Brain Power
Layne Kalbfleisch Pioneers Cognitive Research
The College of Education and Human Development Magazine is published semi-annually for alumni, donors, and friends of the college.

The college welcomes comments and suggestions for stories. Please send letters to:

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Layne Kalbfleisch Pioneers Research on Cognitive Function

Most people aren’t likely to include the field of neuroscience when they think about the College of Education and Human Development. But Layne Kalbfleisch, assistant professor in the Educational Psychology Program, is engaged in cutting-edge brain research, including children with ADHD, autism, and dyslexia.

Content Literacy for Today’s Adolescents: Honoring Diversity and Building Competence

In the fifth edition of his book, William Brozo, professor of language and literacy in the Graduate School of Education, provides strategies to assist teachers in developing adolescents’ literacy skills in a range of subject areas. Read excerpts in “Bookmarks.”

From Campus to Community: Exploring Active Options

Adults in “55 and Better” communities may be downsizing their mortgage and square footage, but they are hardly ready for a sedentary lifestyle. Undergraduate students in the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism consulted residents of an active adult community in Prince William County, Va., to assess their interests in leisure pursuits.

On the cover: Layne Kalbfleisch, CEHD assistant professor, works with Spencer Pomata on a series of exercises to test cognitive function. Read more about her research on page 4.

Photo credit: Evan Cantwell
Just recently, I was asked to create what many people would call an “elevator speech” for the college. In trying to craft a brief paragraph that gives someone unfamiliar with the college a sense of who we are and what we do, I was struck by what a challenging task I had undertaken. Part of the difficulty was trying to keep my description brief, while still giving a sense of the incredible breadth of programs, projects, and initiatives. Throughout this process, I found myself reminded of the many unique and different types of “work” done in the college. If you were to ask most people what they think we do in the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), their first answer probably would have to do with teacher preparation. While that is one of our very important functions, we also offer cutting-edge professional development to school and community personnel; get deeply involved in educational policy issues; explore health, wellness, and recreation issues as they relate to children and adults; and conduct research on cognitive function—just to name a few things.

I suspect you are somewhat surprised by the mention of research on cognitive function and encourage you to learn more about the work of Layne Kalbfleisch, assistant professor in CEHD’s Educational Psychology Program, in this issue’s cover story. Dr. Kalbfleisch’s work in cognitive neuroscience greatly informs and shapes the ground-breaking research on how children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, and dyslexia think. A pioneer in the field, Kalbfleisch is finding answers to some very difficult questions that will ultimately help children with some of the aforementioned disorders and cognitive challenges learn.

But the surprises don’t end there. In CEHD’s School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism (RHT), students have collaborated with a local active adult community to help create leisure programming that meets their social, recreational, and educational needs. Looking at the current demographics, the need for services to those who are “55 and Better” will only increase, and the faculty and students of RHT are working to meet this community need.

These are just two examples of some of the interesting ways in which the college is contributing positively to the lives of children and adults—locally and nationally. I have many more examples to share, so while I have completed my “elevator speech,” I encourage you to get involved and learn firsthand just how remarkable we are.

Jeff Gorrell
Dean, College of Education and Human Development
Nancy Portee, ’84, admits that her decision to attend Mason was influenced by wanting to stay close to her family (who had moved from California to Northern Virginia when she was 13) and having a best friend who had attended the university. However, once admitted, she says Mason was a good fit and she became fully engaged in the life of the university.

Deciding on her major came easily as well. Helping people was important to her—particularly having the opportunity to influence children and help them become successful, productive adults. She also knew that she had a natural ability for teaching and enjoyed the challenge of explaining a concept in different ways to help someone understand it. Teaching was her “calling.”

Graduating with a BS in education, the likely place for Nancy was an elementary school classroom. But, as life often does, it presented an interesting opportunity and Nancy decided to follow it. She accepted a job with Unisys, a worldwide technology services company, where she developed software and conducted computer training, among other duties. She worked in the field for more than 5 years and changed focus only after the birth of her daughter, Brittany (now 23 years old), because she didn’t want to travel as much.

With everything going on in her life personally and professionally, Nancy still found time to stay true to what was important to her—helping others. As a founding member of the BeFriend-A-Child mentoring program run by the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, Nancy serves as a mentor for children who are at risk of abuse and neglect or have been affected by abuse and neglect. Now, 23 years later, Nancy is still active with the program, serving as the lead volunteer. She actively organizes events, garners funds and sponsorships, and trains and counsels fellow mentors, along with many other responsibilities.

“All joking aside, Ann is quick to say that without Nancy, the program could have ceased to exist. From 1996–98, there was no staff coordinator, but Nancy and another mentor took it upon themselves to keep the program operating. Nancy even used her own funds to ensure certain programs and events continued.”

When Nancy received the call informing her she had been nominated and selected as the 2007 College of Education and Human Development Alumna of the Year, she said she was “shocked and surprised.” What is shocking is that she had not received the honor already. Reading through the nomination letters, it is easy to be awed by what a significant difference she makes in the lives of children (and adults).

In her letter of support for the nomination, Diane Painter (’74, ’94) wrote that when she learned more about Nancy’s work with BeFriend-A-Child, she was “very moved by the realization that Nancy demonstrates the mission of the education program of the college—a mission that promotes unwavering, committed efforts to care about all children, and to value and support them, in order for them to grow into happy and productive individuals.”

If you mention to Nancy that you are impressed with all that she has done and continues to do, she will flash her infectious smile and shrug her shoulders. To her, it is what should be done. She refers to it as a “mitzvah,” a word used in Judaism that generally refers to good deeds. Growing up, she was taught the need to help others, and her mother’s dedicated volunteerism served as a shining example. Now, she teaches her daughter the same thing, involving her in the work she does with BeFriend-A-Child and at group homes and homeless shelters.

If you ask what’s next on her agenda, Nancy quickly brings up the need for more mentors in the BeFriend-A-Child program. “Often, 10 percent of people are doing 90 percent of the work,” she says. “I want more people involved, so we can do more.”

To learn more about being a mentor with the BeFriend-A-Child Program, contact Ann Rieger at 703-324-7072 or Ann.Rieger@fairfaxcounty.gov.
Ask most people about the work in the College of Education and Human Development, and their responses aren’t likely to include the field of neuroscience. But Layne Kalbfleisch, assistant professor in CEHD’s Educational Psychology Program, is also the Pomata Term Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience in George Mason’s Krasnow Institute for Advanced Study. Her work includes cutting-edge research on the brain, including the cognitive function of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, and dyslexia.

Kalbfleisch serves as the principal investigator and lab chief of Krasnow Investigations of Developmental Learning and Behavior (KIDLAB), where research focuses on the relationship between talent and disability. “We study attention in ways that allow us to explore the benefits that may be the result of both typical attention function and ‘unsung’ benefits that may be the result of attention deficit disorders and dyslexia,” she says. “To do this, we test children of all ages and abilities, including those who have been identified for special programs in gifted and/or special education. These studies are contributing important information about talent and intelligence—how the brain becomes ‘expert’ at certain skills.”

