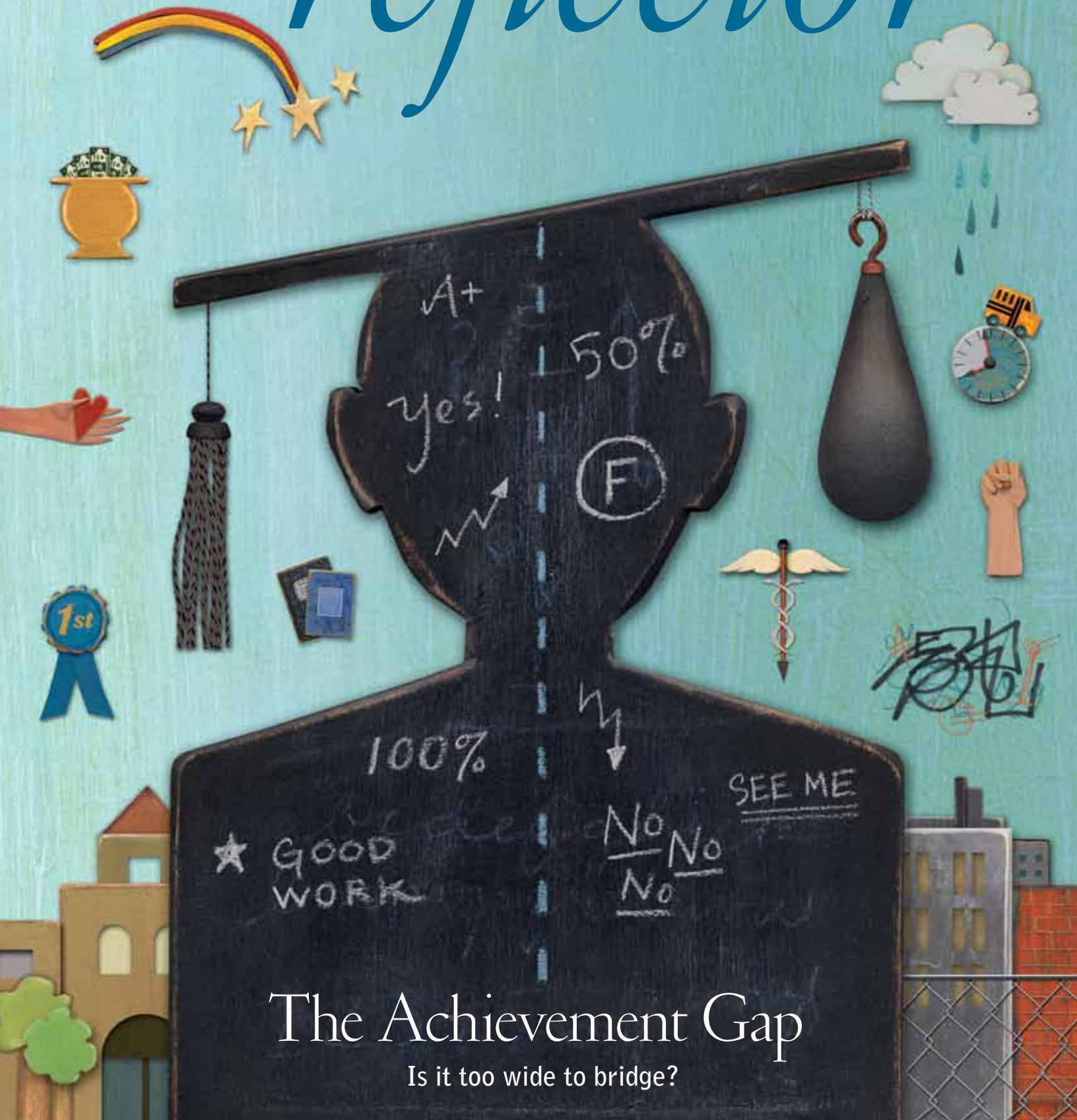


P E A B O D Y

reflector



The Achievement Gap

Is it too wide to bridge?

The Peabody Journal of Education



The Peabody Journal of Education (PJE), America's second-longest running publication devoted exclusively to educational research, practice and policy, is committed to providing information and reasoned opinion that will enhance understanding and practice among institutions and individuals concerned with human learning and development.

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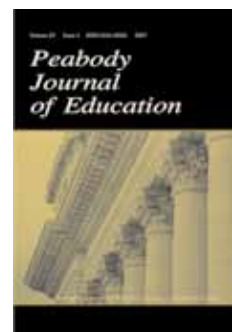
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JAMES GUTHRIE



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Associate Dean James Hogge looks at two very different decades in the dean's office



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WOLF HOFFMAN

Among the many challenges facing American education, the achievement gap remains one of the most insidious and resistant to change.

By the fourth grade, African American and Latino students run three academic years behind their white peers.

Only 55 percent of Latino and 51 percent of African American students graduate from high school, compared to 79 percent of Asian students and 76 percent of white students.

Of students who enter college, the gap in completion rates between minority students and their white peers is about 20 percentage points, with only about 40 percent of minority students graduating within six years.

Following schooling, the achievement gap becomes an economic gap that reinforces a negative cycle. Adults with only a high school degree are estimated to earn \$1 million less over the course of their lifetimes than those with a college degree. In the current recession, the unemployment rate for high school graduates is more than twice that of college graduates.

These dismal statistics reflect a picture that has changed little since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was first passed in 1965 with the hope that it would equalize educational opportunities for low-income students. With the ESEA up for reauthorization, it comes as little surprise that Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has been framing education as “the civil rights issue of our generation.”

So it is perhaps appropriate that in this issue of *The Reflector*, we take a long look at the many dimensions of the achievement gap, and the many ways that Peabody College faculty are working to address this vexing educational and social problem.

Also in this issue, Associate Dean James Hogge reflects on two very different decades of service in the dean’s office. As Jim prepares for a “partial” retirement beginning this summer, I would be remiss in not taking this opportunity to offer my heartfelt thanks for his 43 years of service to Peabody College. We are extremely grateful.

CAMILLA P. BENBOW

Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development



STEVE GREEN

Peabody launches new research office

Peabody College has launched a new central research office to create a more integrated and robust infrastructure for faculty, students and staff involved in research.

“The Peabody Research Office, or PRO, will serve as the front door for research at Peabody. It was created in response to faculty recommendations,” said Craig Kennedy, associate dean for research and director of the new office. “Our long-term goals are to provide research support to the Peabody community and to facilitate new research collaborations and initiatives.”

PRO integrates several previously distinct entities—the Learning Sciences Institute, Office of Research Enhancement and Office of Research Compliance—into a single entity. Office staff will specialize in National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation and Department of Education grants, will establish

a research information portal on the Web and will integrate information technology into grant development.

“As part of our long-term commitment to research at Peabody, we reviewed research support needs this spring to better ascertain existing and future needs,” Kennedy said. “This process is designed to result in improved research supports in statistics, information technology, database integration and other research needs.”

Morton-Young receives Distinguished Alumna Award

Nashville activist, scholar and author Tommie Morton-Young received the Distinguished Alumna Award from Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College of education and human development during Commencement ceremonies on Friday, May 14. Morton-Young earned her master of arts in library science in 1955,

becoming the first African American to graduate from George Peabody College for Teachers, as it was then named.

Morton-Young is a Nashville native who attended public schools and received her undergraduate degree cum laude from Tennessee State University. After receiving her master’s degree from Peabody, she went on to earn a Ph.D. from Duke University.

During her career, she has held many positions in government and higher education. She served as a researcher for the U.S. Navy Library in Washington, D.C., and did transliteration in Russian for the Library of Congress. She also taught at several universities, including Atlanta University, Tennessee State University, the University of Wisconsin, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Central University and North Carolina A&T State University. She retired from the University of North Carolina system as a full professor.

On May 14, the lawn in front of the Wyatt Center (Social-Religious Building) was awash in blue tassels as 204 M.Ed., 13 M.P.P. and 22 Ed.D. degrees were awarded. Additionally, 315 B.S. degrees were awarded to newly-minted Peabody alumni on Vanderbilt’s Alumni Lawn.



DANIEL DUBOIS

Tommie Morton-Young, MA'55, was named distinguished alumna for 2010 for her contribution as Peabody's first African American graduate as well as her scholarly work and activism during a long academic career.

"Tommie Morton-Young made a signal contribution to the history of Peabody in 1955," said Camilla P. Benbow, Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development at Peabody. "But more importantly, she has used her education to strengthen the lives of children, families and communities, especially those which too often are marginalized."

"I am genuinely honored to be named as the Distinguished Peabody Alumna for 2010," said Morton-Young. "The college has a distinguished history and reputation, and as the first African American to graduate from the institution many years ago, I am pleased to name it among my alma maters."

Smith earns honors

Wyatt Smith, Ingram Scholar and president of Vanderbilt Student Government, has been named this year's recipient of Vanderbilt's Michael B. Keegan Traveling Fellowship. The goal of the fellowship is to develop future

leaders through world travel and experiential learning. Graduating seniors awarded the fellowship have the opportunity to pursue an idea or an issue, about which they are impassioned, in the context of daily life in communities around the world.

