Residency 1 is that it bridges the gap between theory and practice, Hitchcock says.

"Residency 1 students can spend time in the classroom and then go back to their peers and professors and talk about their experiences, tweak what they're doing in real time, and get feedback about how to handle specific situations. It builds their confidence so that when they go to Residency 2, they're ready to hit the ground running," she says.

Professors are also using technology to bring in outside experts to advise their students. Dr. Becky Alexander, who teaches Managing Learning Environments, a new support course for Residency 1, uses Google Hangouts to arrange video chats between students and veteran teachers. "We've chatted with at least five teachers, and this works well," Alexander says. "It allows teacher candidates exposure to teachers from a variety of grades and demographics. They are able to ask questions and interact."

And now that many students have moved into Residency 2, Hitchcock is seeing another happy side effect of Residency 1: less confusion and anxiety about the edTPA. For more than three years, Hitchcock has coached students through the edTPA process, and while the individual components of the assessment should be familiar territory to second-semester seniors, she says they've still been bewildered at first—until now. (edTPA is the broad assessment required by all teachers in Residency 2 student teaching.)

"This has been the first semester where I've worked with [them] that I haven't gotten the deer-in-the-headlights look," she says. "They look at the assessment and say, 'Oh, yes. This makes sense.'"

That easy familiarity is the end result of what Ridgley calls the "scaffolding of learning" under R2T. "We've tried to be strategic so that by the time our students reach that residency year, they are ready—whether they realize it or not—to go into a classroom and be more active, to be a learner alongside the mentor teacher and the children in the classroom."

With that goal in mind, faculty built more fieldwork into the preresidency courses, says Dr. Jim Huffman, chair of the Womack Family Department of Educational Leadership. "Our sophomores and juniors are getting out into the schools and having some limited field experiences," he says. "I think the effect of all that is increased confidence in the students as they go into their student-teaching semester."

Just Plain Ready

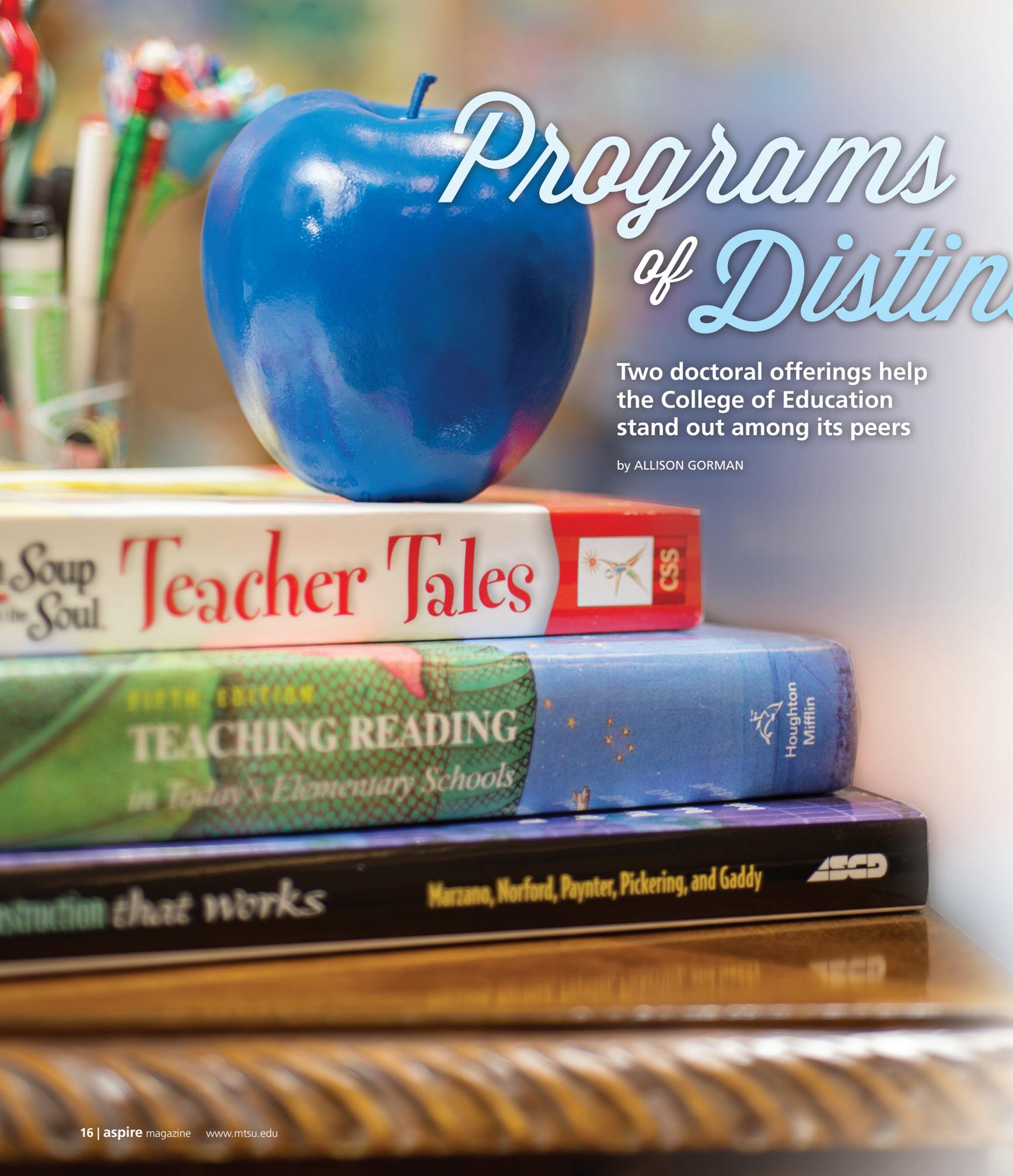
Melissa Anesi, now in Residency 2 at Hobgood Elementary in Murfreesboro, realized how ready to teach she was when she compared notes with two friends, graduates from other programs, who are already teaching. "The stuff I'm telling them that I learned in Residency 1 just blows their mind," she says. "One is a middle school teacher right now, and she's just learning some of the things I learned last semester in Dr. Alexander's class."

That confidence is shining through in the classroom.

Anesi says she's reassured several upcoming residency students who are nervous about the new program and its workload. "I tell everyone it's fabulous," she says.

Residency 2 student Ashley Fuqua reached the same conclusion, in a roundabout way. Her sister had graduated under the old program, and Fuqua admits she was upset when, just in time for her own senior year, R2T was rolled out, along with its demanding new residency requirements. "Residency 1 is the toughest semester to have, both physically and mentally," says Fuqua, now student teaching at H. B. Williams Elementary in White House. "But that toughness is what prepares you for Residency 2 and life as a teacher. At that point, the only thing you have real control over is your preparedness."