Assisting Kalbfleisch with her research is a powerful machine: a Siemens Magnetom Allegra 3 Tesla brain scanner. The device, which arrived at Krasnow in May 2006, provides a safe, noninvasive way to examine and measure changes in the brain through functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

While fMRI labs typically are found at medical centers, Mason has the good fortune to be one of a select number of schools that house their own scanners. Kabfleisch serves as co-director of the Neuroimaging Core of the Krasnow Institute, as well as director of MRI safety and operations for the entire university.

“My lab is pioneering ways to make functional imaging represent real-world cognition to create closer ties between brain and behavior,” Kalbfleisch says. “We look at ‘functional signatures’ to determine how the brain functions for a task in a type of condition.”

To help her unlock the mysteries of the brain, Kalbfleisch has developed a series of exercises that look at reasoning and attention. Adapted from a test created by Mason psychology professor Jack Naglieri, the exercises are nonverbal, allowing Kalbfleisch to test young children and those who speak other languages, as well as more accurately assess children with learning disabilities.

How does the scanner work? As the child lies flat with his or her head in the machine, a projection screen displays the task to be performed. Then, as the child responds by pressing buttons, the scanner records the changing images of the brain. The imaging allows Kalbfleisch to see how people use certain areas of the brain—what she calls their “neural real estate”—associated with different abilities.
“We hope to shed light on important aspects of cognitive function that are not well understood or even named,” she says.

**A True Calling**

Kalbfleisch was drawn to brain research when she tutored gifted children and young adults with learning disabilities during her master’s studies in educational psychology. “My experience made me want to become a scientist,” she says. “I wanted to know about the students’ brains. I knew there must be a biological basis for how they think and how they do what they do.”

In addition to understanding ADHD, autism, and dyslexia, Kalbfleisch is studying the consequences of having ADHD and dyslexia and intellectual giftedness and creativity. “There is evidence to suggest that some kids who have ADHD or dyslexia and a high IQ have cognitive strengths,” she says. “We call them ‘twice exceptional’ children. And we see that these children are ‘paradoxical learners’—they fly at hard stuff, but do poorly on easy stuff. Yet we have no empirical data to show why this is.”

Kalbfleisch, who also serves as an adjunct professor of pediatrics at The George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, is testing different populations among gifted children—those with high ability according to IQ tests, as well as those with ADHD or dyslexia. “We are testing children of all ages and abilities, including typical children and those identified for special programs in giftedness and/or special education,” she says. “We need to look at the typical brain at each pass to get more specialized to compare and contrast. We know nothing about what areas of the brain facilitate special strengths. We hope to document empirically the brains of these children to understand the relationship between talent and disability.”

A true pioneer in the field, Kalbfleisch is one of only a handful of researchers who are exploring the relationship between talent and disability on a physiological level.

She points out that while so-called twice exceptional children generally don’t do well in school, they go on to become engineers, artists, and researchers. “The United States
is trying to be competitive in science and mathematics, but school systems only support traditionally smart kids—those who are motivated and do tasks well. We’re missing a whole other subset of children who could perform exceptionally if we could support them properly.”

KIDLAB’s research also involves looking at the way space and environment affect thinking. Kalbfleisch says that while previous studies have explored how typically developing people function on various tasks of attention and memory, no study has examined the influence of the local environment on performance. She and her team have designed artificial spaces with different heights and depths and direct children to do various tasks to determine if there are changes in performance.

“We hope to learn the relationship space and environment have to quality of thinking and length of engagement,” she says. “For example, would students perform better on attention and memory tasks if they were working at an open table or a study carrel? More specifically, is the brain influenced by the height and depth of the study carrel? The results could have an impact on how we put together classroom and learning environments.”

Educational Ramifications

Kalbfleisch envisions her research benefiting other branches of learning, including a direct link to studies in instructional technology. “It’s a natural fit,” she says. “If we know about the physiology of these academic tasks and what is developing at certain ages, can we intervene and help children function properly and strongly?”

She adds that while a lot of intervention is happening through computer games and other technical exercises, there is not large-scale evidence to demonstrate that these interventions have permanently and positively altered the function or the structure of the brain. “There’s a segue between technology tools that could help improve the quality of children’s learning and potentially remediate a disability and exploring those tools in the MRI environment to see if the changes in behavior and performance, and the influence on the plasticity of the human brain, become permanent.”

Reflecting on the broader application of her research, Kalbfleisch says it will have an impact on educational policy and structure for special needs students. “This science will give us empirical data to illustrate how brain physiology influences many types of learning—we’ll have statistics to show that we do need to provide services that don’t exist right now. It’s going to challenge people to take a second look at how education is structured and delivered to special needs and twice exceptional students.”

Kalbfleisch underscores that her science is emerging out of her experience as an educational psychologist, rather than as a classical scientist going from experiment to experiment in the lab. “I would love to be able to stand before Congress in five years and show them the signatures of the brains of typically developing children, gifted children, and twice exceptional children,” she says. “These profiles will allow people to understand different aspects of brain function that we need to nurture and support. My goal is to have an impact on the policies and structures that govern the medical and educational care of special needs students and effect permanent and positive change.”
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Content Literacy for Today’s Adolescents: Honoring Diversity and Building Competence

“We read to understand, or to begin to understand. We cannot do but read. Reading, almost as much as breathing, is our essential function.”

That quote from Argentinean author Alberto Manguel sets the stage for William Brozo’s *Content Literacy for Today’s Adolescents: Honoring Diversity and Building Competence*, published in its fifth edition by Pearson Prentice Hall earlier this year. Brozo, a professor of language and literacy in the Graduate School of Education, co-wrote the book with Michele Simpson, professor of reading at the University of Georgia.

Based on principled practice, the book provides strategies to assist teachers in developing adolescents’ literacy skills within a range of subject areas. Topics include creating motivating learning contexts, developing vocabulary knowledge, using writing as a form of active learning, and expanding comprehension through the use of information technology. The fifth edition features expanded coverage of reading engagement and effective practices with multiple texts, as well as resources for raising achievement of striving adolescent readers.

Brozo, whose career includes teaching reading and language arts at the middle and high school levels in the Carolinas, notes that the impetus for writing *Content Literacy* was his work with students in rural South Carolina. “I quickly came to realize my literature methods courses at the University of North Carolina hadn’t prepared me very well for 10th and 11th graders who had woeful reading skills,” he says. “I sought a master’s degree in reading first, and, finding the field so intriguing, went on to complete my doctorate. I had always been an inveterate reader, so finding a scholarly forum for promoting reading seemed like a natural professional trajectory for me.”

Brozo is also the author of *To Be a Boy, To Be a Reader*, a book of strategies for helping teen and preteen boys become active readers. He has written numerous articles on literacy development for young adults. In addition, he consults teachers and administrators around the country on ways of enriching the literate culture of middle and high schools.