Smith, who is from Reform, Ala., graduated in May with majors in human and organizational development and political science. He carries a minor in economics and a concentration in public policy. In his project, titled "What Constitutes Empowerment? Exploring the Global Intersection of Democracy, Poverty and Citizenship," Smith plans to travel to democracies spanning six continents while exploring the pursuits of religious freedom, economic opportunity,



STEVE GREEN

Wyatt Smith

educational access and political participation in free societies across the world.

Smith has also been selected as the 2010 Young Alumni Trustee for the Vanderbilt Board of Trust.

Second straight year at No. 1 for Peabody

Vanderbilt's Peabody College of education and human development is ranked as the best graduate school of education in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report* for the second consecutive year.

In rankings published in the May edition of *U.S. News & World Report*, Peabody programs in Administration/Supervision and Special Education were also named No. 1 in the nation. Also ranked were Peabody programs in Education Policy (No. 4), Elementary Education (No. 5), Higher Education Administration (tied at No. 6), Educational Psychology (No. 7) and Curriculum/Instruction (tied at No. 9). With its overall No. 1 score of 100, Peabody was 9 points ahead of its nearest competitor.

"We are exceptionally pleased to retain the first-place ranking and strengthen our hold on the position," said Dean Benbow. "It confirms the quality of our people and programs, and it adds weight to our efforts to strengthen education for all learners."

The annual graduate school rankings are based on surveys of more than 1,200 programs and 12,400 academics conducted in fall 2009. Individual program rankings were based on ratings from academic experts.

Faculty News

Dale Ballou, associate professor of public policy and education, has been asked to serve on a committee to advise the Institute of Education Sciences on the strategy to evaluate the use and impact of education stimulus funding (for example, Race to the Top funds), and whether the projects being funded improve schooling.

Sandra Barnes, professor of human and organizational development, has been elected president of the Association of Black Sociologists.

Leonard Bickman, Betts Professor, was awarded a Fulbright Senior Scholarship to study in Australia from September 2010 to January 2011.

John Braxton, professor of education, received the 2009 Chancellor's Cup from Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos during Homecoming week in October. The Chancellor's Cup is given annually for "the greatest contribution outside the classroom to undergraduate student-faculty relationships in the recent past." The faculty member's contribution "shall be one of educational importance, relevant to the central purpose of the university." Braxton's research centers on the college student experience, the sociology of the academic profession and academic course-level processes. He is currently involved in developing programming for Vanderbilt students after they leave The Commons and become upperclassmen.

Bruce Compas, Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Psychology and Human Development, has been appointed chair of the Psychosocial Development, Risk and Prevention Study Section of the National Institutes of Health's Center for Scientific Review.

David Dickinson, professor of education, served as a featured guest speaker at the sixth International Convention on Early Child Development in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January. In March, he, **Ellen Goldring** and **Karen Harris** were selected as American Education Research Association Fellows "in recognition of their exceptional scientific or scholarly contributions to education research or significant contributions to the field through the development of research opportunities and settings." They were inducted in May during AERA's 91st annual meeting in Denver, Colo. Goldring, holder of a Patricia and Rodes Hart Chair, is chair of the Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations, and Harris is Currey Ingram Professor of Special Education.

Corbette Doyle, lecturer in organizational leadership, received the 2009 Plus 1 Award from the Professional Liability Underwriting Society. She joins the ranks of CEOs of major insurance companies who have received the award and is the award's first female recipient.

Steve Elliott, Dunn Family Professor of Educational and Psychological Assessment, received a three-year appointment to the Educational Testing Services visiting research panel. Steve has also been appointed director of research and scientific practice of the Society for the Study of School Psychology.

Robert Jiménez, professor of language, literacy and culture, has been named a winner of the Joyce Morris Article Award from the International Reading Association for his article in the area of the history of reading instruction.

Mark Lipsey, director of the Peabody Research Institute, was appointed by Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen to the Governor's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council in February. The new council will collaborate with and coordinate the services of state and local government agencies and non-governmental entities in the criminal justice system to increase public safety. The council is composed of 19 members representing state and municipal officials, the judicial system, law enforcement and other stakeholders.

Velma McBride Murry, Betts Professor of Education and Human Development, has been appointed as a member of the Board on Children, Youth and Families of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine.

Deborah Rowe, associate professor of education, has won the Dina Feitelson Research Award from the International Reading Association for her article, "The Social Construction of Intentionality: Two-Year-Olds' and Adults' Participation at a Preschool Writing Center." The article was published in 2008 in the journal *Research in the Teaching of English*. The award was presented in April at the International Reading Association's annual meeting in Chicago.

Beth Shinn, professor of human and organizational development, co-authored *Toward Positive Youth Development: Transforming Schools and Community Programs* (Oxford University Press). The book received the 2010 Social Policy Edited Book Award from the Society for Research on Adolescence.



STEVE GREEN

Alice Bator, Moses Musaaazi, Ogechi Achuko, president of the African Student Union, and Sarah Quirk

Building a bridge between Uganda and Vanderbilt

Peabody students Alice Bator and Sarah Quirk spent just two months in Uganda during the summer of 2009, but walked away with a lifetime of knowledge in topics ranging from technology, sustainability, diplomacy, community organizing, economic development, women's rights and much more.

Bator and Quirk traveled to Uganda to further the work of Kasiisi Project Vanderbilt, which they founded. Kasiisi Project Vanderbilt supports the national nonprofit Kasiisi Project, which aids schoolchildren in rural western Uganda by building schools, funding scholarships and promoting conservation education.

"I have been involved with Kasiisi Project since fifth grade,"

said Bator, a Peabody junior majoring in human and organizational development and a member of the Peabody Scholars program. "In 2008, Sarah and I introduced it to Vanderbilt."

In the summer of 2009, Bator and Quirk traveled to Uganda to meet Kasiisi students and communities and to work on a project that blended invention and economic development to help Kasiisi schoolgirls. That project, led by Moses Musaaazi, a professor of electrical engineering at Makerere University, centers on producing affordable, biodegradable sanitary pads.

"In Africa, particularly Uganda, many girls miss school because they don't have access to sanitary pads. In the past, the pads were 100 percent imported and too expensive. My goal was to find

an appropriate napkin, produced by local materials, that was affordable to local girls," Musaaazi said during a November 2009 visit to Vanderbilt.

"Dr. Moses Musaaazi is probably the smartest man I've ever met," Bator said. "Having this exposure to appropriate technology was fascinating. All of his solutions are affordable and can be made from local materials."

Not only are schoolgirls now able to afford pads, enabling them to stay in school, the women constructing the pads have also been transformed.

"Lifestyles have changed—women who had not been earning a single dollar now are making \$200 a month," Musaaazi said. "They are economically independent and they can make a better home."

While in Uganda, Bator and Quirk interviewed girls, gave out samples of pads to receive feedback, conducted research and advocated for the project with both public and private organizations.

“It was an amazing experience,” said Quirk, a junior majoring in human and organizational development who plans to pursue a career in nursing. “We met with people at embassies and banks, wrote a proposal for using white waste paper to make the pads and did public relations work with the community.”

“It was the most independent thing either of us has ever done,” Bator said. “We found an apartment and lived in the city. I had opportunities that I would never have here—meeting with UNICEF, the World Bank and other organizations. We were also asked to give a presentation to the Ugandan government. These are things that 20-year-olds don’t generally get to do.”

Video about the project can be seen on YouTube; search “Vanderbilt Kasiisi Project.”

An urban teachers master’s program

Educators wishing to teach in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) will have the opportunity to earn a Peabody master’s degree designed expressly for them beginning this summer.

The new program is focused on improving teaching in urban middle schools and is the result of a partnership between Peabody and MNPS. Sharon Yates, lecturer in education, will direct the new program.

“Peabody College and MNPS both share a goal of improving learning for Nashville’s students,

and highly effective teachers make the critical difference,” Dean Benbow said. “We are very excited to be partnering with Metro on an innovative program like this.”

The program will prepare students to teach in upper elementary grades through grade eight with a focus on one of three areas: literacy, mathematics or science. It will be open to recent college graduates, as well as new and existing teachers.

“This program will serve multiple purposes,” MNPS Director of Schools Jesse Register said. “It will provide top training to our teachers, which will directly impact classroom instruction, and it will assist in our recruitment of the country’s most talented and promising young teachers.”

A primary goal of the new program, Teaching and Learning in Urban Schools, is recruiting and retaining excellent teachers who will continue teaching in MNPS schools after they graduate. The program will focus on improving instruction, improving student outcomes, changing assessment practices and creating communities of reflective, committed teachers dedicated to working with their MNPS colleagues to foster systemic improvement.

For more, visit: <http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/x11615.xml>.



Dean Benbow and Jesse Register, Metro Nashville Director of Schools

Cutting-edge talk about school choice

With the Obama administration highlighting school choice as a likely reform strategy, interest in how parents choose a school is more intense than ever. “School Choice and School Improvement: Research into State, District and Community Contexts,” was hosted by the National Center on School Choice in late October.

The conference looked at school choice issues as top researchers from across the country discussed the topic in its expanding array of forms, including charter schools, magnet schools and vouchers and inter- and intra-district choice programs. The conference explored such questions as: What leads parents to choose charter or private schools over the nearby public school, and how do they make those decisions? What can be done when family choices or district policies increase segregation at both traditional public schools and schools of choice? Do charter schools skim the best students and teachers away from neighborhood public schools? How is school choice playing out in countries other than the United States?