Ultimately, that's what R2T is all about: from practice comes preparedness, the antidote to a "disastrous" first year. [a](#)



Programs of Distinction

Two doctoral offerings help
the College of Education
stand out among its peers

by ALLISON GORMAN

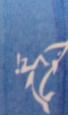
Soup
the Soul

Teacher Tales



CSS

FIFTH EDITION
TEACHING READING
in Today's Elementary Schools



Houghton
Mifflin

Instruction that works

Marzano, Norford, Paynter, Pickering, and Gaddy



If traffic seems heavier on I-24 these days, it may be due to the rising popularity of the College of Education's two doctoral programs. Education professionals from across the state and beyond are making the commute to MTSU to take advantage of the programs, which are unlike any others in the country.

MTSU launched a Ph.D. in Literacy Studies in 2008, followed by an Ed.D. in Assessment, Learning, and School Improvement in 2013. Both programs have attracted educators seeking to enhance their knowledge and careers while using what they've learned to make an immediate difference in the lives of K–12 students.

Roadworthy

High school teacher Tyra Pickens says when she decided to pursue a doctorate in literacy studies, she passed up a program offered by a major university in Huntsville, Ala., where she lives and works, deciding instead to make the twice-weekly drive to Murfreesboro. "The credentials of the professors, the course schedule, and program requirements at MTSU were impressive," she says. "Therefore I gladly commute eight hours a week—after working full-time—to be a part of the MTSU community."

MTSU's program is interdisciplinary, with coursework offered by faculty from four departments: Elementary and Special Education (COE), Psychology, Health and Human Performance (College of Behavioral and Health Sciences), and English (College of Liberal Arts). The faculty includes a neuroscientist, an audiologist, a linguist, and a literacy specialist. Program director Jwa Kim, a psychostatistician, specializes in testing and measuring student progress in language acquisition, phonetic awareness and reading comprehension.

Kim says MTSU's program explores literacy from a different angle than other doctoral programs he's seen. "Usually, when you have a Ph.D. program in literacy, it focuses on how to teach students language, and language development," he says. "We were more interested in the process of understanding how the brain works when children acquire language and reading comprehension."

After a slow initial launch, the 60-hour program was retooled to make it more flexible and student-centered, Kim says. "And then the students came, and they did not leave," he adds.

Now with 32 students (and six graduates, who have gone on to apply their new degrees in K–12 administration or higher education), the Ph.D. in Literacy Studies is at capacity. "When we first started, we anticipated about 13 students," Kim says.

Commuting Cohort

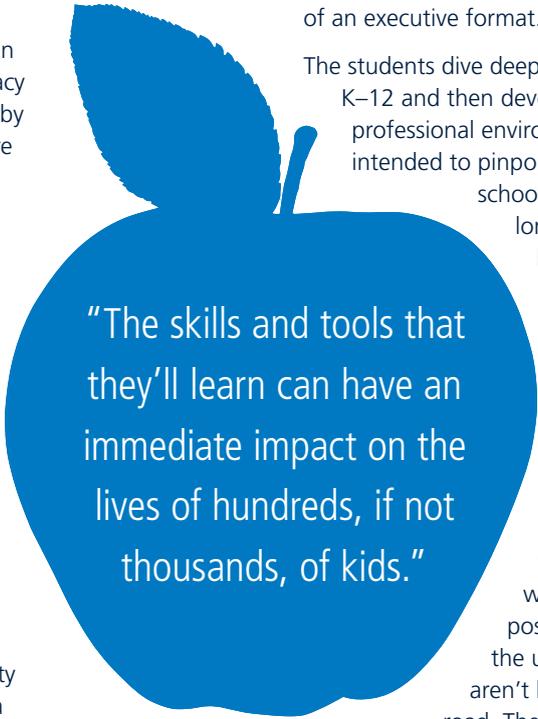
Launched last fall, the Ed.D. in Assessment, Learning, and School Improvement is designed to equip education professionals to make immediate improvements in struggling schools, "student by student and skill by skill," says program director Rick Vanosdall.

The inaugural class includes twenty working educators who drive to MTSU from every corner of the state. "The first cohort ranges from classroom teachers to community activists to consultants to principals and assistant principals," he says. "They come to campus for this face-to-face program on weekends, in kind of an executive format."

The students dive deep into the research on what works in K–12 and then develop projects to implement in their own professional environments. Vanosdall says the projects are intended to pinpoint and correct specific weaknesses in schools: entrenched strategies that may no longer be effective, for example, or policies based on research that was misinterpreted or misapplied. While projects are scaled to fit the professional context of the doctoral candidate, "they are portable across multiple positions," he says.

"The truth is, this program is focused on anyone who wants to gain the knowledge, understanding, and skills to improve schools, and those individuals who are in a position to work collaboratively within a school or school district to have a positive impact on learning," he says. "One of the unique features of the program is that people aren't learning theory to apply someday down the road. They're doing it right now, and they're learning along the way to improve educational opportunities not just for some children but for every child."

As with the Ph.D. program, the Ed.D. has attracted applicants because it fills a critical niche, says Dr. Robert Eaker, former COE dean. "There are very few doctoral programs nationally that are geared to help practitioners in the schools be more successful, so people have clamored to sign up for it," he says. "The skills and tools that they'll learn can have an immediate impact on the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of kids." @



"The skills and tools that they'll learn can have an immediate impact on the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of kids."

To learn more about these programs, or to apply, visit www.mtsu.edu/education/EdD_ALSI.php

On the importance of teachers . . .

If it weren't for teachers, I'm not sure any other occupation would be possible. My parents and family—I owe just about everything to them. But the other group that I would credit for any success I've had in life would be teachers. I think back on some of my favorite teachers and realize you learn so much about self-confidence, about feeling worthwhile, and about fairness and consistency from them—not to mention the subject matter.

I ask people all the time, "Tell me who or what is the most important in your life?" There's never been a time that people haven't said, "my children," or "my grandchildren." Not ever. So, when you talk about teacher impact and teacher preparation, you're talking about entrusting these people with the absolute most valuable piece of your life. That's the heart and soul of the work of the College of Education at MTSU.

On the challenges of being a teacher . . .

I think even those college students who love little children or love working with teenagers and who love their subject area are often still shocked when they go in and see exactly what a teacher is expected to do—and even more when they see what the truly great teachers actually do. You have to know your content. But you also have to know the pedagogy; the instructional strategies; the ways to reach one child versus the way to reach another—because children learn differently, and they learn at a different pace.