Following are excerpts from *Content Literacy for Today’s Adolescents*.

—Amy Biderman

The Demographics of Youth Culture in America

So who are the individuals and groups that comprise youth culture in the United States at the outset of the 21st century? One way to answer this question is by looking at the most recent census data available (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). The adolescent population today, ages 10–19, totals over 40 million and is growing. While White youth make up over 60% of this segment of our society, it is more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before and more so than the general population. Hispanic youth now represent a greater percentage (15.6%) than African American youth (14.5%), and this trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future as Hispanic immigration increases. Asian/Pacific Islanders at the present time represent less than 4% of youth, but are projected to double in size by 2020. Over half of all adolescents, mostly White, live in suburban settings; and more than a quarter live in central city areas, where there are much higher concentrations of African American and Hispanic youth.
The expected increase in the numbers of Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders comes as a result of an unprecedented wave of immigration we are experiencing nationwide. The decade of the 1990s saw immigration population growth that has rivaled any period in our history (Rong & Preille, 1998; U.S. Census 2000). This unparalleled level of transnational migration has introduced into our middle and secondary schools ever-growing numbers of students with limited English skills. The United States Department of Education estimates over 5 million school-aged children and youth occupy this category, two times the number of just one decade ago (Hawkins, 2004). Though the growing number of immigrants has enriched the racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity within the United States, the increased diversity in population challenges long held beliefs about what it means to be “American” (Miron, Inda, & Aguirre, 1998). At the same time, data point to a shortage of teachers across the nation who are qualified or trained to teach these new immigrant children, with claims of as few as 1 qualified teacher available for every 100 English Language Learners (ELLs) (Zhao, 2002). Furthermore, it has been estimated that only 2.5% of teachers with ELL students in their classes have any special preparation to work with them (Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2001).

What other important demographic data do we have for these young adults? The good news is that overall child well-being has improved nationally. Eight of 10 critical indicators such as the rate of teen deaths by accident, homicide, and suicide; teen birth rate; high school dropouts; and number of children living in poverty all moved in a positive direction during the period from 1996 to 2001 (Kids Count, 2004). About two-thirds of all teens are growing up in households with both parents, and most have demonstrated reading and math levels at the basic level or higher.

Despite these positive indicators, it’s helpful to put into perspective the facts and figures compiled on youth in order to underscore the very real perils of adolescent life in America. For instance, on a typical day in 2001, the following could be said (Kids Count, 2004):

- 18 teens died from accidents
- 5 teens died from homicide
- 4 teens committed suicide
- Nearly 400 children were born to females ages 15-17
- 750 children were added to the poverty ranks
- 1.5 million children had parents behind bars
- 3,000 students dropped out of high school

Holding in mind the myths about youth (noted in Facts about Adolescents) and realizing that there have been improvements in the overall quality of life for teens, these facts remind us, nonetheless, that our work is never done concerning improving the living and learning conditions for every young person. We know from research that caring, engaged teachers who actively seek to form supportive relationships with adolescents can help sustain student effort, increase achievement, and improve students’ life and career options (Ancess, 2003). Given the galaxy of potentially harmful influences in the lives of many teens, it becomes all the more critical that their learning and relational needs do not go unaddressed at school (Davidson, 1996).

Language, Culture, and Identity

Who we are is inextricably tied to the ways we express ourselves. Dat, a senior in high school whose second language is English, explains how the full breadth of his personality goes unrecognized for those who only know his English persona: “Even though my English is pretty good, I don’t feel like myself unless I’m speaking Vietnamese.” Indeed, Dat’s awareness of the connection between language and identity must be shared by countless numbers of immigrant youth in schools and communities across the land struggling daily to meet the linguistic expectations of school and the dominant culture (Leander, 2002). Census data reveal that over 35 million people in the United States speak a language other than English at home (Morrell, 2002). As noted in this chapter, Latinos are the fastest growing minority group, with 50% of the total minority population being Spanish speakers. These Spanish speakers comprise over 70% of the ELL population, while the number of Vietnamese students, like Dat, totals nearly 5%. Combined, these two groups account for over 75% of the total linguistic minority population (Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2001).

As you can see, for most language minority students like Dat who are entering our secondary schools in larger and larger numbers, many issues of identity are at stake. While most ELL students acquire English language proficiency at varying levels, many of them have problems with adjustment and identity that may go unaddressed in school. It’s critical to point out that immigration issues for people of color have been unfairly and inappropriately compared to those of previous waves of im-
migrants of European descent. Unlike earlier, largely White immigration, immigrant youth of color are confronted by unfounded social stereotypes and generalizations about achievement and behavior that act as barriers to personal and academic advancement. Hones (2002) argues that the vast majority of students of color, particularly Latino and Asian youth, who fail to live out the “American Dream” begin to fix blame for their failure on themselves, their parents, and their racial or cultural group. Our secondary schools could and should be sites of critical self-exploration for these students where identity construction, language development, and academic success occur within supportive and caring learning environments.

Principle 3: Engage and Sustain Effort in Reading, Writing, and Thinking

Content teachers engage and sustain students’ efforts in reading, writing, and critical thinking when they create educational environments and implement classroom practices with students’ interests, needs, and goals foremost in their thinking and planning. These teachers know that engagement must remain connected to academic literacy and learning processes in order to give energy and direction to them (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). Thus, a science teacher who shares a graphic novel with his class about Nicola Tesla, the inventor of alternating current, knows this type of engaging text not only encourages his students to read but also delivers important scientific information in an easily digestible and fun way. Teachers who embrace this principle are also keenly aware of the influence of family, community, and peers on adolescents’ academic motivation and regard them as resources to help sustain student effort (Valdes, 1998).

Principle 6: Expand and Generate New Understandings Using Information and Communication Technologies

We asserted in Chapter 1 that today’s youth are active participants in a mediasphere of ever-evolving print, digital, visual, and aural information competing for their attention and shifting to meet their desires. Studies continue to reveal how print-based and digitally-mediated literacy practices permeate the daily lives of many adolescents (Bean, Bean, & Bean, 2000; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Lewis & Fabbos, 1999). In a recent survey (Lenhert, Simon, & Graziano, 2001), over 70% of teens in the United States said they use the Internet as the primary source for their school reports. Internet web browsers have made available a convergence of information and communications technologies (ICTs) including print, images, databases, instant messaging, e-mail, fax, radio and video conferencing, interactive programs, and virtual reality. These new technologies are both easily consumed and produced. And youth from all areas of the world are quick to take advantage of them (Bruce, 2004).

Our wired and increasingly wireless world presents unparalleled challenges and opportunities for teachers of youth. Teachers guided by this principle appreciate that ICTs with which adolescents have developed such facility need not conflict with school-based learning. Instead, ICTs can be embraced as a resource for expanding students’ content knowledge, learning strategies, and critical thinking. Bruce (2002) puts it this way:

Whatever else new technologies have done, it is difficult to make the case that they diminish literate practices or fully replace old forms of meaning-making with new ones. Instead, as they are assimilated they simply enrich a growing matrix of multiple genres and media (p. 12).