The conference brought together 130 scholars, graduate students and practitioners from 22 states as well as Australia, Ecuador and the Netherlands. Practitioners included teachers, school administrators, state education officials, foundation officers and representatives of advocacy groups. Discussions focused

on how place matters in the world of school choice. Choice programs vary greatly across different communities, districts and states and so do their effects on schools, families and expectations about education.

For more, visit: www.vanderbilt.edu/schoolchoice

Peabody housing experts collaborate on \$31 million grant

Peabody housing experts think struggling Nashville neighborhoods will get some relief from nearly \$31 million in Recovery Act funding awarded to the Metropolitan Development and

Housing Agency (MDHA) by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

“This award is a wonderful opportunity for Nashville and a credit to the reputation of MDHA,” said Susan Saegert, professor of human and organizational development and director of the Vanderbilt Center for Community Studies. The Center for Community Studies assisted with the grant proposal through research and data analysis.

The grant—the only one given in Tennessee—will support efforts to stabilize weakened neighborhoods through purchasing and rehabilitating foreclosed and

abandoned properties, redeveloping vacant properties as housing and establishing a financing mechanism for low- to middle-income homebuyers of foreclosed properties.

The award was given under HUD’s Neighborhood Stabilization Program to spur economic development in hard-hit communities and create jobs. Nationally, nearly 60 grantees representing states, local governments and non-profit housing developers received \$2 billion in competitive funding.



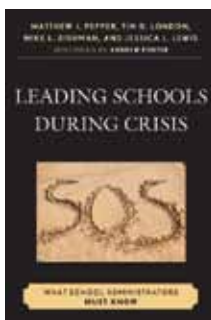
Susan Saegert

Read About It

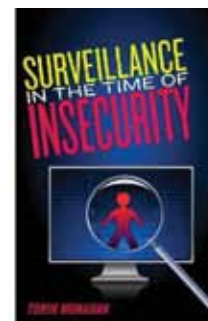
Employee Engagement: A Roadmap for Creating Profits, Optimizing Performance and Increasing Loyalty (Jossey-Bass, 2009) by **Brad Federman**, MEd’93. There is mounting evidence that employee engagement keenly correlates to individual, group and corporate performance in areas such as retention, productivity, customer service and loyalty. This book provides a comprehensive framework, language and process offering a research-based blueprint for looking at employee engagement with the same regularity and importance as any other aspect of the organization.



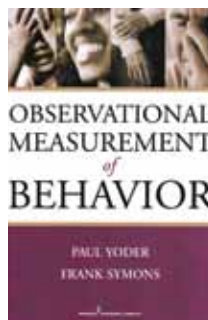
Leading Schools During Crisis (Rowman Littlefield Education, 2009) by **Matthew J. Pepper**, MA’04, MEd’07; with **Tim London**, EdD’07; **Mike Dishman**, EdD’07; and **Jessica King Lewis**, BA’03, EdD’07. Analyzing the leadership and behaviors of principals who face situations threatening the continuing existence of their school, this scholarly and practice-oriented book proposes the first school-specific model of defining and analyzing crises. Through authentic case studies, it offers a detailed theoretical and practical analysis of each crisis and the lessons from it for all school leaders.



Surveillance in the Time of Insecurity (Rutgers University Press, 2010) by **Torin Monahan**, associate professor of human and organizational development and medicine. By exploring the counterterrorism-themed television show *24*, rapture fiction, traffic control centers, security conferences, identity theft, public housing and gated communities and examining how each manifests complex relationships of inequality, insecurity and surveillance, Monahan fuses advanced theoretical accounts of state power with research from the social settings in which insecurity dynamics play out.



Observational Measurement of Behavior (Springer Publishing Company, 2010) by **Paul Yoder**, MS’79, professor of special education, and **Frank Symons**, director of the Observational Methods Lab in the College of Education and Human Development at University of Minnesota. Focusing on both group and single-subject research design, it is intended as a text for graduate school courses that teach students how to conduct research using both types of designs. The book also addresses methods now enabled by computer software that many older texts do not address.



From Trepidation to Triumph

*Dean James Hogge looks
back on two very different
decades at Peabody*



JOHN RUSSELL

BY Associate Dean James Hogge

I have been privileged to serve Peabody as associate dean in two decades: in the 1980s and in the first 10 years of the 21st century (actually, since 1998). Two more disparate decades would be difficult to imagine.

My first decade as a Peabody associate dean began in 1980, a few months after the merger with Vanderbilt. The two-thirds of the Peabody faculty who had survived the merger were fearful about the future, and with good reason—enrollments had plummeted, and the college had no robust and sustaining revenue streams. In the first few years after merger, Peabody's annual deficit was double the subvention of \$750,000 that was to be provided in each of our first 10 years as Vanderbilt's college of education and human development. Elsewhere in the university many predicted that Peabody would be unable to achieve financial viability. The situation was "touch and go"; many at Peabody feared that someone would touch them on the shoulder and tell them to go.

Peabody's first regular dean, Willis Hawley, took the helm from Acting Dean Hardy Wilcoxon in

1980 and immediately began recruiting new faculty who would increase Peabody's research capacity and ability to secure external funding. In addition, he worked with Peabody faculty to develop new and innovative academic programs that would absorb excess faculty and attract new students, especially at the undergraduate level. Peabody's surviving faculty proved to be admirably adaptable and willing to take on new assignments, with many beginning to teach undergraduates for the first time in years. In this first decade a group of faculty led by Professor Robert Innes established a new program, Human Development, that later was renamed Human and Organizational Development (HOD) and was destined to become Vanderbilt's most popular undergraduate major. The success of HOD was fundamental to Peabody's eventual financial viability.

Despite their post-merger anxiety, Peabody's faculty and students were able to laugh at themselves and their situation. For example, the faculty- and student-produced skits of the "Peabody Follies" early in Dean Hawley's administration included a "program

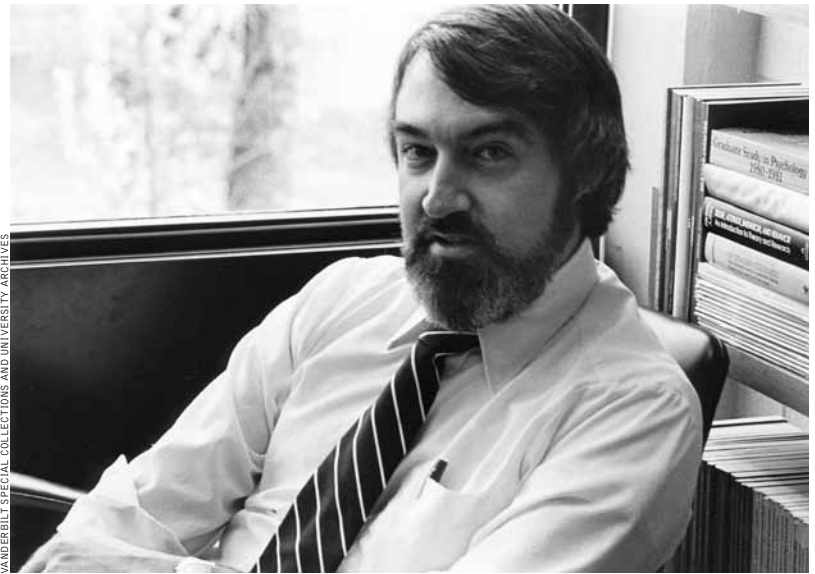
name generator,” operated by associate deans, that parodied our frantic efforts to rebuild enrollments. In addition, Dean Hawley donned tennis shoes and a cardigan sweater in an impersonation of Mr. Rogers singing “You’ll Never Go Down the Drain.” In that uncertain first post-merger decade all of us needed to reassure each other that Peabody’s survival was possible.

In 1990 I left the dean’s office to resume work as a faculty member in the Department of Psychology and Human Development. Dean Hawley, whose administration ended in 1989, initially was replaced by Acting Dean Joseph Cunningham, who was followed by Dean James Pellegrino. By 1998, the end of Dean Pellegrino’s administration, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Peabody 10th in the United States among graduate schools of education. During the 1990s Peabody also began completing fiscal years with surpluses, leading one central administration official to comment that Peabody was no longer viewed as a problem. Instead, it had become “part of the solution.”

Substantial investments in Peabody’s strategic plan, continuing success in the recruitment of nationally prominent faculty who garner ever-increasing external funding, and growing numbers of stellar students have propelled Peabody to the level described in our vision of 10 years ago.

I returned to the dean’s office in 1998, when Dean Camilla Benbow began her first appointment as Peabody’s leader. While the survival of Peabody no longer was in doubt, the college was experiencing growing pains and organizational challenges that threatened its financial stability and increasing excellence.

For example, the HOD major’s popularity had begun to imperil its continued success. With more than 700 students and its faculty scattered across several departments, the program had become administratively unwieldy. After considerable discussion, the Department of Human and Organiza-



James Hogge in 1979, at the time of Peabody’s merger with Vanderbilt. In 1980, Hogge began his first decade as associate dean.

tional Development was created to manage most of the HOD major’s core curriculum, two of its tracks, its required internship and three related graduate programs. The major’s policy-related courses and three of its tracks were lodged in the existing Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations. In addition, department-spanning coordinating committees were created to guarantee program coherence. These changes helped assure the future success of the HOD program.