You've got to stay abreast of the latest research. And I don't mean a one-size-fits-all because if you're not really careful, you'll find yourself moving from fad to fad seeking the latest, so-called best solution. You've got to know how to be good consumers of research and make sure that you apply it accordingly.

“Teaching has to be a passion for you. You have to really like kids. You can be taught the rest. But you can't be taught how to really like kids.”

You've also got to know how to analyze the data for your school. That starts with looking at and understanding the data for every single student in your class. It's skill-by-skill, student-by-student analysis. Only then do you aggregate your classroom to determine if there's an area that students are excelling in or in which they're not doing very well. Really good teachers know how to use the data to assess at every level and evaluate student progress or lack thereof. They are constantly asking themselves—what is it we expect our students to know, how do we know if they learn it, and what do we do if they don't?

These test scores and numbers have faces and stories, and if [students are] not achieving a certain skill, a good teacher persists in asking, "Why not? Is it something going on at home? Is the child well? Is he just having trouble in math? Or is it me . . . failing at instruction?"

Classroom management is another necessary skill. If you think about a classroom, you're really managing a complex organization. And there are soft skills, too, that make a good teacher. Are you prepared? Are you organized? Appropriately dressed?

When it's all said and done, though, teaching has to be a passion for you. You have to really like kids. You can be taught the rest. But you can't be taught how to really like kids. That just doesn't happen. I've never been able to teach somebody that, yet. If you don't like kids, you don't have any business in this profession.

On the rewards of teaching . . .

Payback really comes from simple things like when a grown adult stops you in public and says something like, "If it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't have been able to do—fill in the blank—whatever it is. Or when you get a note from a parent of a child you taught who says, "If it hadn't been for you talking us in to doing this particular program, I don't think our child would be where he or she is today." That happens with teachers everywhere.

And every teacher has those "A-ha!" moments when a student you've struggled and struggled and struggled to teach a certain concept to finally gets it. You just want to go up and down the hall telling everybody, "Come and listen to Johnny read," or "Come and watch this science experiment!"

Sometimes parents are so busy or overwhelmed with their own lives, or sometimes due to circumstances even of their own making they're not present in a child's life. That makes a teacher even more important in a student's life. They may be the only adult figure who believes enough in the child to discipline them or to tell them they're smart or nice.

Being abused by a stepfather when you're a sixth grader; having a serious illness; having your mom murdered: those things all happened to students I either taught or for whom I was their principal. They're not going to learn today's lesson if those kinds of things are going on in their life. So you've got to have a teacher who's in tune to that child enough to know what they need, not just academically but socially and emotionally, and teachers who go that extra mile to make sure they get what they need, whether it's referring them to counseling or getting somebody to help the family because they need financial assistance, or, well, all kinds of things.

I look back at times that I missed something with a kid. Teachers probably think more often about the ones that they failed than the ones that they reached, and they feel that they as teachers failed.

On the role of MTSU's College of Education . . .

Compared to other colleges within MTSU, the College of Education is not glitzy and glamorous. It doesn't produce the best chocolate milk in the world, or operate world-class flight simulators, or run recording studios. Those are incredible, phenomenal programs at MTSU that we are all proud of. In our college, our work isn't exciting until you think about that moment when a student in a classroom "gets it" as the result of a teacher's effort.

Our primary mission is to prepare educators, and that includes school counselors, school principals, directors of schools, supervisors—really just about anybody you can think of who is related in any way to education. So we're doing more than teacher training.

(continued on page 20)

IN HER OWN WORDS

A chat with Lana Seivers, dean of the MTSU
College of Education, facilitated by Drew Ruble

Our work relies more on cutting-edge research and technology than the general public might initially think. We also perform more professional development for practicing teachers than people might think. Teachers and teacher candidates have to keep up on the rapid advances in technology and the vast opportunities to get information on the latest findings in the field of science or the latest literature. So, in addition to staying abreast of what kind of strategies to utilize to help that first grader learn to read or to help a sixth grader who is struggling to read, you better know the latest research if you're a teacher. You better never stop learning.

The College of Education also operates The Ann Campbell Early Learning Center (formerly Project Help), in which young children with disabilities are working side-by-side with typically developing children. We've also got the Child Development Center, where our students actually observe and work in classrooms. Our outreach to K–12 schools across Tennessee is vast. For example, we've got the Home- and Community-Based Early Intervention Program that serves 15 counties, where our interventionists go out and work with families of young children with disabilities. The Center for Educational Media provides satellite instruction to a great number of school districts in the state, among many other activities and partnerships.

We're asking a lot of the school districts to take our students. But we're giving something back, too, when we can provide that kind of expertise. I think our efforts to work with school districts to provide relevant, rigorous experiences are paying off. In addition, I have no doubts that our efforts to link teachers in the field to what we're doing in research—including in our Center for the Study and Treatment of Dyslexia, which is the only such center in the state of Tennessee—are making a difference.

On the value of giving . . .

We have students who just need a little bit of help making ends meet with things like gas money and other living expenses when they are student teaching every single day for an entire semester. Because most of them quit their jobs or work less hours in order to student teach all day, every day. And what people don't know is they're expected to do what their mentor teacher does, meaning attend after-school meetings or night ball games, or PTA meetings. Our teacher candidates have to do that, too, and they can't say, "I'm sorry, I've got to go to work," because that residency is their job. Just as with real teachers, it's not really an "8:30 to 3:30, nine months a year and you're done" kind of job. @

Helping Hand

As development director in MTSU's College of Education, I have the honor almost every day to meet interesting people with a connection to MTSU's teacher training program. I feel privileged to hear stories from the past—both good and bad—that shaped their lives. More often than not, I end up forging friendships with those alumni, former faculty, and staff members. Conversations with these people help me learn about their philanthropic visions. In turn, I am able to inform them about the latest activities happening in teacher preparation at MTSU, arrange a campus visit or a meeting with the dean, or even reunite alums with old classmates and professors. I like to explore their passions and, if they desire, to design a gift that will fulfill their vision and establish their legacy while also meeting one of the college's many needs.



The most common areas that philanthropic gifts affect are student and faculty support, program improvement, and the dean's discretionary fund. Gifts come in many forms, from annual giving, to one-time cash gifts, multiyear pledges, bequests, matching gifts, gifts-in-kind—the list goes on and on. Gifts range from \$5 to more than \$1 million. Each donor and each gift are significant, regardless of the amount or destination.