This principle also implies teachers must understand the importance of ensuring that all adolescents, regardless of background or ability, are able to read and manipulate a range of ICTs (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Tatum, 2000). To realize this principle, content area teachers—on a regular and frequent basis—will need to create the space and opportunity, as well as in some cases advocate for resources that allow students access to numerous types of digital technology, such as hypertexts (Bolter, 1998) and multimedia (Eken, 2002). They will need to rethink the authority and primacy of traditional print as the exclusive information source for classroom learning and restructure assignments and activities to encompass a variety of ICTs.

Chapter 11, Introduction

If we journey back far enough in the history of schooling in America, we come to a time when struggling adolescent readers did not exist. Sure, there were plenty of youth who had limited literacy abilities or could not read at all, but virtually none were allowed or chose to remain in the schools that were available. Most schools did not extend beyond primary or elementary levels. And even with the rise of secondary education in the United States, it was not until the 1940s that high school matriculation rates began to exceed 50% of the eligible adolescent population. For most, schooling went no further than the 8th grade. Consequently, those students who made it to high school were generally regarded as having superior academic abilities and/or came from families that could afford a non-working teenage son or daughter.

Today, high school attendance is compulsory. Youth from disparate cultures and with wide-ranging ability levels, who would never have had the opportunity for secondary education in years past, comprise the middle and high school
student bodies all across America. Meeting the reading and learning needs of this diverse group is no longer an option but a legal mandate and the professional responsibility of all teachers. The right for all students to participate in the regular classroom curriculum is protected by federal legislation (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA), and progress of all students—including those who are English learners, students with disabilities, and students from poverty—must now be documented through requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

Legalities and professional responsibilities notwithstanding, evidence abounds that teachers across the United States lack appropriate training and skills in content-area literacy (Barry, 1997; O’Brien, Stewart, & Moje, 1995; Romine, McKenna, & Robinson, 1996). What’s more, we have demonstrated in this book that the very nature of content area literacy is being regularly redefined through emerging technologies (International Reading Association, 2001). Literacy can no longer be thought of as only the effective use of paper, pencil, and books. Students who are literate are also proficient in locating and reading information from digitized sources, and can express themselves using e-mail, word processors, and presentation programs as well as with handwriting. Not only must students be taught the critical literacy skills needed for effective information use, they must be proficient users of rapidly evolving technology while developing the capacity to use yet-unimagined new literacies (International Reading Association, 2001).

When secondary teachers lack understanding of current theories of content literacy and practices to make disciplinary knowledge accessible to all, this may be especially detrimental to striving readers and learners. There are numerous indications that youth of color (Tatum, 2000; 2005; Jimenez, 1997) and those receiving special education services (Fisher, Schumaker, & Deshler, 2002) are not getting adequate training in higher-level literacy skills (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Braunger, Donahue, Evans, & Galguera, 2005). Nevertheless, these students can be taught to improve their reading and thinking abilities when knowledge of literacy, language development, and learning strategies is applied to them as it is to other students (Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996; Woods & Algozzine, 1994) and, when appropriate, strategies are adapted to meet their unique learning needs (Greenleaf, Jimenez, & Roller, 2002; Pearman, Huang, & Mellblom, 1997).

What Does It Mean To Be a Striving Reader

We have elected to refer to youth with low-achievement levels in reading as striving readers for the following reason. Like all terms and labels, once embedded in the professional vernacular they have a way of reifying expectations and practices for students. Let’s consider how this has happened with the thinking that has built up around the popular moniker at risk. Throughout our careers we have avoided the proclivity to toss this label around because we believe it inadequately and inappropriately stigmatizes youth (Brozo, 1995; Polakow & Brozo, 1994). The expression at risk must always be followed by the question At risk of what? A seventh-grader of color from a single-parent household in poverty who is a recent immigrant may possess, according to a school district’s definition, all of the risk factors of failure; yet, we might also ask whether the seventh-grader is at risk of unresponsive instruction because the school he attends employs teachers ill-prepared to deal with his needs (Brozo & Brozo, 1994). Flipped completely on its head, at risk might become at promise when schools and teachers see youth from diverse backgrounds as resources with multilingual and multicultural flexibility and the potential to make great strides given quality instruction.

Similarly, then, if a label must exist, we endorse striving reader over those that imply deficit, deficiency, or handicap. This is not because we fail to appreciate the challenges youth who are in need of further development in literacy pose, but to urge a different set of expectations and practices based on language that describes youth in a way that values the strengths they possess, their effort and potential.

Even though the label striving readers is a comfortable alternative to other more pejorative ones, it does not describe a single, monolithic condition. Striving readers may all be in need of literacy development but have unique needs, too (Ivey, 1999a). Here are three potentially useful ways of grouping the issues striving readers bring to middle and high school disciplinary classrooms:

- Some striving readers need to learn the cognitive strategies to read independently. With these strategies they may move beyond struggles with comprehension, word recognition and word learning, and fluency.
- Some striving readers harbor strong negative attitudes toward reading. This might have evolved out of a history of reading and writing failure or from being forced to read texts that were too difficult. These attitudes contribute to low self-esteem and low self-efficacy. A defensive shield might come up when confronted with a reading task. The attitudes of these striving readers keep them disengaged from the reading process.
- Some striving readers have lost touch with what books and other material interests them. They need to be surrounded by engaging texts and given the time and space to explore, sample, and experience a range of genres. Their “discourses of desire” need to be honored so as to reacquaint them with the pleasure and rewards associated with reading.
Policy Watch

This regular feature examines education, community, health, lifestyle, and related fields from policy perspectives. It is intended to acquaint alumni and friends with topics that may have implications for them in their professional lives. The topical areas will vary from issue to issue.

The following commentary from Penelope Earley, professor in the Graduate School of Education and director of the Center for Education Policy, examines teacher recruitment and retention. It is based on “Teacher Recruitment and Retention: Policy History and New Challenges,” a study by Earley and Susan A. Ross, principal of Loudoun Valley High School, Rochelle, Va. The study was supported by National Evaluation Systems, Inc. The full text is available at http://www.nesinc.com/PDFs/2006_02EarleyRoss.pdf.

Why Investing in Good Teachers Is Important

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a record 49.6 million students entered the nation’s schools in 2003. Demographers speculate this increase is the result of birth rates among children of baby boomers and an increase in the number of immigrant families moving to the United States. These children are now in third grade, and most will remain in the public school system for nine more years.

It is well documented that the demographics of the teaching force do not mirror the student populations in terms of race and gender. In the 1950s, approximately 80 percent of children entering school were non-Hispanic whites, whereas in 2003, 60 percent of students were white, 18 percent Hispanic, 16 percent black, and 4 percent Asian.