Early in Dean Benbow’s administration it also became apparent that Peabody needed to restrain expenses—primarily through budgetary adjustments and the achievement of leaner administrative staffing—while diversifying its sources of sustaining revenue. Fifth-year master’s programs were created to make it possible for undergraduates to earn a master’s degree with one additional year of study, master’s programs in additional specialty areas were created, and existing master’s programs were expanded. At the same time, Peabody’s portfolio of externally funded projects was enlarged through continuing recruitment of eminent scholars in all departments. In the same time period, the Kennedy Center was extended from a Peabody-based unit to a transinstitutional research enterprise. And, Peabody’s star continued to rise as promised in our strategic plan.

Dean Benbow arrived as the university was in the midst of strategic academic planning. In 2000, as part of that exercise, the faculty and academic leaders of Peabody College developed a strategic plan

that painted a mostly prescient vision of Peabody College in 2010:

... the Peabody College of 2010 will be widely recognized as the place where collaborative, multidisciplinary research involving scholars throughout Vanderbilt University is producing the most exciting discoveries in the areas of how people learn and develop, how teaching at all levels can be made more effective, how education can capitalize to the fullest on emerging technologies, and how social context affects these activities. It also will be recognized as a leader in applying this knowledge to facilitate lifelong learning, optimize human development, prevent or ameliorate developmental disabilities, reform both teacher education and graduate education, and render the institutions of education more effective. As a result of Peabody's contributions, Vanderbilt University will be well on the way to surpassing such institutions as Harvard and Stanford in being recognized as the university with the very best school of education (and human development) in America.

Substantial investments in Peabody's strategic plan, continuing success in the recruitment of nation-

ally prominent faculty who garner ever-increasing external funding, and growing numbers of stellar students have propelled Peabody to the level described in our vision of 10 years ago. In the 2010 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings of graduate schools of education, Peabody was ranked number one for the second year in a row, with Stanford and Harvard tied for number three.

Disparate decades, indeed!

What might the future hold for Peabody? The college's strong financial position, superb faculty, outstanding students and accomplished alumni portend continued leadership in education and human development. Peabody's entrepreneurial and adaptive community of scholars will, as in previous years, continue to make important and influential contributions to the knowledge base while pursuing lines of investigation enabled by the emergence of new technical capabilities (e.g., in brain science). At the same time, however, Peabody will maintain the symbiotic linkage of theoretical research and practical application that has distinguished the college for many years. In short, I am confident that the Peabody of the future will remain a source of pride for all of us who have been part of the college.

OpportunityVanderbilt

A scholarship is the gift of opportunity...

In Michelle Eckland's family, she's the first to go to college. Michelle dreamed of coming to Vanderbilt, and Vanderbilt's commitment to meeting students' financial need made her dream a reality. She's immersed in learning about children and health care policy—studying in South Africa and Nicaragua on campus-sponsored trips, interning with a nonprofit in D.C. and volunteering locally with Gilda's Club.

It's the scholarship she receives that makes Vanderbilt possible for Michelle.

"I'm a first-generation college student, and I love it here," she says. "There are so many opportunities for community service and helping others."

With a scholarship gift, you give other exceptional young women and men the opportunity to learn, discover and achieve at Vanderbilt.

Opportunity Vanderbilt supports the university's commitment to replace need-based undergraduate student loans with grants and scholarships. To date, Vanderbilt has raised \$73 million toward a goal of \$100 million in gifts for scholarship endowment.

Photo by Vanderbilt Creative Services

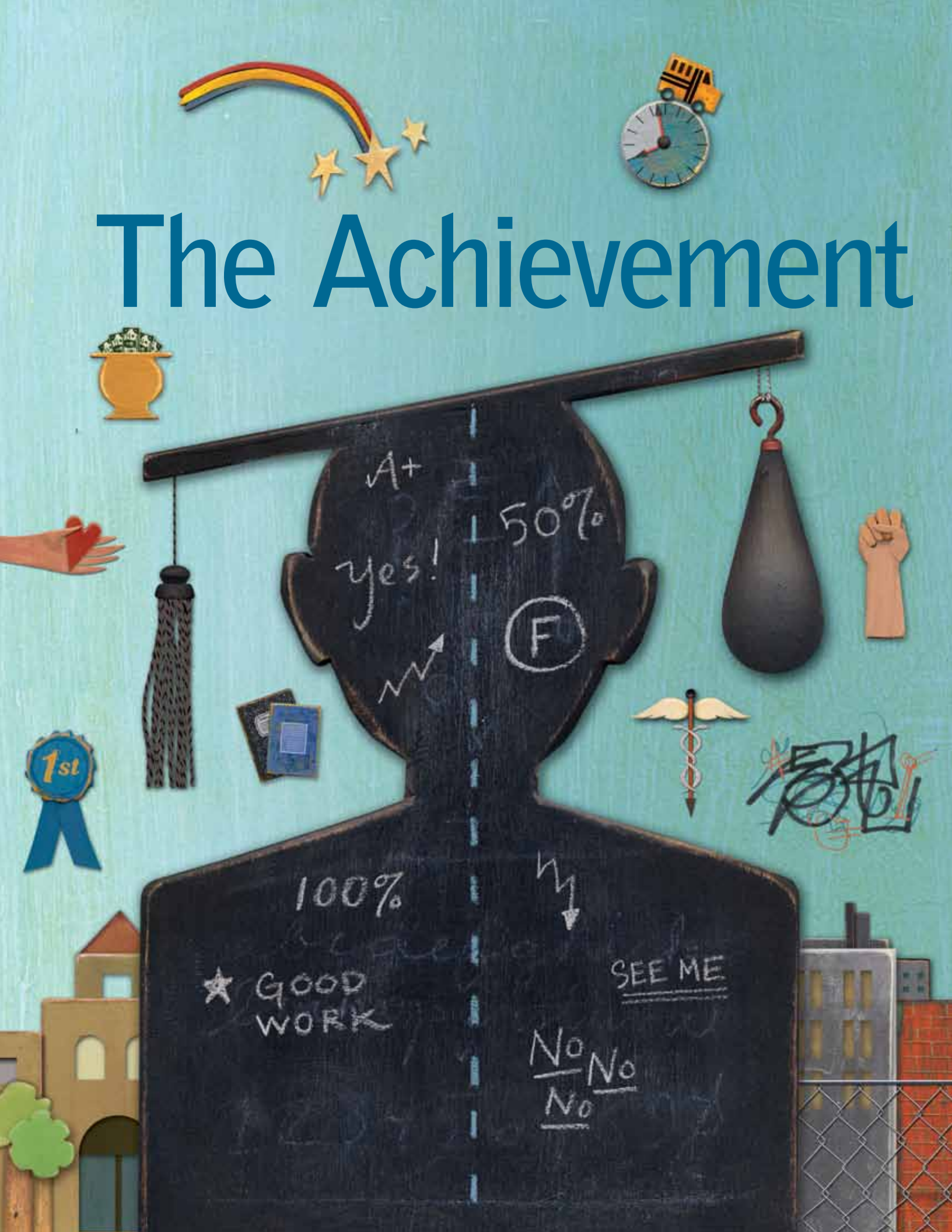


Michelle Eckland
Mina Latimer Lanham Scholarship, Peabody 2011

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Gap in Education



a World of Hurt

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It's a gray winter day at Ross Elementary, an inner-city school in East Nashville that serves a high percentage of children who qualify for the free and reduced-priced lunch program, and pre-K teacher Tish Smedley is overseeing the controlled chaos of her 4-year-old students as they prepare for rest period. A slender little boy dressed in a black basketball warm-up suit enters the classroom, waits patiently and then hands her a sheaf of papers with an image on top. He is a first-grader and not one of her students.

A little confused, Smedley takes the papers and asks, "Is this for me?"

"I'm just showing you what I did," he tells her.

Smedley realizes that he has handed her not a picture he drew, but a graph of his progress in literacy. The graph shows that every month from September 2009 to February 2010 his scores have improved, rising from a 10 to a 57.

"You're showing me your progress! Look what you did!" Smedley gushes. "This is amazing! Are you proud of yourself?"

"Yes, ma'am," he answers quietly.

She gives him a big hug and lets him choose a treat from a bag she has on hand for just such occasions.

Clutching his report, the boy walks out of the room—never once having so much as cracked a smile.

Like millions of other at-risk minority children from low-income families, this child understands on some level the seriousness, the gravity, of the spike in his test scores. He, his teachers and his school are swimming against the current, trying their best to narrow the achievement gap in education.

The achievement gap is a hotly debated topic among educational academicians and policymakers. After largely being ignored during the 1990s, it has reared up again in the new millennium when the No Child Left Behind Act forced schools to disaggregate the numbers and analyze standardized test scores of students from different backgrounds and social classes—including white, Asian, African American, Hispanic, Native American and low-income children. Like a mirror reflecting an ominous truth, the numbers show that, on average, poor black and Hispanic children are not performing as well as their white and Asian peers. In some cases, the discrepancies are chilling.

“On average, white children outperform black children on every measure of academic skills,” says Richard Rothstein, research associate at the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. “It’s not just in reading and math, but also in science and history, on physical fitness, on behavioral outcomes, and arts and music. And the cognitive gap is as large before children enter kindergarten as it is during their school years. Children from impoverished social and economic communities don’t come to school as prepared to learn as middle-class children. This suggests that factors related to social class, not differences in school quality, are primarily responsible for fostering differences in academic performance between blacks and whites.”