As shown in this edition of the new *ASPIRE* magazine, gifts are used to further the mission of preparing first-class teachers. Many programs featured in these pages are supported wholly or in part by charitable donations. In my experience, many are surprised by the impact their gifts can have and are even more impressed by how far their dollars can be stretched. We pride ourselves on being good stewards of your hard-earned money, and we take our role in helping you share it very seriously.

Every area of the College of Education could benefit from your generosity. If you feel compelled to give back to your University through a gift to the college, I would welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you might have. We need your help!

I am constantly in awe of the dedication and passion that donors to this college display day after day, year after year. It's another reason why we take our responsibility to prepare future teachers and leaders so seriously. As your development officer, I work to match your dreams with our needs. And it is an honor.

—Lucie Burchfield
lucie.burchfield@mtsu.edu

Time to ASPIRE

We expect our teacher candidates to "aspire" for greatness and give their education all of their time and energy. However, in today's world, that can be very hard for many students who must reduce their outside work hours or quit their jobs altogether to give their studies and residencies the attention they demand.

Our faculty and staff advise students every day who need a \$250 book they can't afford or \$50 they don't have for gas to get to their placements. Through seed money donated by alums Andy and Cherry Womack—and Dr. Lana C. Seivers—the ASPIRE Fund was recently established solely to assist such students needing that little bit of extra help.

Your gift of \$25, \$50, or \$100 to this crucial account could help a student with a compelling need stay in the program and continue on their path to becoming a teacher. We need YOUR help!

The generosity you show today will no doubt be returned many-fold when these future teachers provide the same kind of help and empathy to a young student in need. Please consider supporting these future educators! Make checks payable to the MTSU Foundation, ASPIRE Fund 91315.

Visit www.mtsu.edu to donate.



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Math education professor and paratriathlete Dr. Jeremy Winters

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Family Legacy

The Womack family's involvement with MTSU endures through the years

news & notes

There are simply too many positive developments happening in the College of Education to tell you about them all in a single magazine. The following news and notes section, then, is intended to highlight just a few of them from the past year.

This roundup of smaller stories also conveys the breadth and depth of the work being accomplished in the college. Many of these notes may become feature stories in future editions of *ASPIRE*.



Dynamic Duo: Dr. Jeremy Winters (left) and his guide Matt Connors at the 2013 ITU World Triathlon Championships in England.

A Man With A Vision

MTSU math education professor Jeremy Winters, who is legally blind, finished among the top 10 overall at last year's paratriathlon world championships in London.

The Tullahoma native competed in partnership with a guide for the three-pronged event, which consists of a 750-meter swim, a 20-kilometer tandem bike race, and a 5-kilometer run. Winters, who is tethered to his guide during the swimming and running portions and who wears blackout glasses, competed in the Paratriathlon Male TRI-6b division (visually impaired). The duo finished the triathlon in one hour, 18 minutes, four seconds.

The event was streamed live over the Internet, allowing friends and other supporters to catch a few glimpses of Winters on his journey to the finish line.

"I truly appreciate everyone involved in helping me accomplish this goal," he said.

Two days before his top-10 finish in London, Winters and his guide, Matt Connors (pictured top left), collected silver medals for an aquathlon competition, which involves a swim followed by a run. Winters and Connors completed the aquathlon in 44 minutes, 36 seconds.

When Winters was 10 years old, he was diagnosed with the degenerative eye disease Cone-Rod Dystrophy, or CRD. The inherited disease causes sight deterioration and often results in blindness. Winters was able to play sports in high school, including football and baseball, but as his sight worsened he moved solely to track, where he earned a scholarship to college. After college, he remained an avid runner, picked up bicycling, and was introduced to paratriathlons by his sister.

To help Winters perform his work as a professor, and his work in professional development with K-12 teachers, MTSU provides him a closed-circuit television that changes normal print into oversized lettering.

BY JIMMY HART

Good Counsel

The Womack Educational Leadership Department offers programs that seek to prepare students to work as professional counselors in mental health agencies or elementary, middle, and high schools. Graduates of the department's School Counseling concentration have the knowledge and skills needed to plan, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs designed to facilitate the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students as lifelong learners in a pluralistic society.

The Center for Counseling and Psychological Services is a not-for-profit training facility staffed by master's degree students in the program who complete training under the supervision of the professional counseling faculty. The center is also a professional counseling and educational resource to residents and professionals throughout middle Tennessee and conducts research aimed at promoting optimal mental health.

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling concentrations received the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Outstanding Masters Program Award in 2011.

Faculty members include: Dr. Robin Lee, past president of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision; Dr. Virginia Dansby, president of the Tennessee Association for Specialists in Group Work; and Dr. Michelle Stevens, secretary of the Tennessee Association for Specialists in Group Work, among others.

Dr. Ellen Slicker and family recently endowed a scholarship in counseling in memory of her mother, the late Clarisse Winkler.



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

Good Supervision

The Womack Family Department of Educational Leadership also offers the Specialist in Education degree (Ed.S.) with majors in Administration and Supervision and Curriculum and Instruction. Students pursuing the Master of Education degree (M.Ed.) major in Administration and Supervision, Curriculum and Instruction, or Professional Counseling.

The Ed.S. in Administration and Supervision offers specializations in higher education and instructional leader licensure (K-12 administrator license).

The program is coordinated by Dr. Marvin Peyton and offered only in the off-campus cohort format.



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

Middle Tennessee State University

A+ Grads

This fall, the MTSU Alumni Association will recognize the first class of its expanded Distinguished Alumni Awards, and educators will have their very own place on the podium.

President Sidney A. McPhee initiated the idea of expanding the awards, hoping they would become more reflective of the global university that MTSU is today. The alumni recognition now will be in two tiers, highlighting an overall Distinguished Alumni Award recipient and new True Blue Citations of Distinction to include awards for Achievement in Education by both faculty and nonfaculty members of the MTSU family.

Chip Walters, an MTSU alumnus, chair of the committee that worked to expand the awards program, and "voice of the Blue Raiders" in football and basketball, said he and the committee were particularly excited to see the establishment of these two new awards for educators since MTSU's roots are as a normal school created specifically for the cultivation of teachers. Dr. Lana Seivers, alumna and dean of the College of Education, also applauded the new structure.

"MTSU alums are teachers, school leaders, professors, policy makers, and advocates throughout the country whose tireless work has made a real difference in the lives of so many children," Seivers said. "These educators often are the unsung heroes, and this award will give them the recognition they so richly deserve. We are very proud of MTSU's rich history in teacher education and of the University's high regard for educators. We encourage our alums to nominate deserving educators, and [we] look forward to celebrating their achievements in education."