Although there are more minority teachers today than in 1950, the teaching force remains more than 85 percent white and more than 80 percent female. Moreover, teachers are graying. Nationally, more than 40 percent of teachers are over 50 years old and nearly a third of teachers with more than 30 years of experience are men. Thus, at a time when a significant portion of the teaching force is nearing retirement, there is a need for more teachers from a variety of backgrounds.

Finding teachers to meet the needs of school systems is a complex problem that often has been addressed with simplistic—and unsuccessful—policy solutions. In part, this is because decision makers have not fully considered the unique supply and demand characteristics of the public school teacher market: K–12 teaching is a large enterprise representing roughly 2.7 percent of the U.S. workforce; it is directly affected by increases or decreases in the school age population; workers are primarily white and female; the demand for teachers is a function of state or local rather than national needs; an increased supply of new teachers in one part of the country is not likely to relieve shortages in another geographic area; teachers must be qualified in each subject they expect to teach and as such their preparation programs are sometimes more different than similar; content and pedagogical preparation programs are influenced by state laws, which also account for a measure of difference among teachers; teachers tend to seek jobs in communities similar to and near where they grew up; the majority of hiring decisions are made during a four-month period from late spring to September; and the market is segmented by teaching field because of state licensure policies.

A review of education policies to recruit and keep excellent teachers reveals a series of policy miscues. There is an assumption embedded in federal and some state actions that teacher retention policy can actually serve as a recruitment tool. This is wrong-headed because finding and hiring someone to take a teaching job is essentially an employment issue, while teacher retention is an investment issue. There is an intuitive appeal for such programs as loan forgiveness and signing bonuses to attract individuals into teaching, yet there is little empirical evidence that they work.

Although some of these programs have been studied, few have undergone rigorous external evaluations. Moreover, studies of these incentive programs omit two key questions: (1) Did people who received a loan or signing bonus intend to go into teaching anyway? and (2) Do people who take signing bonuses and loan-forgiveness opportunities tend to stay in teaching longer than those who do not? Essentially, do these policies merely pay people to do what they planned to do anyway? If that is the case, they are helpful for those who intend to teach, but have minimal if any impact on the size of the workforce.
Decision makers need to disentangle teacher recruitment and retention. Strategies to find and hire good teachers require a form of employment policy, whereas keeping excellent teachers is best supported by investment policies. Employment policy and investment policy are different. Employment policy needs to be nimble; it needs to allow hiring agencies to respond quickly. In the market for teachers, quickly does not mean six months or even three months, but rather, it could mean three days. There is no other field where almost all new employees are hired within a period of four months or less. The school districts that can offer the first contracts or are such attractive places to work get the pick of available teachers. Obviously, this works to the advantage of wealthy school districts. If it is late August and a principal doesn’t have a teacher for a classroom, long-term strategies such as loan forgiveness are not the answer.

Employment policy is targeted. That is, it involves negotiation between an individual teaching candidate and a school. Therefore, it needs to be highly individualized and short term. What is an effective employment policy tool one year may not work in subsequent years. Policy tools to enable employment policies to work might involve federal and state funds to build the capacity of localities to offer the kinds of incentives that will attract strong candidates to their schools. If employment policies are going to be supported by federal and state funds—and as such have state or national impact—they will need to be targeted to the school districts with the greatest financial need rather than to affluent school districts.

By comparison, investment policy needs a measured, long-term response. Investment policy would support loan forgiveness for teachers if strong evaluations of these programs showed their merit. It would include support for teacher education programs, K–16 partnerships, and teacher mentoring and induction. The essence of investment policy is that public funds are directed to strengthen the professional infrastructure of teaching. Not all teachers who are new to a school are new to teaching. In fact, most teachers are transfers from other schools or communities or are individuals returning to their schools after stepping out for a year or so. These teachers need and expect different types of supports than individuals who are newly minted teachers. Thus, like employment policy, investment policy needs to be targeted, but in this case it is targeted to the needs of the individual, the school, the preparation program, and the school district.

Investment in teacher retention programs must be universally available, not just found in prosperous school districts. This suggests the need for statewide funding, but local flexibility in terms of how a particular retention program is operated at the school itself. By reframing policies related to preparing, hiring, and keeping good teachers as either nimble employment policies or long-term investment policies, a different picture of how governments should structure incentives emerges.

In addition, this framework suggests different evaluation strategies to determine the success of the programs. Employment policy can be studied using economic models and lends itself to quantitative methods that analyze the cost and success of various hiring incentives for teachers. Investment policy could also draw on quantitative tools, but would also need a qualitative component. This might include case studies of individual teachers to find out what influenced their decision to enter and remain in teaching. It could include studies of school climate and the characteristics of schools with low turnover.

It is short-sighted to ignore the need to invest in existing teachers and focus primarily on strategies to find new ones. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that the cost of replacing an employee is at least one-third of the individual’s salary. In the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2004, this amounted to $147,106,125. Investing $3,000 to $4,000 per new teacher for two years is wiser fiscal policy than expending $20,000 or $30,000 to replace a teacher. As a result, savings from wise investment policy can be used to support employment strategies to help Virginia’s school divisions hire the top teachers they need and families expect.

References


National Center for Education Statistics (2004). Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2000–01.


What do residents who choose active adult communities want in terms of their leisure pursuits? Undergraduate students in the Therapeutic Recreation and Exercise Science Program in the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism (RHT) found out during the spring semester. As part of their Therapeutic Recreation course, the students collaborated with active adult residents of the Dunbarton Community in Prince William County, Va., to help determine what the residents want to learn, feel, and accomplish through leisure.

Adults in “55 and Better” communities may be downsizing their mortgage and square footage, but they are hardly ready for a sedentary lifestyle. They may be tired of raking leaves and shoveling snow, but they aren’t necessarily ready to give up working full-time or participating in a full quality of life. Mimi Fittipaldi, an IET education support specialist at George Mason’s Prince William Campus, resides in the Dunbarton community and serves on the Communications Committee. She says she and her husband moved to Dunbarton to “… share good times in a community environment and take advantage of the community’s pool, walking trails, clubhouse, and gym.”

The RHT students assessed residents’ current and future programming interests among classifications such as the arts, self-improvement and education, sports and games, aquatics, environmental, wellness and fitness, hobbies and social activities, volunteerism, and travel and tourism. They also looked at the latest sociodemographics at Dunbarton, as well as constraints to participating in leisure activities as a result of structural or attitudinal barriers. Many of the residents appear to be choosing to age in place rather than move south to a warmer climate. A part of the “sandwich generation,” this demographic group is challenged with both aging parents and children nearby.

“By 202, 55-plus households will comprise 40 percent of all households,” according to Brenda Wiggins, who teaches the course and publishes in the area of programming across the lifespan. “By partnering with Mimi Fittipaldi, a CEHD colleague and Dunbarton homeowner, my students may decide to look for ‘Recreation Director’ or ‘55 and Better Fitness Consultant’ positions upon graduation. The need for such careers already exists.”