A national test of 15-year-olds conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found that black high school sophomores in the United States scored at the 26th percentile in reading, and at the 25th percentile in math and in science, compared to their white peers who scored at the 62nd percentile in each of these subject areas. Sadly, in too many instances, poor and minority children are graduating from high school with no more than an eighth-grade education.

According to Joseph Murphy, Frank W. Mayborn Professor at Peabody, and author of *The Educator’s Handbook for Understanding and Closing Achievement Gaps* (see box), these children often spend their entire lives trying to overcome what they did not master in school. “If you’re on the wrong side of the gap, you’re more likely to drop out of school, less

likely to enroll in college, and more likely to drop out if you do enroll in college,” Murphy says. He is studying any and all issues that might improve educational quality, because not to fix the problem will have unforgivable consequences.



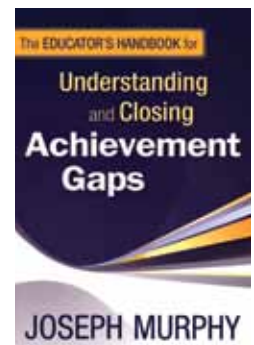
Joseph Murphy

“You can’t systematically parcel students into a ‘Kids We Left Behind’ category. That’s reprehensible. It’s a social justice issue, too. You are damning these kids to second-class citizenship in nearly every dimension we have.”

Minority and low-income children are markedly “school-dependent,” meaning that it’s difficult for them to access resources and opportunities outside of school to help them overcome deficiencies in their education. “If you’re a poor kid and you’re in

Read About It

The Educator’s Handbook for Understanding and Closing Achievement Gaps (Corwin, 2010) by Joseph Murphy, Frank W. Mayborn Chair and associate dean.



By gathering and analyzing the most up-to-date research and data, Murphy’s book helps school leaders understand what the achievement gap is, why it persists, and what educators can do about it. In the book, Murphy examines external factors that contribute to achievement gaps, such as socioeconomic status, family environment, racism and individual differences; covers internal factors such as instruction, school culture and school support; and provides strategies for addressing both internal and external factors to make an impact.

a bad school, you're in a world of hurt," Murphy says, "because you don't have a lot of other support systems that are going to make up for it."

The Education Equality Project, a bipartisan advocacy group, views the achievement gap not only as an indicator of an ugly underbelly in American society, but also as the most important civil rights challenge facing this generation. Although there are some exceptions, the evidence is clear that, in general, urban families with the lowest income tend to be zoned to schools with the least resources. Teachers are often inexperienced and are quick to transfer or burn out. Students in these schools are disproportionately referred to special education and underreferred to gifted programs. In many of these city schools—Nashville, Cleveland, Indianapolis, to name a few—the high school graduation rate is less than 50 percent. Yet a few miles away in more affluent suburban neighborhoods the graduation rates are above 90 percent.

"What tugs at me is the disparity of public education between schools. They should be equitable," says Sharon Shields, professor of the practice of health promotion and education. "We are only going to benefit as a society if the opportunity is there for all children to reach their potential. We have to ask ourselves, what are the barriers to achievement?"

Stagnating trends and the summer dip

The achievement gap was first acknowledged in the 1950s, when the federal courts began addressing issues of disparity through its ruling on *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*. From the late 1960s through the mid-1980s, the United States made a concerted effort to tackle educational inequality through desegregation policies and social, health and welfare programs. Leaders feared the U.S. was losing its international competitive edge with the rise of the Soviet Union's space program and Japan's emergence as an economic power. According to a 2009 Report by the Center on Educational Policy, for 25 years the black-white and Latino-white gap fluctuated but essentially trended upward across all grade levels, hitting its narrowest mark in the late 1980s. Then it began to widen again. The lines have now essentially stagnated. In 2008, the gap was still quite large—ranging from 16 to 29 points on the NAEP 500-point scoring scale.

Experts dispute the causes for this stagnation, although Rothstein blames it on inattention. "The



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gap narrowing may have slowed because we lost focus on social inequality," he states. "Our public schools are more racially imbalanced than at any time in this country since desegregation, because our neighborhoods are more hypersegregated than they ever were. Over the past two decades we have actually rolled back social reform."

His data indicate that family income is only one factor in a myriad of social class issues that are driving down achievement. Rothstein says, "Typically, black and white children, even if they come from families of similar incomes, are not similar in their performance on these measures of achievement. Among black and white families with similar incomes, whites have greater wealth, better housing and better health outcomes. So it's not surprising that the test scores of white children will be higher, even after controlling for current family income."

To compound the challenge, disadvantaged schools are trying to hit a moving target. Stagnation in the achievement gap is actually a by-product of shifts among the various groups. In the past decade, minority and low-income students, who started off behind at the beginning of each school year, made significant gains in achievement levels, but so did their white and Asian peers. The result has been a zero-sum gain.

Ellen Goldring, Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Educational Policy and Leadership, uses the analogy of two trains that need to arrive at the same destination at the same time. "If one of the trains gets

Pre-K students at Ross Elementary School in Nashville work with colors and shapes prior to leaving school for the summer break. Research suggests that students from disadvantaged schools are more likely to experience a "summer dip" in achievement that can aggregate so that children can become at least two years behind by the time they reach high school.

stuck in the snow and the other train keeps going, then for the one that's stuck in the snow to reach the end on time, it has to go much faster," she explains. "So, it's not just a matter of making up a year's growth if you're behind. It's that you have to learn at a faster rate."



Ellen Goldring

In many cases over the course of the nine-month school year, these children seem to be learning at a faster rate and making up ground on their more advantaged counterparts. What is pulling them down, researchers now say, is how much they lose over the summer. Some call this phenomenon the "summer dip." Marc Stein, PhD'09, assistant professor in the

neighborhood, race or class, all students lost ground during the summer. However, students living in middle and higher socioeconomic status neighborhoods lost much less ground than students in more disadvantaged contexts. One possible explanation is that by living in a more advantaged context, students may be privy to educationally meaningful experiences during the summer that compensate for not being in school. Disadvantaged students may not have these same experiences and exposures.

"The schools are helping disadvantaged students make up ground to close the gap during the school year, then the summer happens and the school has to bring them up again," Stein says. "By the end of the fifth grade in this district, the achievement gap is wider than it was at the end of second grade."

Cumulatively, poor students are losing more ground over the summers than they are able to make up over the school years. Other research suggests that by the time some students reach high school, they may be at least two academic years behind.

School of Education at Johns Hopkins University, studied one of the largest school districts in the Southeast that encompasses a wide range of schools from the most affluent to those with high percentages of children receiving free/reduced lunch to see how the summer dip affected children in grades two through five. He found that, on average, regardless of

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"This really highlights the need to consider summertime in these evaluations when we talk about



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school effectiveness,” Stein says. “When we only use spring test administration to judge effectiveness, we lose sight of the impact of that intervening summer.”

Certain studies claim that the educational experience of the mother is one of the strongest influences on a child’s school performance. In turn, one of the major causes of the achievement gap is the intellectual environment in the home. Researchers found that children ages 0 to 3 from middle-class families were exposed to much more complex language in their home environments and heard three-and-a-half times more words per hour in their daily backgrounds than preschool-aged children from low-income homes. In short, the education achievement gap arises long before a child ever goes to school.

Parenting styles are also seen as contributing factors. Tish Smedley insists that her inner-city parents care about their children’s future, but many don’t know how to promote early childhood education. Nearly all of her students have at least one working parent, albeit often in low-wage jobs. In many cases, the problem is that these children have spent years in daycare devoid of enrichment. “I have kids who come into pre-K, and they don’t know how to hold a pencil or a crayon. They don’t know how to hold a pair of scissors,” she says. The standards for kindergarten are so high now, that if these children go straight to school without first spending a year in pre-K, she says “then kindergarten just slams them.”

It is unfair, experts argue, to lay the blame at the foot of the schools and expect teachers to remedy all these deep-seated, complex and cumulative ills. “Schools didn’t cause the problem, and we can’t expect schools to fix the problem alone,” Murphy says. “We need a more robust attack on it.”

Yet even if policymakers agree with this data, wholesale social reform will entail a long, hard-fought, multipronged battle. In the meantime, figuring out how to narrow the gap will continue to fall into the lap of school systems.

Charter, magnet, DoDEA schools and parental choice

For decades low-income parents have sought ways for their children to escape traditional inner-city public schools for better educational opportunities. The charter school movement grew out of this desire, allowing individual schools more freedom to implement innovative teaching strategies to help disadvantaged students. Some charter school networks, like the national KIPP Academy, YES Prep Academy in Houston (see p.25), IDEA Public Schools

located near the Texas-Mexico border, and Harlem Children’s Zone Promise Academy in New York have all been recognized for their success in narrowing the achievement gap for at-risk students. Unfortunately, other charter schools have not come close to meeting those goals.

The magnet public school initiative was an even earlier appeal to parental choice. Magnet schools came on the scene in the 1960s to mitigate against “white flight” during the era of integration and busing. Over time, magnet schools began evolving around central academic themes, like math and science, the performing arts or the liberal arts. In this way, city schools could draw students of diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds from a variety of enrollment zones, because they shared specific academic interests. In the United States many more magnet public schools than charter schools are operating today, although charter schools tend to grab the headlines.