Honorees will be announced in late summer or early fall. Winners will be celebrated at Homecoming, where they will attend a reception, ride in the parade, attend the football game, and be introduced to the crowd.

Nominations for the 2015 Distinguished Alumni Awards will be accepted through March 2015. Criteria and nomination forms can be found at www.mtalumni.com/awards. For more information, call (615) 898-2922.



An Apple for Teacher

After 30 years in the classroom, where she touched thousands of young lives with her gifts as a teacher, MTSU alumna Gayle Gillespie ('72, '74) is retiring from the Rutherford County Schools district. Gillespie spent the last 26 years at Campus School. She has also taught MTSU classes off and on during her teaching career.

The entire Gillespie family is "True Blue." Gayle's husband, the late Dr. Cliff Gillespie ('70, '71), was the former Dean of Admissions and is among the University's Distinguished Alums. In addition, all three of Gillespie's children, Matthew Gillespie ('98), Lauren Gillespie Agee ('01 and Young Alum of the Year in 2008), and Michael Gillespie ('05) are MTSU graduates.



Fourth Generation MTSU

In December 2013, when Kathryn Lee Vehr crossed the stage at Murphy Center and received her diploma, she became the fourth generation in her family to graduate from MTSU's College of Education, joining her great-grandmother Ruby (Cates) Sanford ('32), her grandmother Bessie Lee (Sanford) Saupé ('62, '80), and her mother Mary Josephine (Saupé) Vehr ('87, '10). True Blue!

Editor's note: If you are a graduate of MTSU's College of Education and would like to be considered for inclusion in an alumni achievements section in next year's ASPIRE magazine, send your information to lucie.burchfield@mtsu.edu.

Children First

MTSU's early childhood programs play a key role in the lives of many Tennessee schoolchildren and their families

▶ The Ann Campbell Early Learning Center

The Ann Campbell Early Learning Center, formerly known as Project Help, is a comprehensive early learning center providing home-based services for families with children who have developmental delays and are affiliated with the Tennessee Early Intervention System. The center provides inclusive classes where young children who have delays play and learn with those who are developing typically or above.

The center also provides hands-on training for University students who will

be working with children and families in public or private schools. Over 1,500 hours of practical training are provided each year to pre-service MTSU students working toward careers involving children and families.

A 501(c)(3), not-for-profit with tax-exempt status through the MTSU Foundation, the Center was established in 1983 by Dr. Ann Campbell and is the only home-based, as well as community center-based, inclusive program for young children in Rutherford County.



Teacher candidates observe early learners through mirrored glass in The Ann Campbell Early Learning Center.

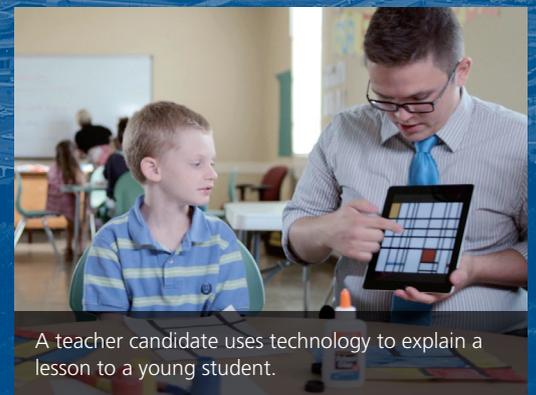
PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

▶ Child Development Center

The Child Development Center serves as a clinical experience and practice site for pre-service teachers. MTSU's College of Education is one of only 100 in the nation that maintains a laboratory school. The center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and has earned Tennessee's highest Three-Star quality rating from the Tennessee Department of Human Services.

The center's site is an environment in which research and development activities may be conducted.

The program employs and supports a teaching staff that has the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development and to support families' diverse needs and interests.



A teacher candidate uses technology to explain a lesson to a young student.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DVL

▶ Home & Community Based Intervention

The MTSU Home and Community-Based Early Intervention (HCBEI) program provides early intervention for families of children who have been diagnosed with developmental delays or disabilities who range in age from birth through two years. Early interventionists visit children and families in homes and community settings to coach the family on ways to address their child's goals during their normal daily

routines—and how to provide support and encouragement.

Program activities include collaborating with other campus early childhood programs as part of the newly formed MTSUnity for Early Childhood; continuing to work on public awareness activities; collaborating with the Center for Educational Media to produce PSAs that run in English and Spanish on local

channels throughout a 15-county service area; producing new brochures, stickers, print ads, and posters about the work of HCBEI; and collaborating with other area early intervention resource agencies to produce joint public awareness materials. HCBEI has been also selected by the Tennessee Early Intervention System to participate in an Early Childhood Outcomes pilot project.

Media Innovation

The Center for Educational Media (CEM) partnered with the Tennessee Department of Education to throw a live TV surprise party for 169 exceptional Tennessee schools. Broadcast from Kenrose Elementary in Brentwood, the party boasted a giant projection screen, three cameras, cheerleaders, and a marching band, and the program was broadcast live by AVS to all the schools honored so that students and faculty across the state could join the celebration.

Did You Know?

- The CEM has been producing K–12 educational programming for more than 18 years. The CEM website contains over 200 hours of Professional Development for K–12 teachers. Thousands of K–12 teachers and students from over 100 Tennessee school districts have participated in CEM broadcasts or webcasts during the past two years. The CEM is currently working with College of Education staff to produce videos for the culmination of a \$1.3 million National Science Foundation grant's finale gala.
- The CEM serves the entire MTSU campus with audio/visual needs through Audio Visual Services. AVS has worked in concert with MTSU News and Media Relations to produce the award winning "Out of the Blue" television program that is distributed regionally and even nationally each month. AVS has won four prestigious national Telly awards for videos it has produced.
- The CEM manages more than \$3.1 million in satellite, television, and webcasting equipment, most of it housed in the LRC. MTSU is the only Tennessee university with a statewide and nationwide satellite and webcasting network. The CEM also manages the Education Resource Channel @ Middle Tennessee, which provides programming to communities in several Tennessee counties via cable television. AVS is in the final phase of upgrading its infrastructure to fully High Definition capability.



**Center for
Educational Media**

In Lock Step

New agreements between MTSU and both Columbia State Community College and Motlow State Community College will help community college students majoring in early childhood education turn their associate degrees into bachelor's degrees at MTSU.

The agreements ease the transfer of community students into the Bachelor of Science degree program in early childhood education at MTSU. They also provide specific advisement for transfer students and encourage academic and administrative coordination between the institutions.