Wiggins’ course emphasizes methods of assessment, development of program plans, and strategies for addressing the needs and interests of different populations within both community and clinical settings. Other areas in which the students collaborated during the spring semester included drafting a job description and identifying qualities to
consider for a recreation director, developing marketing strategies to increase community awareness and participation, and setting up a program plan, including activity forms.

With occupancy growing and a new management agency on the horizon, Fittipaldi, the Dunbarton Board of Directors, and Activities Committee members were pleased to gain the benefit of a broader academic perspective while providing the students an opportunity to apply their skills in an evolving “55 and Better” community.

“This joint venture will benefit both Dunbarton residents seeking a more active lifestyle and us RHT students who will potentially be working with this distinct population,” said one person in the class. Noted another, “After collaborating with Dunbarton, we RHT students are looking forward to our own retirement in a community just like it. I want to live here someday!”

Brenda P. Wiggins is an associate professor in the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism, and Mimi Fittipaldi is a program associate in the Initiatives in Educational Transformation Program.
alumni and friends gathered at the Fairfax Campus for a Homecoming Block Party on Feb. 17. Following a week of frigid, snowy weather, the day brought sunny skies and seasonal temperatures. This year’s Homecoming theme was “Green ’n Gold Never Fold,” which signifies the Patriot attitude and the perseverance of the Mason Patriots during last year’s run to the NCAA Final Four. The celebration featured live entertainment and competitions for best decorated block space and most spirited attire. Following the Block Party, the Mason Patriots took on the Kent State Golden Flashes.
As the fiscal year winds down (June 30 marks the last day), those of us in the development business find ourselves with somewhat of a dilemma. Each day on the calendar can either be a celebration—if we find ourselves in the enviable position of successfully surpassing our goals—or more pressure-filled if we are still working to reach our goals. But, with all of that aside, it is also an interesting time because even while we have one eye on the close of the current fiscal year, we are enticed with the promise a new fiscal year (starting July 1) holds. It is a bit like the beginning of a new calendar year—a “clean slate.” New ideas, projects, and initiatives energize you and offer a chance for things to be done bigger and better than the year before.

Yet, until the books are closed, the current fiscal year is our “reality check.” In getting a sense of where things stand, lots of questions come to mind. What are the total dollars raised? Are the donor numbers up or down? (In development, the numbers are your truth.) So, the question becomes, how does the college look as the 2007 fiscal year draws to a close? Mostly, there is good news, but there is also opportunity for improvement.

At the time of the magazine’s publication, the college had raised a total of $76,484—an increase of 11 percent when compared with the same time frame the preceding fiscal year. So, it is good to see the amount of money being raised showing growth. However, one concern after further analysis of the numbers is that although the total dollars have shown some growth, the total dollars contributed by alumni and the total number of alumni donors are both down. This fiscal year (2007), to date, 529 alumni donors have made a gift to the college for a total of $21,738. Last fiscal year (2006), at the same time, 598 alumni donors had made a gift to the college for a total of $24,500.

What do all these numbers tell us? While we are seeing some growth in total dollars raised, our alumni donors and dollars have both decreased by nearly 3 percent.

I think this presents us with an exciting opportunity, and I would like to challenge alumni to work with the college to increase both of these numbers. In particular, I encourage those who have given to continue their support and consider increasing their gift. And, for those who have not yet made a gift, I hope you will consider becoming a donor today. With the ability to designate your gift, you can support a specific program in the college, fund student scholarships, or, with a gift to the unrestricted fund, serve various needs in the college. You have the ability to make a difference wherever it matters most to you.

Analysis of the numbers also shows that as we look to meet the challenge of keeping the number of alumni donors growing, we are deeply grateful to those alumni who consistently give to the college. To encourage this type of support and acknowledge alumni donors who make a gift of $10 or more for five years consecutively, the Proud Patriot Society was created. An honor roll of these donors (broken down by school) can be found online at www.gmu.edu/development/annual/proudpatriots.html. We thank all of the college alumni who are currently members of this society and hope others will show their Patriot Pride and become members!

With the summer closing in upon us, we are beginning to plan alumni chapter events and programs. Involvement in the chapter is important and allows alumni an opportunity to stay connected with and involved in the life of the college. If you are interested in networking with fellow alumni, mentoring current students, participating in professional development activities, or just socializing and having fun with some fellow Patriots, get involved. There is no doubt that for the college to remain a thriving and vibrant academic community, we need the involvement and support of our alumni.

If you want more information on the alumni chapter or have ideas for alumni events, please contact me at srochell@gmu.edu or 703-993-2005.

Shernita Rochelle Parker, Director of Development
College of Education and Human Development
When it began in 1990, CEHD’s FAST TRAIN Program trained foreign affairs spouses to become qualified candidates for teaching positions in international schools. Over the years, the program expanded to reach a broad range of international teachers and students, and for the last six years has been an approved site for the Peace Corps Fellows/USA Program.

The Peace Corps Fellows/USA (PCF/USA) Program at Mason offers an MEd option for returned Peace Corps volunteers, with a Virginia state license allowing them to teach elementary education or English as a Second Language (ESL) in multicultural settings in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

George Mason is part of an exclusive group of about 40 schools participating in the program. The Fellows/USA Program is a way for the Peace Corps to assist returned volunteers with financing their graduate education. About two-thirds of those schools offer an education program. In the Washington, D.C., area, Mason is one of only two schools to offer a PCF/USA Program in education.

“We intentionally limit the number of schools in an area that offer the same program,” says Julie Driver, Fellows/USA marketing specialist. “All universities involved in the program have exceptional programs, and we don’t want the schools to be competing for these students.”

It appears, though, that the choice to attend Mason was clear for several students who attended a reception with Peace Corps leadership at the Fairfax Campus.

“I knew before I left that I wanted to take advantage of the Peace Corps Fellows Program, and when I returned from my assignment, I knew I wanted to be in D.C.,” said Greg Clark, a current student in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program, who served in Nepal with his wife. “I consistently heard great things about the program at Mason from other returned volunteers and that they had a strong program in both domestic and international training, which was important to me.”

Student Amy Dong, who left a career in asset management at Goldman Sachs in New York City to join the Peace Corps, echoed Clark’s sentiments. “The international aspect of the training was important in case I wanted to take the opportunity to teach overseas again. The curriculum is also practical and hands-on instead of just being based on theory.”

Mason’s PCF/USA Program, which currently has 10 students, requires that students make a commitment after completing the program to serve in area schools that are multicultural and schools that have significant numbers of economically disadvantaged students.

According to Sherry Steeley, field coordinator and faculty member in FAST TRAIN, there is a shortage of teachers with strong cross-cultural skills. Returned Peace Corps volunteers are a natural fit for this work in part because of their sense of service and their experience.