Having studied the effect of parental choice on education, Ellen Goldring states that neither traditional public, magnet nor charter schools are panaceas to the achievement gap. However, she says, across all types of schools researchers have found a handful of “enabling conditions” that appear to form the essential ingredients for helping disadvantaged students achieve. First, these schools have strong school leadership, meaning that the principal and administration have a focus on school improvement. Second, they implement the tactic known as professional learning communities, meaning that teachers collaborate on subject matter to help students learn, draw connections and analyze. Third, all school professionals relentlessly focus on the academic achievement of their students, adding rigor to the curriculum. And finally, they prioritize teacher efficacy by giving teachers the tools and support to meet the needs of their students.

Claire Smrekar, associate professor of public policy and education, has studied children educated in the Department of Defense Educational Activity (DoDEA) system, located on the grounds of military posts in the U.S. and overseas. Using evidence that black and Latino children in these schools out-perform nearly all other minority students in the country, she initiated a study to explain the narrower achievement gap among these students—given that white and Asian DoDEA students performed well also. Smrekar discovered



Claire Smrekar



Tish Smedley, pre-K teacher at Ross Elementary in Nashville, sends her students home each summer with a bucket filled with educational supplies and activities in an effort to overcome the “summer dip”.

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that the families of these students had many of the same characteristics of inner-city families: the vast majority of parents were enlisted, rather than officers, and therefore were paid low wages, qualifying the children for free/reduced price lunch; most parents had no more than a high school education; the families tended to be unstable, with high mobility, a high rate of divorce and blended families, and also a high rate of domestic violence; and they lived in military housing, which is similar to public housing in that living spaces tend to be small and cramped.

The differences between the military bases and inner-city conditions were equally notable, however. For example, military neighborhoods were safe, characterized by low crime, areas of green space, playgrounds and recreational facilities. Also, living on the base meant that at least one parent had full and stable employment. Finally, family members had easy access to a medical facility and to quality health care.

In addition, the DoDEA schools met all the criteria listed by Goldring—leadership at the top and high-quality teachers, an emphasis on academic achievement, collaboration among teachers across subject matter, and ample resources so teachers could meet the needs of students dealing with difficult family situations.

“We argue repeatedly that there are important lessons to be learned and models of organizational coherence and continuity that could be adopted from the DoDEA system,” Smrekar says. “While we acknowledge the differences, if you look at the way the school reaches in to families and provides systems of support and a spirit of caring, then it’s clear that there is much to be learned and much to be valued.”

Teachers, gifted students and the role of encouragement

Given that high teacher quality is one of the essential components for narrowing the achievement gap, policymakers have been casting about for ways to find these top-notch individuals. Teach for America, which enlists college graduates to fulfill two-year stints teaching in disadvantaged schools, has been rattling the cages of the traditional recruitment process. With 24,000 recruits, however, TFA is not nearly big enough to meet the need. The American public school system requires almost 4 million teachers to educate all its children.

Ronald F. Ferguson, senior lecturer of public policy and education at Harvard Graduate School of Education, conducted a 2002 study on racial and ethnic disparities where schools were reportedly excellent. He found that when high school students were asked what motivated them to work hard in school, white and Asian students often cited teacher demand. However, minority, and particularly black students, almost always pointed to teacher encouragement as their reason for putting forth extra effort.

Donna Ford, professor of special education, says: “There’s a saying in the black community that goes, ‘Black kids don’t care what you know until they know that you care.’ Research consistently shows that black kids want those relationships with their teachers. Relationships matter.”

Ford’s primary research focus has been on the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted and AP classes. She found that a significant proportion of low-income, black and Hispanic students—including some who defied the odds and scored well on standardized tests—would be better served in gifted programs. According to the Office of Civil Rights data of 2006, more than a quarter of a million black



Donna Ford

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children were not identified as gifted who should have been. Ford argues that this underrepresentation is a symptom of the larger issues of the achievement gap. “We cannot close the achievement gap without addressing inequities and underrepresentation in gifted education. Educators, community leaders, policymakers and other stakeholders must be proactive and aggressive in making change,” she says.

For years, children from the projects were never selected into Metro Nashville’s ENCORE gifted-and-talented program. Teachers like Tish Smedley

changed that and began referring their students, and today several of those students have gone on to college and beyond. Almost two decades later, it's still not easy. Smedley points to a little boy who is sitting cross-legged on the floor, enrapt in a picture book.

"He's so bright," she says. She did some assessments early in the year, but he didn't test out as gifted because he'd had such little exposure to life experiences. "We're going to test him again," she asserts. "I feel confident he'll be placed in gifted, but we're going to have to give him some experiences so he'll do well on the assessments."

Homemade remedies in the absence of a cure

In the absence of a cure for the achievement gap, a number of programs are being tried in a hit-and-miss attempt to transcend the barriers that gave rise to it. Some of these initiatives have truly affected change.

For example, since 1982, Vanderbilt's Center for Health Services has served more than 12,000 families through the Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker, or MIHOW, program. MIHOW is a home-visitation and mother-to-mother mentoring network designed to increase the health and parenting skills of women living below the poverty level, and therefore to close on the preschool achievement gap. MIHOW workers continue to mentor the family until the child reaches age 3.

A strong emphasis is placed on reading after the child is born. Recent data show that 58 percent of 2-year-olds in the MIHOW program are read to daily by a parent or family member, compared to 16 per-



Meanwhile, inner-city teachers are trying to address the educational imbalance created by the "summer dip." At the end of each school year, every child finishing pre-K at Ross Elementary receives a "summer bucket." Tish Smedley and the other pre-K teacher buy sand buckets and fill them with games and activities—color cards, number cards, rhyming cards, letter cards, bubbles, sidewalk chalk, CDs of music they learned in class, and other fun toys for the children to play with over the summer. The teachers pay for these summer buckets largely out of their own pockets. At \$15 to \$20 per bucket for the 35 children in pre-K, it's a generous gift. Smedley is not satisfied with how the children have been using the materials in the past, however, so this year she is having a meeting of all parents to show them how to join with their children in the summer bucket activities.

Smedley says, "We're not saying you have to do everything every day, but just pick one activity every day. And if you don't do anything else, read to them."

Some school districts are addressing the summer dip by implementing a year-round school program in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Year-round schools have had uneven results across the country, and there's no universally effective formula.

Smedley taught in a year-round program for two years until it was canceled. "The teachers were exhausted," she says. "It was a good program and it kept the gap closed a bit, but we found that the children who needed it the most didn't come. It started great guns at the beginning of the summer, but then it would dwindle as the summer wore on. My class size dropped from 20 to 13, which wasn't what Metro wanted. It wasn't as beneficial as Metro wanted it to be."

Disparities in health care also reinforce disparities in education. Rothstein's data indicate that low-income children are absent from school because of illness 30 percent more than middle-income children. "If they're not in school, they're not learning," he says. He believes that equalizing health conditions for children is one of the least expensive ways to move on the gap. He suggests putting full-service health clinics with professional primary care providers on the campuses of low-income schools. This will give students access to preventive health care, such as vaccines and routine medical, dental and vision exams.

In addition to on-site health care, children also need counseling in good nutrition and fitness

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cent of 2-year-olds living below poverty in the U.S.; and 100 percent of MIHOW 2-year-olds are read to at least weekly, compared to 81 percent nationally of 2-year-olds living below poverty. Simply hearing those additional words in their daily background can help these children narrow the gap by the time they're ready for kindergarten.

habits to reach their learning potential, Shields says. One-fourth of American children are either obese or at risk of being obese. “There is more and more evidence that having higher levels of fitness can contribute to your ability to achieve,” she says, adding that in many schools physical education classes are being eliminated to cut costs, “so we’re not making the advances we’d hoped to make on narrowing the gap.”

An underutilized secret weapon

Shields is affiliated with the Community Outreach Partnership Center, a hands-on, collaborative, inner-city advocacy group embarked on a mission of preventing crime, promoting health and enhancing economic opportunities for low-income citizens. In that capacity, she has solicited students from her classes to work with children on the “Veggie Project” and the “Commit to be Fit” nutrition and health programs in underserved neighborhoods.

Importantly, Shields and Peabody professor Carolyn Hughes have tapped into an underutilized secret weapon in addressing the achievement gap—college students. Vanderbilt University received a three-year grant from Tennessee Academic Civic Engagement Program (TACEP) to establish a mentoring and tutoring program in schools the county deemed most at-risk. Each year, between 250 and 315 Vanderbilt students signed up and fanned out into the neighborhood schools to tutor or mentor between 450 and 625 K-12 students. At the end of the grant, says the program’s director Heather Jolly, TACEP evaluations

showed an across-the-boards increase of 30 to 40 percent in grades, graduation rates, college applications and college attendance for students at the participating schools.

In grades K-8, the Vanderbilt mentors emphasized reading, because most of the eighth graders who came for help were barely reading at a third-grade level. Once the mentors worked with them on reading and literacy, the students’ scores improved not only in English, but also in math and science. In the high schools, the mentors assisted students not just with their proficiency requirements so they could graduate, but also helped them develop game plans so they could go to college—a feat many of them had never previously considered. In Tennessee, students need to score at least a 21 on the ACT college prep test to qualify for state scholarship funds. Out of 75 students who were mentored, just a few failed to reach that score.