"We're going to break down all of the barriers," said President Sidney A. McPhee, who added that such agreements help "move the bureaucracy" so that students can achieve their educational goals.

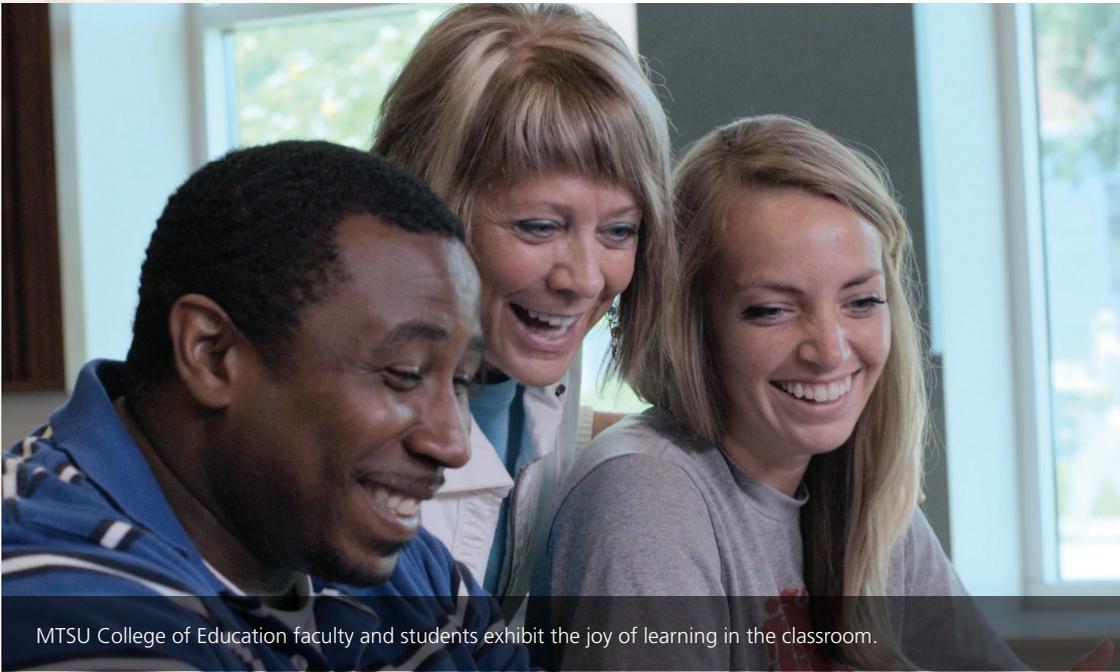
The next step is to track the partnerships for effectiveness, not just in increasing transfer student enrollment but in sending more graduates into the teaching profession who will stay for the long term, McPhee said.



Columbia State President Janet F. Smith with Dr. McPhee.



Motlow State President MaryLou Apple with Dr. McPhee



MTSU College of Education faculty and students exhibit the joy of learning in the classroom.



Dr. Bob Eaker

Good Partners

MTSU's College of Education has a proud history of partnering with Tennessee's public schools. Since 1998, one of the college's more prominent partnerships has been centered on assisting schools to "re-culture" into high-quality Professional Learning Communities, or PLCs.

Virtually every major educational organization in the U.S. has endorsed the concept of PLCs as a powerful strategy for enhancing student learning. The concept is based on three fundamental cultural shifts that schools must undertake to significantly and systemically positively affect student learning levels.

The first shift is that schools must turn their focus from "teaching," meaning the coverage of content, to one of "learning"—the learning of each student, skill by skill. Faculty members working in a PLC recognize that their job is not complete simply because the appropriate content has been taught. The focus is on ensuring that each student learns.

The second cultural shift is the move from individual teachers working in isolation to teachers working with their colleagues in collaborative teams. The work of collaborative teams is organized around focusing on four

critical questions associated with enhancing student learning. First, what is essential for every student to learn in every subject, grade, and course? Second, how will we know if students are learning (collaborative teams frequently monitor the learning of each student, skill by skill, through the use of common formative assessments)? Third, how will we respond when students experience difficulty in learning? And fourth, how will we extend and enrich learning for students who demonstrate proficiency?

The third shift is a passionate focus on results. Each team uses the collaborative analysis of student learning data to make decisions about additional time, support, and enrichment for students and to reflect on instructional effectiveness.

The PLC concept is prominent in school districts across Tennessee, the U.S., and, increasingly, the globe. That's in no small part due to the work of one of MTSU's most prominent College of Education faculty members, Dr. Bob Eaker. In 1998, Dr. Eaker, then dean of the College of Education, published (with Dr. Richard DuFour) *Professional Learning Communities at Work*. Since then, Dr. Eaker—a former fellow with the

National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development cited by Phi Delta Kappan as one of the nation's leaders in helping public school educators translate research into practice—has written 12 books on PLCs that have been translated into French, Chinese, Arabic, and Dutch.

More than a decade ago, the Rutherford County School District partnered with Eaker and the College of Education to become a PLC district. Since becoming director of Murfreesboro City Schools, Dr. Linda Gilbert has also championed the PLC concept. Warren County Schools offer yet another example. Eaker recently coauthored a professional paper on PLCs with now retired Warren County director of schools Jerry Hale and current director Bobby Cox that appeared in a respected education journal.

Partnering with schools to implement PLC concepts and practices is just one of the many partnerships between the College of Education and Tennessee schools. Truly, MTSU's College of Education is more than an excellent teacher training college. It's a place that values and supports our K–12 partners, day-in and day out, year after year.



Keeping Engaged: Dr. Becky Alexander (left), Dr. Charlene True (middle), and Dr. Charles Milligan (right) are the brain trust behind Project Engage.

PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

A Collaborative Effort

There's an old adage that says, "Two minds are greater than one."

That saying rings especially true for an ambitious collaborative endeavor that combines teaching and learning with innovative technology. Dubbed Project Engage by a team of three MTSU professors and five teacher candidates who joined forces to launch the initiative, the project uses iPads loaded with specific pedagogical applications that foster educational growth in an elementary setting.

Dr. Becky Alexander, an MTSU Elementary Education assistant professor who helped get the project off the ground, said the endeavor began in a meeting at Woodbury Grammar School in fall 2011.

Alexander joined five of her students—Hallie Shafer, Heather Martin, Miguel Eguia, Raven Booth, and Tyler Mingle—to observe a first-grade class taught by Holly Harwood, one of Alexander's former protégés.

The academic trio joined the five teacher candidates to launch Project Engage.