“Returned volunteers who go through the Peace Corps Fellows Program are well equipped to take on the task ahead of them,” notes Driver. “They go into the schools with their eyes wide open. They are used to working in underserved, underfunded, and underappreciated areas.”

The fellows have the support of the Peace Corps even after they return to the United States. Every two years, members of the Peace Corps management team visit with current and past students of the PCF/USA Program at Mason. They make a day out of visiting schools and seeing graduates in action, talking with current students and also speaking with program administrators to discuss ways they can assist.

As Driver notes, “Once you are a member of the Peace Corps, you are always a part of the family.”

This story appeared in a slightly different format in the Mason Gazette.
Norton Receives Virginia Outstanding Faculty Award

Priscilla Norton, CEHD professor of instructional technology, has received an Outstanding Faculty Award from Virginia Gov. Timothy Kaine. She was recognized along with 11 other outstanding faculty members from Virginia’s public and private colleges and universities for excellence in teaching, research, knowledge integration, and public service. Norton was the only faculty member recognized for a “Teaching with Technology” emphasis. The recipients were selected from a pool of 95 candidates nominated by their peers.

“Students and citizens across the commonwealth benefit from the academic research and instructional leadership demonstrated by these remarkable faculty members,” Kaine said at a ceremony in Richmond. “These recipients come from every region of the state and represent diverse disciplines, and their dedication to scholarly pursuits has helped Virginia’s colleges and universities remain among the finest in the nation.”

Norton, who has taught at Mason for 10 years, is noted for providing a conceptual framework for revolutionizing curricular design for online learning while transforming school communities through her graduate programs for teachers. Her own teaching and education of K–12 teachers are the objects of her research and publication, and she is actively involved with international, national, and local activities to facilitate the integration of technology with the learning of a broad range of students.

Norton collaborates closely with Georgetown University and the U.S. Agency for International Development, supporting efforts to bring technology to schools throughout the Republic of Macedonia. She also served as external evaluator for three grants in support of the U.S. Department of Education’s PT3 program, facilitating the preparation of tomorrow’s teachers in technology integration.

Graduates of her programs have assumed significant leadership roles as university professors, directors of technology, and technology and curriculum specialists. A large percentage of the technology resource teachers in Northern Virginia school systems are graduates of her programs.

Norton spearheaded a collaboration of three school districts to develop an innovative virtual high school offering courses grounded in her design model. In 2006, she received a Governor’s Technology Award for Innovative Use of Technology in K–12 Education for this initiative.

The Outstanding Faculty Awards are administered by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and funded by a grant from the Dominion Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Dominion, an integrated energy company. The Virginia General Assembly and governor created the awards program in 1986 to recognize the finest among Virginia’s faculty.

Following are some notable achievements of CEHD faculty, staff, and administration in recent months.

David Anderson, associate professor in the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism and director of the Center for the Advancement of Public Health, gave the lecture, “Legacy of Life: Creating Healthy Futures,” as part of George Mason University’s Vision Series. The session highlighted seven convictions for healthier living, incorporating practical strategies for individual and collective action. The inaugural year of the Vision Series, offered free of charge to the community, featured distinguished Mason faculty members speaking on the topics that most engage them.

Michael Behrmann, director of the Kellar Institute for Human disAbilities, received an Education Leadership Award from The Arc of Northern Virginia, which advocates on behalf of Virginians with intellectual, cognitive, and related developmental disabilities. The award recognized Behrmann’s work to create opportunities that allow students with disabilities to work, learn, and compete alongside their peers without disabilities. In addition, George Mason University received a Lifetime Achievement Award for its contribution to people with disabilities through its employment programs, the LIFE (Learning into Future Environments) Program, and other initiatives.

Fred Bemak and Rita Chi-Ying Chung, professors in the Graduate School of Education, traveled to Myanmar (formerly Burma) to assist with an ongoing project to develop effective prevention and intervention programs to curb the exploitation of children. The research for Save the Children, UK, addresses girls who have been trafficked across the border to Thailand for commercial sex work and child labor. Bemak and Chung spoke with the girls, family members, com-
munity leaders, and non-governmental leaders to help them understand the issues that are creating problems with reintegrating the girls into families and communities. Based on the research, they will help to develop programs that will be more effective in promoting family and community reintegration.

Nada Dabbagh, associate professor in the Graduate School of Education, was a keynote speaker at the E-Learning International Conference, “Learning Theories vs. Technologies,” sponsored by Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok. The title of her address was “E-Learning: A Transformative Approach to Integrating Theory and Technology.” Further information about the conference can be found at http://ru-conference.ru.ac.th/index.html.


Joan Isenberg, associate dean for outreach and program development, had the lead entry on early childhood teacher education published in the newly released four-volume set, *Early Childhood Education: An International Encyclopedia*, edited by Rebecca S. New and Moncrieff Cochran and published by Praeger Publishers. The entry delineates the historical and philosophical traditions of the field, analyzes the literature on early childhood teacher education and teacher learning, and highlights the contemporary influences on early childhood teacher education.

Joan Isenberg, associate dean for outreach and program development, and Jennifer McCreadie, director of assessment and program evaluation, were awarded continuation funding of $25,000 by The John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for their project titled “Evaluation of Changing Education through the Arts Program.”

Margo Mastropieri and Tom Scroggs, Graduate School of Education, have been named by George Mason University as university professors, the highest academic designation bestowed on faculty. They are the only university professors currently employed in CEHD. Larry Bowen, deceased, was a university professor for several years prior to his death in 2002.

Jorge Osterling, associate professor in the Graduate School of Education, conducted an in-service teacher training on multiculturalism and second language acquisition at the State of Cundinamarca’s Teacher Cooperative School in Bogota, Colombia. Established in 1958 as a PK–12 laboratory school, the Colegio Cooperativo del Magisterio de Cundinamarca serves about 400 low-income students. Its mission is to create, evaluate, disseminate, and support quality educational programs for all students and teachers.

David Wiggins, director of the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism, was appointed editor of *Quest*, the journal of the National Association for Kinesiology and Physical Education in Higher Education. He previously served as associate editor for three years. Wiggins also was invited to serve on the Editorial Board of the *African American National Biography* to be published by Oxford University Press. The work will include 4,000 biographies in an eight-volume print edition and another 1,000 biographies available only online.

S. Shelley Wong, associate professor in the Graduate School of Education, was chosen president-elect of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Inc. She will serve a three-year term on the Executive Committee and Board of Directors.

CEHD’s Center for the Advancement of Public Health (CAPH) was selected by the Youth Initiative Office in Loudoun County, Va., to conduct a formal assessment of activities and services provided to the county’s youth.

David Anderson, CAPH director, and Laurie Dopkins, Mason associate research professor of sociology, conducted the research and provided a strategic plan, including potential partnership options with the university. For an executive summary of the findings, visit the CAPH website at www.caph.gmu.edu or contact Anderson at 703-993-3697 or danderso@gmu.edu.