“Most of these schools have at least 800 to 900 students, and we only saw about 75 students in a school each year,” Jolly says. “But we made a small dent.”

Mentoring gives inner-city children a chance to work with and establish relationships with positive role models. “But this is a reciprocity relationship,” Shields says. “It’s not just about a college student going out and ‘helping’ a student in a low-performing school. It’s also about a college student learning about barriers to achievement and the potential of underachieving youth if they are given possibility, opportunity and tools.”

The directors recruited only those Vanderbilt students who would fully commit to the time demands of the program. “I don’t think this program would have been successful if it weren’t for the trust relationship that the Vanderbilt students established with their mentees,” Jolly reflects. “They met people who wanted them to succeed. So many of these kids, particularly the kids who are struggling, don’t feel like they have anybody who wants them to succeed. Vanderbilt mentors told them, ‘I’m here for you. We’re going to get through this together.’”

Some of those mentees are now in college—adding weight to research that low-income, black students work hardest in response to encouragement. Now that the TACEP mentorship grant has ended, Peabody faculty are searching for ways to keep the program running so they can continue to make a difference in the lives of these students who find themselves on the wrong side of the achievement gap.



For three years, Vanderbilt students tutored students in at-risk schools through the Tennessee Academic Civic Engagement Program (TACEP).

Far Away, Distant Learning: The Rural Achievement Gap

Amid all the recent scrutiny of the achievement gap and its effect on urban minority and low-income students, another large subset of disadvantaged American students—those attending poor rural schools—have been largely overlooked and underexamined. More than one in five children in the U.S. live in rural areas, and of these, 20 percent are black or Hispanic.

In a 2003 report, “Closing the Achievement Gap: Rural Schools,” Doris Terry Williams writes that while rural students performed as well as or better on standardized tests than their nonrural peers, white rural students consistently outperformed students of color in measures of achievement. Lower achievement, Williams reported, was most pronounced in rural areas like the Deep South and Southwest and on American Indian reservations where there are large concentrations of people of

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color. A litany of social issues, many of the same factors affecting urban schools, contribute to this inequity.

The achievement gap in these areas is not a function of being remote or rural, but a function of poverty, explains Rachel Tompkins of West Virginia, the founding president and senior fellow of the Rural School and Community Trust. “There are some beautiful rural places in America where kids are doing just fine and achievement scores are very high. In Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa, rural kids are doing quite well,” she says. “But if you go to the poorest regions in the South, you find they’re spending half as much on instruction, per pupil, as New York, Connecticut, Washington state or Wisconsin. The inadequacy and inequity of school financing systems, particularly for the poorest rural districts, is a problem.”

Craig Anne Heflinger, professor of human and organizational development, has studied

mental health issues confronting “the poorest of the poor” children in rural areas. She has found that two-thirds of people with symptoms of clinical mental illness living in rural counties receive no care at all. In addition, poor children with severe emotional problems and behavioral problems are significantly more likely to also have physical health problems than other poor children without these problems. “So, we’ve got a group of kids with multiple challenges,” Heflinger says. “And there are huge disparities in access. We have lots of ‘invisible’ kids who live way out in the country, who aren’t getting folded into the health care system.” Instead, her research indicates, if rural children and adolescents receive services for mental health and substance abuse problems, they most often do so through the schools.

One way that states have tried to address education equity issues for rural children is to shut down underresourced local schools and instead send them to large consolidated schools, with the intent of raising the tax base and distributing low-income rural children across a school district. Tompkins believes that consolidation has been a disaster for many rural minority students in the Southeast and West, and has led to a disproportionately high dropout rate among students who are bused long distances to large, impersonal suburban schools.

“We think that if we put poor kids in a shiny school by the side of the road they’ll do better,” Tompkins says. However, many of these children feel increasingly lost and disenfranchised, and they quit school altogether.

Particularly for students who are emotionally fragile to begin with, being on a school bus for more than an hour each day is not a good way to help them achieve in school, Heflinger says. “For children who have impulse problems and behavioral difficulties, it just widens the opportunities for them to be in an unsupervised setting where they can get into trouble,” she says. “And if you kick kids off the bus, their parents certainly can’t drive them 60 miles to and from school.”

One advantage of small rural schools, says Tompkins, is that everybody knows everybody, and it’s much harder for students





An AVID classroom at Runge Independent School in rural south Texas prepares eighth- and ninth-grade students for college.

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to become disconnected and fall through the cracks. Also, in many of these low-income areas, the school acts as the heart and soul of the community, the hub of social and educational activities.

Small can work

That is certainly the case with Runge Independent School, a designated Title I school serving 300 students in rural south Texas. The school is divided into an elementary school made up of pre-K through sixth grade, and a high school comprising grades seven through 12. Eighty percent of the student body is minority and most qualify for free/reduced price lunch. Located about 70 miles south of San Antonio, the town has a population of about 1,050 residents, with a median family income (and the families tend to be large) of just under \$30,000 a year. It is 45 miles to the nearest town of more than 50,000, and almost that same distance in the opposite direction to the nearest movie theater. Runge has a public library, a few gas stations and a convenience store, but no grocery store. Most people work in

agriculture or construction, as laborers in the oil fields or on ranches, for the regional prison system, or for local businesses like WalMart in the neighboring town of Kenedy (pop. 3,300). Seventy-five percent of the townspeople are Hispanic, and only 6 percent have a college education or above. Many families live in government housing projects. Largely because of shortages in adequate housing, of the 30 teachers at the school, only five live in Runge, which creates a major hurdle for recruiting highly qualified teachers to the area.

Still, the citizens love their community and they are proud of their school. Nearly everybody in town attends the high school football and basketball games. Each spring, hundreds of people pile into the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall to see the 16 or 18 high school seniors graduate. Runge High School Principal Jo Ann Villareal says that because Runge is such a small school, 90 percent of its students are involved in multiple extracurricular activities. Those include sports, band, cheerleading, academic competitions and Future Farmers of America.

“Our school is really the focal point for all of Runge,” Villareal says. “There are not enough businesses or community organizations to create community involvement.”

Thanks to the benchmarks set by state assessments and funding received through Title I designation and the federal stimulus package, Villareal and her teaching faculty have redoubled their efforts to raise the academic performance of students at Runge High School, primarily by increasing the rigor of the curriculum. Runge now offers its students a chance to participate in Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), a rigorous college-readiness program for eighth and ninth graders that focuses on student-



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directed learning and critical thinking. Out of 52 students in those two grades, 28 have joined AVID.

Without the personnel or resources to offer Advanced Placement classes, the high school allows interested students to take online distance-learning classes and/or dual-credit courses at the community college 45 miles away. Out of 35 juniors and seniors in 2009-2010, 14 took distance-learning courses in English and history.

“These kinds of options open up doors for our students,” says Villareal. “The courses are expensive and beyond the means of many of our families, but the district pays the tuition, fees and books through state high-school allotment funds.”

Using stimulus funds, she was also able to purchase Acer laptop computers for every student in seventh through 12th grades to keep throughout their high school careers. These computers have been a tremendous boon to instruction, allowing teachers to incorporate website and database searches into their assignments. Unfortunately, few places in town have Internet access. The school now stays open until 9 p.m., so students can work in the computer lab and use the school’s printers. “It’s not like we have a Starbucks around here,” Villareal says. “Half or more of our students wouldn’t have Internet access otherwise.”

This focused effort on academics has yielded good results. In the past two years, more students completed high school, including those who became pregnant while still in school. Plus, Texas has deemed Runge Elementary School as “exemplary,” and the high school as “recognized” for their students’ performance on the state standardized assessments. “Recognized” status indicates that 80 percent of students are above the passing benchmark in each of the subject areas tested. Runge was also awarded a “Bronze Medal” in the *U.S. News & World Report* listing of “America’s Best High Schools 2010.” The bronze designation means that the school’s least advantaged students were performing better than average compared to similar students in the state, although they could not demonstrate a high level of college readiness, because students did not have access to Advanced Placement courses.

Which points to Villareal’s next looming hurdle. Even though her students have been performing well on the state tests, this only indicates they’ve reached minimum proficiency in academic subject areas. Most Runge students are not scoring high enough on the ACT and SAT to be accepted into or receive scholarship money for college. Only two students out of 18 who graduated in 2009 went on to a four-year college. The school is now holding ACT-prep courses to help prepare juniors to take the exam. Teachers have also begun arranging more college visits and other trips to expose them to the world outside of their community. They are also encouraging them to go on college visits on their own.

“Right now, we are reaching the minimum standards,” Villareal says, “but we really want to go beyond that so our students are not only prepared to be accepted into four-year colleges, but also will do well once they get into college.”

To meet that goal will require more than intensified efforts by Runge’s handful of teachers. In the truest sense of the word, it will take a village.

Is the Answer YES?

Teacher Lauren Wimbley is walking around her classroom at YES Prep Southwest, giving her sixth-grade students instructions on how to complete their science lessons. They are learning about the composition, function and description of the Earth's strata, layer by layer. On paper, this is a classroom that should be a recipe for disaster. Thirty-four Hispanic and black preteens, most of whom qualify for free/reduced-price lunch, are crammed together, seated shoulder-to-shoulder in a cramped modular building located in a low-income neighborhood in southwest Houston. As Wimbley energetically describes the assignment, the students bend forward intent on their work. There are no disruptions. No shouts or extraneous conversations. Only learning.