Funded through an instructional technology grant, Project Engage enables MTSU faculty – and MTSU students who are teacher candidates -- to use iPads loaded with specific iPad applications that support collaboration in the classroom, to infuse technology into an elementary school setting. Teacher-candidates, first grade students, a first grade teacher, and a professor all work collaboratively to provide experiences ranging from the creation of a blog between college students and first grade students to shared book reading using Google Hangouts.

Dr. Charlene True, an associate professor in the Womack Family Educational Leadership Department who collaborated on the project, described Project Engage as "the essence of Ready2Teach," TBR's teacher education redesign program focused on getting teacher candidates into public schools early and often. One of the most effective benefits of Project

Engage is the cross-departmental collaboration it generates. The project allows educators from different walks of life to team up for the good of the community.

"The project has gotten us all working together," said Dr. Charles Milligan, another MTSU Womack Family Educational Leadership assistant professor who also assisted with the initiative. "The school's principal, Bonnie Patterson, has been an integral part of Woodbury and Cannon County for her whole life. She has such passion for her students that it's hard not to want to assist her with this project. It's been good for us; it's been good for the school; and it's been good for the students and community as well. We hope to see some tremendous gains in school achievement."

Editor's Note: This is a condensed version of an article that first appeared in the newsletter of MTSU's Information Technology Department, The Communicator, which is written and edited by Dan Copp.



Dr. Willis Means in the classroom

PHOTO COURTESY OF DVL

Means to an End

Congratulations to Dr. Willis Means, a professor in the Department of Elementary and Special Education, who in August 2013 received a 2013–2014 Outstanding Teacher Award. In all, the MTSU Foundation celebrated 17 faculty members for their outstanding work and service to the University and community with special awards.

Means designed one of the first online graduate courses offered by the Regents Online Degree Program, an online undergraduate and graduate case-based classroom assessment course, and comparable instructional technology courses. He is now teaching and developing problems-based materials for the first course in the department's professional education sequence.

Means' career in urban elementary and middle schools and as an early adopter and advocate of the use of technology in schools has

resulted in presentations at regional and national instructional technology conferences. As a computer science textbook contributing author, he has emphasized the social and educational uses of computers. His research interest in computer-mediated communication is leading him to explore using mobile technologies in collaborative learning, problems-based learning, and the professional development of pre- and in-service teachers. He has been active in the redesign of the pre-service teacher education program by serving on two Tennessee Board of Regents committees (Ready2Teach and Instructional Technology).

Means earned a B.A. at David Lipscomb College, an M.Ed. at the University of Cincinnati, an M.S. at the University of Evansville, and an Ed.D. in instructional design and technology at Texas Tech University. He came to MTSU in 1996.

Ensuring Student Success

The Student Success and Advising Services (SSAS) unit in the College of Education is designed to provide academic, personal, professional, and financial support to all students majoring in elementary and secondary education at MTSU. Established in the spring 2014 semester, SSAS works with staff and faculty to provide a streamlined path through precandidacy, admission to teacher education, student teaching residencies, and teacher licensure.

- SSAS members contact freshmen and transfer students before their arrival on campus and assist them through the admissions process. Advisors lead all freshmen and transfer students through CUSTOMS orientation and help students register for their first-semester classes.
- Staff members closely monitor education students' academic progress, and provide counseling and tutorial referrals for students who are struggling.

- Advisors help students complete the requirements for admission to teacher education and submit their applications for candidacy.
- SSAS works to provide a smooth transition from initial candidacy to teacher licensure and provides career development, PRAXIS tutoring, interviewing skills development, and other student success programming.
- SSAS provides microgrants— one-time financial assistance of \$250 to support education students in need.

Said Jim Rost, SSAC director, "The College of Education is committed to providing a holistic student support approach for all of our students from orientation to graduation."





Alumnus and former State Sen. Andy Womack at the dedication of the Womack Family Department of Educational Leadership

PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT



Robert "Dr. Bob" Womack

PHOTO BY KEN ROBINSON

Family Legacy

In October, 2009, the Department of Educational Leadership was renamed through a major endowment established by the Dr. Bob Womack Family to enhance faculty support in perpetuity. In addition to the endowment, the Womack Family Department of Educational Leadership also honors the extended Womack family's long and close relationship with MTSU.

That involvement began when MTSU was still known as Middle Tennessee Normal School. On April 14, 2012, the University formally dedicated the Womack Family Department of Educational Leadership to honor the family's multigenerational years of support and service to MTSU and the state of Tennessee.

"It's easy, when you're in a family with this kind of lineage, to do what we've been able to do," explained former state senator Andy Womack of Murfreesboro at the event, after enumerating the family members who've attended MTSU since the eldest, his uncle Price Womack, graduated in 1928. "We had our role models right there. Our mother (the late Elizabeth Clements Womack, also an MTSU alumna) raised us, and our father

matured us. They gave us a sense of how important family is."

Beloved MTSU education professor Robert "Dr. Bob" Womack, who graduated from MTSU in 1948 and taught teachers here from 1953 until shortly before his death in 2010, insisted that any honors include the whole family, his eldest son added.

Noting that his grandparents, David Andrew and Georgia Price Womack, "took advantage of higher education themselves at a time when most people weren't able to," Andy Womack mentioned the accomplishments of his aunts and uncles through their MTSU connections—becoming doctors, teachers, farmers, public servants, and trailblazers in their fields. He said that tradition has continued with his own siblings and into the next generations.

Both Lynn Womack and Lara Womack Daniel are teachers (Lara in MTSU's College of Business), and Rick Womack has continued the family legacy as a successful breeder and trainer of Tennessee Walking Horses. Andy Womack's General Assembly tenure was marked by his sponsorship and successful

passage of the Education Improvement Act of 1992, which rewrote all K-12 statutes for Tennessee's public schools.

In addition to encouraging public service for his family and his students, Dr. Bob Womack was determined to make his students think for themselves, several speakers at the event noted.

"Dr. Womack was one of my professors when I was at MTSU," said Dr. Lana Seivers, dean of MTSU's College of Education and a former state commissioner of education. "At first, he scared me to death. His class was the first time I'd ever been asked to think rather than give back rote answers. . . . By the end of that class, the only thing I was scared of was not living up to Dr. Womack's expectations."

Womack's expectations also included helping future students become the top-notch teachers MTSU has produced since its founding in 1911. His family established an endowment fund that ultimately will provide more than a half-million dollars in faculty and support for MTSU's education program.