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**Name Change for Hemlock Overlook**

The Hemlock Overlook Center for Outdoor Education has a new name: the Hemlock Overlook Center for Experiential Education. George Mason Provost Peter Stearns and CEHD Dean Jeff Gorrell approved the name change.

Hemlock Director Susan Johnson notes that the phrase “experiential education” is more in line with the center’s mission: facilitate, educate, and involve individuals and organizations through experiential team-building and environmental education, while fostering growth and leadership development.

“The old name was somewhat misleading in that the center does not offer outdoor recreation activities such as rock climbing, kayaking, and white water rafting that are commonly associated with outdoor recreation,” she says. “The opportunities offered at the center actually focus on what is generally known as experiential learning, for example through internships, practicums, research projects, the team development course, corporate training, and student leadership opportunities.”
**Alumni News**

**Susan E. Bridges ’88,** principal of Richardson Elementary School in Culpeper, Va., was one of 65 outstanding elementary and middle school principals named as a 2006 National Distinguished Principal by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the U.S. Department of Education.

**Rebecca Fox ’93, ’99; Diane Painter ’74, ’94; and Gail Ritchie ’93, ’06** co-wrote two articles in the spring edition of *The Teacher Educators’ Journal.* The first is titled “The Growth of Reflective Practice: Planting the Seed.” The second, written with Professor Julie Kidd, is titled “The Growth of Reflective Practice: Teachers’ Portfolios as Windows and Mirrors.” Both articles present findings of a program-level portfolio research study to determine through candidates’ critical reflective statements 1) what they learned from their advanced master’s degree programs that align with the Core Propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and 2) how they use this knowledge and apply it to their own professional practice.

**Kari Isbister (Bostick) ’00** married Jeffrey Isbister, an air traffic controller at Boston’s Logan Airport, and now lives in Stoughton, Mass., where she stays home to take care of the couple’s two sons, Nathaniel (22 months) and Gavin (5 months).

**Linda Mycko ’95** had her first book published. *Using Excel to Create Interactive Games* enables teachers to create interactive games based on their curriculum for students.

**Linda G. Trexler ’71, ’90** was one of 18 recipients of the Washington Post’s Distinguished Education Leadership Award in 2006. As principal of Neabsco Elementary in Prince William County, Va., she is credited by both students and parents for the school’s remarkable turnaround.

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**Obituaries**

**Margaret Anne Braun ’78** died at age 82 on Feb. 25 at Inova Mount Vernon Hospital after a heart attack. A graduate of the Counseling and Development program, she helped students at Alexandria’s Mount Vernon High School by providing guidance and counseling on pre-college planning.

**Robert T. Petruska ’91** died Sept. 18, 2006. A resident of Gainesville, Va., he was a graduate of the Education Leadership Program.

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**Kyle Wilson ’05 Dies in Line of Duty**

Kyle Robert Wilson ’05, a firefighter for the Prince William County, Va., Department of Fire and Rescue, died on April 16 while searching a burning house for occupants. He was the first Prince William County firefighter to die in the line of duty in the 41-year history of the department.

A native of Prince William County, Wilson received a bachelor of science in athletic training in 2005 from the School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism. He had been a member of the Prince William Department of Fire and Rescue since January 2006.

“Kyle heroically gave his life in the service of others,” says Shane Caswell, director of the Athletic Training Education Program. “He was a bright, energetic student who was well-liked by his peers.”

A fund has been set up for Wilson’s family. Checks made payable to the Kyle Wilson Fund can be sent to the Prince William Professional Fire Fighters, 5521 Mapledale Plaza, Dale City, Va., 22193.
KEEP US IN THE LOOP!

Do you have a new job? Just get married? New addition to the family? Published a new book or article? We want to know all this—and more! Please keep us, and your fellow alumni, up to date on the latest happening in your life.

Return this form to: College of Education and Human Development, Office of Development and Alumni Outreach, 4400 University Drive, MS 2F1, Fairfax, VA 22030, or e-mail your updates to: srochell@gmu.edu.

You may also update your information online at www.gmu.edu/alumni and click on Alumni Directory.

Name ______________________________________________________________________________________

Degree _________________________________________________________ Year of Graduation _____________

Address ____________________________________________________________________________________

Telephone ___________________________ (home) ___________________________ (work)

Preferred e-mail ____________________________________________________________________________

Employer __________________________________________________________________________________

Share your news ______________________________________________________________________________

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___________________________________________________________________________________________

I am interested in getting more involved. Please send me information on:

☒ CEHD Alumni Chapter ☐ Supporting CEHD ☐ CEHD Admissions ☐ Other: ________________________
Ways to reconnect, get involved, and have some fun!

The CEHD Chapter of the George Mason University Alumni Association (GMUAA) continues to plan interesting and exciting events for alumni of the college. If you have a suggestion, please share it with us by e-mailing srochell@gmu.edu.

The calendar highlights a few upcoming GMUAA events. These events, open to all alumni, are a fun way to get to know fellow alumni of CEHD or other colleges and schools at the university. For more information on individual events, go to http://www.gmu.edu/alumni/activity.html.

In the next few months, the CEHD Chapter will be scheduling events. We encourage you to visit the website, cehd.gmu.edu, for more information.

June 2007

14 New York City Alumni Invited to Summer Mixer
20 Chicago Alumni Host Happy Hour
21 Hampton Roads Area Alumni Host Happy Hour Social
23 New York City Area Alumni Bowling Outing
28 Denver Area Alumni Host Happy Hour Social

Remember, Once A Patriot, Always a Patriot!

To stay involved in the life of the university and the college, we suggest that you:

1. Volunteer your time
2. Attend an Alumni Association event
3. Support Mason athletics by attending a game
4. Return to campus and attend Homecoming festivities each February
5. Participate in an alumni chapter activity
6. Support Mason through a financial contribution
7. Join the Career Network Online to provide career advice to Mason students and alumni

For more ideas on how you can be engaged and stay involved in the life of the university and college, go to http://www.gmu.edu/alumni/15ways/.
SAVE THE DATE

Make the Message Matter:
Engaging Diverse School Communities

July 24–25, 2007
George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia

Program themes will include:

Demographic changes in school divisions
Communication with diverse communities
Leadership capacity to respond and be proactive
How to build trust within the school community

Keynote Speakers:

Gloria Ladson-Billings
Kellner Family Professor of Urban Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and faculty affiliate in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Pedro Noguera
Professor in the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University and executive director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education

Cost: $325

Plan to attend this informative Make the Message Matter summer institute.

Hosted by George Mason University’s College of Education and Human Development, in collaboration with Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William County Public Schools

Check the web site for periodic updates.

http://makethemessagematter.gmu.edu
Once a Patriot, Always a Patriot!

Show your “Patriot Pride” with Mason address labels or license plates (for Virginia drivers). Also visit the bookstore for Mason apparel. For more information, go to www.gmu.edu/alumni/prod.html.