BY GINA E. FANN

HEART OF THE MATTER

A past National Teacher of Year shares his thoughts on education in Tennessee and beyond

by DREW RUBLE



MTSU professor Terry Weeks, a graduate of the University in 1974 and 1976, is the only National Teacher of the Year in history to hail from Tennessee. That's quite an accomplishment given that the Council of Chief State School Officers created the program more than six decades ago in 1952 in an effort to highlight and reward excellence in teaching.

Weeks won the award in 1988 while teaching at Central Middle School in Murfreesboro. A picture of him receiving the honor from President Ronald Reagan appears above.

While Weeks had a tremendous impact on individual schoolchildren while he was a classroom teacher, his impact on the

profession has grown exponentially now in his role as professor at MTSU, where he tirelessly prepares the teachers of tomorrow. Weeks' students eventually leave MTSU and take jobs in classrooms across Tennessee, the South, and the nation, extending the influence of his instruction to whole generations of students.

University Editor Drew Ruble recently spoke with Weeks about a few educational topics close to his heart.

Drew Ruble: Talk generally about the overhaul of teacher training currently underway in Tennessee and MTSU's active role in leading reform.

Dr. Terry Weeks: Tennessee is in a peculiar spot with respect to teacher training. On one hand, the hiring of graduates from fast-track teacher education programs outside of universities is promoted by the state; on the other hand, the expectations for

university-trained teacher candidates have increased significantly. To my knowledge, there has been no overhaul or beefing up of those fast-track programs. The increased expectations at the university level, though, have ushered in several changes in recent years for those following a traditional path of teacher education. Chief among these has been an increase in the amount of time that candidates spend inside public schools before they acquire a teaching license. MTSU developed one of two pilot programs that helped frame this new structure in use at state universities that emphasizes more time out in the schools. Something that we implemented quickly after our MTSU pilot program was a plan to increase the involvement of public school teachers in the training of teachers. As a result, secondary education students now have a field placement in every education course and those placements were designed by



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

PHOTOS BY ANDY HEIDT



teachers in 12 Rutherford County schools.

Ruble: There is a lot of public scrutiny and a lot of politics that surrounds the teaching profession, as well as a seemingly constant call for reform. At the core, though, what are the traits, skills, or characteristics of good teachers that have always made them effective in the classroom, regardless of external forces?

Dr. Weeks: Over the years, some of my students have had to construct a philosophy of teaching for a class assignment. When starting that process, I advised them to first find their anchor. Determine what it is that fuels your passion and create a clear image of that in your mind.

For me, my anchor has been a belief that every student who enters my classroom has a dream of being something great. I don't believe that people walk around with small dreams. In order to achieve their dreams, though, students are going to need some help. They are going to need to acquire some skills, and that is where teachers enter the picture. By helping students acquire skills to achieve great things, the quality of life for all will likely increase.

The reason it is so important to have a strong anchor is because the ever-changing winds of politics can easily blow a teacher off course if they aren't grounded. If a teacher has a strong anchor that they trust, though, they can cling to it when those winds blow and it will provide the support that they need to weather the current political storm.

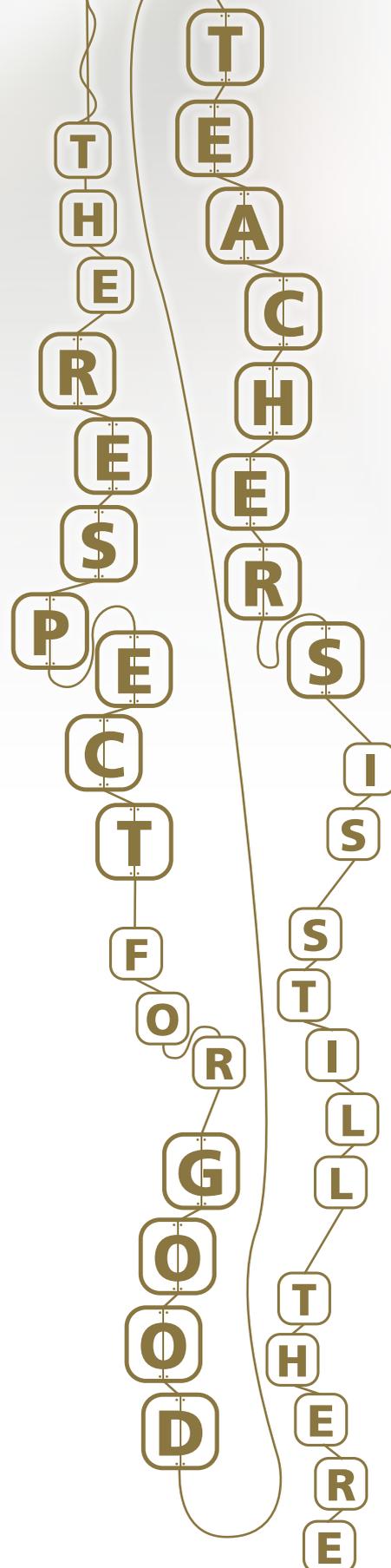
I look to one side and see my anchor of helping students achieve their dreams of becoming something great, and at the benefit that will have to society. I look to the other side and see the latest storm coming in from Nashville or Washington—well, let's just say I've yet to meet a storm more powerful than my anchor.

Ruble: Scholar Jacques Barzun stated in a *Newsweek* article way back in 1955 that "Teaching is not a lost art, but regard for it is a lost tradition." Is that still true? If so, why is that? What happened?

Dr. Weeks: If one looks at teacher salaries, one could make the case that teaching has never been highly regarded in the U.S. I don't know of a period in time when one could say that, based on what they were paid, teachers were held in high esteem. There is probably a good reason why salary is not the proper factor to consider, though. One is likely to never find a time when salaries are going to be really high if that profession has its salaries closely tied to the tax rate. Right now, based on salary, a running back for the Tennessee Titans is much more highly regarded than any teacher in the state. Change the pay structure, though, and connect the salary of the running back to the tax rate, and it won't take long before the Titans would have a new salary cap, and it would not be rising.

Consider what parents look for first when they move into a new city. They don't look for how close they can get to LP Field. They are much more concerned about getting into a good school zone that has good teachers. So I would argue that the regard for teaching is not a lost tradition. The respect for good teachers is still there. If we've lost anything, it is the ability to focus on what really matters in life. If one looks at what matters most to most people with children, making sure that those children get a good education is going to be at the top of their list. Those parents may cheer for the running back on Sunday, but their wishes that mean the most to them are closely connected to that teacher who guides their child from Monday to Friday of each week.

Ruble: Thanks, Dr. Weeks. @



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