YES Prep Public Schools is a Houston-based charter school network begun by Chris Barbic, BS'92, in 1998. After he finished his teaching stint through Teach for America, Barbic grew frustrated when he realized that many of the sixth graders he'd worked so hard to boost over the achievement hump were flunking out and dropping out by the time they reached high school. Today seven YES Prep campuses are in operation, with a total enrollment of 3,500 students. Each school opens in the sixth grade and adds a grade a year until they include the full complement through 12th grade. Students do not have to meet any academic criteria to attend, and

parents in an enrollment zone apply by blind lottery. Over the years, Barbic and his schools have received numerous awards and recognition for promoting academic excellence among at-risk students. Barbic won Peabody's Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2006 for his work with YES Prep.

At the two six-year YES Prep campuses now in operation, 100 percent of the seniors not only apply to but also attend four-year colleges. By contrast, in the rest of the Houston public school system only one in 10 sixth graders finishes college and of the low-income students who do start college, only one in four graduates. By comparison, 84 percent of students who graduated from YES Prep are still enrolled in college or have already received their degrees—a number Barbic finds disappointing.

"We're not where we want to be on that, even if we're better than the average," he says. "We're looking at that right now—how can we get that 84 percent up to above 90 percent?"

Given their 100 percent graduation rate and "exemplary" status on the Texas state assessment exams, it would seem that the achievement gap is not an issue for YES Prep schools. In fact, it's a constant issue. Barbic says that the typical sixth-grade student who enters YES Prep is about two years behind those attending the suburban Houston schools. In a push to make sure the gap is closed by the time students reach high school, YES Prep children are in school



Chris Barbic, BS '92, with students from YES Prep, a charter school system he founded in Houston, Texas.

for longer days (classes end at 4:35 p.m.), and they are in school for an additional 10 days during the summer. They also have weekend community service and enrichment requirements during the school year, and their academic curriculum is uniformly rigorous.

“For a lot of these kids, the middle school years are where they start to fall off the track. The transitions from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school are hard ones. So we create an environment where that transition from middle school to high school doesn’t exist anymore, because they’re all under one roof,” Barbic says. “Secondly, we create classes with great teachers and lots of rigor in middle school so that kids are used to doing rigorous work at a fairly young age. If you wait until high school in the neighborhoods we’re in, too many kids will be so far behind at that point that college isn’t a reality for them.”

Barbic goes against conventional wisdom in addressing many of the issues thought to contribute

One of the most interesting things is that our highest performing teachers are pessimists. They know they are the difference-makers for our kids. If they don’t do their job and do it well, they know there isn’t a bright future for these kids.

to the achievement gap—class size, for example. “I think class size is overrated,” he states. “What’s more important than class size is grade size, or what I call ‘cohort size.’”

In other words, he caps each grade at around 150 students, and he caps each sixth- through 12th-grade school at around 800 students, unlike the 3,000-plus population of local comprehensive high schools. “At 800 kids it’s big enough so that you can have some extracurricular activities, but it’s also small enough so that no one feels like a number. Kids can build relationships with each other and with their teachers,” he says.

He also establishes an expectation from the beginning that each child is destined for success and sets academic standards at the same level as those of the wealthiest suburban schools. If necessary, children are asked to repeat a grade. About 10 to 15 percent of the younger children are held back each year, usually because of a deficiency in English language and literacy skills.

Most importantly, YES Prep administrators embark on intense searches for the best teachers

they can find. Great teachers delivering a quality education, Barbic says, can ameliorate many of the peripheral problems—housing, poverty, crime—that keep these students from learning. The majority of the teachers at his academy are culled from the ranks of Teach for America. Beyond that, however, he and his colleagues have crafted a profile of common traits to identify the kind of teacher who will excel in this environment.

Barbic says, “First, our teachers have what we call a quick rebound time. They hit a skid in the road, an obstacle, and they bounce right back and figure out different solutions to problems. Second, they are not afraid of conflict and they’re not afraid to have a serious conversation with a kid or with a parent. Third, they have high energy and they enjoy being in a leadership position.

“And, finally, one of the most interesting things is that our highest performing teachers are pessimists. It kind of makes sense. Pessimists can’t leave things to chance. They know they are the difference-makers for our kids. If they don’t do their job and do it well, they know there isn’t a bright future for these kids. They understand the gravity of the situation and the importance of education.” Once hired, YES Prep provides a program of training, collaboration and support to ensure its teachers will be successful.

Charter schools, some experts insist, are not the answer to closing the achievement gap, and Barbic agrees that not all charter schools are created equal. In fact, some are no better than the worst public schools. “What the charter school movement has brought to the table is pockets of excellence and proof points around the country for what is possible for low-income kids,” Barbic says. “I think prior to that people didn’t believe it was possible.”

Today, many more adults realize the opportunities that a solid education can provide to even the most disadvantaged child. As evidence, the parents of 5,000 Houston middle-schoolers, who were closed out in the lottery, put their children on the waiting list to get into YES Prep. Such is their faith in the power of possibility.

(See p. 31 for a profile of YES Prep graduate and Peabody undergraduate Stacy Flores.)





STEVE GREEN

Jamie Graham leading a class at Pearl-Cohn High School in Nashville. Graham is a special education major at Peabody.

Jumping the Gap: Two Success Stories

The achievement gap in education is based on averages—average test scores, average family incomes, average performance based on race and ethnicity. On average, for example, black and Latino men are the lowest performing group on the down side of the achievement gap. Yet not all black and Latino males fall into that category. Some have defied the averages and risen above their circumstances to become successful. Jamie Graham and David Perez are two such men.

Although every situation is different, if Graham and Perez can serve as examples, certain common factors appear to be crucial for beating the odds of poverty and racial disparities. First, students must have someone in their lives—a parent, a guardian, a relative or a coach—who refuses to give up on them, even when the student makes bad decisions. Second, at various pivotal junctures in their school careers, a mentor, a teacher or a coach steps forward unsolicited and offers to help. Third, these students possess an innate sense of destiny, believing that if given the slightest chance, they will make the effort to succeed. And finally, these students are inherently resilient, so that whenever they get knocked down, they still struggle back up and give life one more try.

Here are two stories:

Things to Work For

Jamie Graham, Peabody Class of 2011

Born in a rough neighborhood in East Nashville, Jamie Graham was achingly familiar with tragedy as a young child. He and his younger brother Jamonte were being raised by their single mother, Jamie Denise Graham, when she was killed right before Christmas 1996. Jamie, 8, and Jamonte, a toddler, went to live with their grandmother, Hattie Graham. Jamie's second-grade class collected money for a few presents so that Jamie would have Christmas that year. "I will always remember the teacher who did that for me," he says.

Jamie grew into an outstanding athlete and a good student under the watchful eye of his grandmother, who always stressed what she called "the three B's—Bible, books and ball—in that order," and he managed to stay on track until he hit high school. In the ninth grade, he received his first D, in geometry, and although he worked hard to bring the grade up to an A by the end of that year, he had begun hanging out with the wrong crowd and getting into trouble. When he was a sophomore, he quit the football team. With only a few games left in the season, football coach Anthony Law tracked Jamie down. "You need

to come back and play football,” Coach Law told him. “You’re good enough that this is going to be your ticket to college.” Perhaps because the coach made the effort to seek him out, Jamie took his advice and rejoined the team.

For the next two years, Jamie was a star athlete in both football and basketball at Whites Creek High School, and Law became his mentor, his counselor and his advocate, helping Jamie navigate through life’s rough patches. Although he had several college offers in both sports, he signed with Vanderbilt to play football, the only person from his high school class to go there. He chose Vanderbilt because he felt obligated to stay close to home. His grandmother has health issues, and Jamie has largely taken over responsibility for raising his younger brother. Also, he says: “If I get a degree from Vanderbilt, it means so much—especially in my community.”

The trek has not been easy, however. After being red-shirted his freshman year—meaning he practiced with the football team, but could not play in the games—Jamie was ready to quit school. It seemed like every week another of his East Nashville friends was killed. One year Jamie had 11 friends die, mostly in violent incidents. One of his best neighborhood

*When you feel like you’re close to a teacher,
it’s the best feeling in the world.*

friends was shot and killed while walking home. He struggled to adjust to the surreal otherworld that is life at a quiet university.

Jamie says, “It just seemed like things were being thrown at me all at the same time, and I was having tough schoolwork to deal with on top of that.” He took time off, regrouped and finally concluded that sticking it out would give Jamonte more options. “I came back, and I dedicated myself to school. I decided I had things to work for,” he says.

During his junior year in 2009, Jamie had a breakout season on the football field and in the classroom. An education major at Peabody, he did a teaching rotation in a special education class in East Nashville. As he began forging bonds with socioeconomically disadvantaged students who also had physical and learning disabilities, behavioral disorders, autism and emotional problems, he realized where his heart was. He switched his major to special education.

Jamie wants to be a role model for children back in his neighborhood, and he wants to pay back those teachers who were there for him. “When you feel like

you’re close to a teacher,” he says, “it’s the best feeling in the world.”

He has two more years of eligibility on the football team and is scheduled to graduate in spring 2011. Depending on how football works out, he’ll either try to go pro and play in the NFL, or he might take the extra year of eligibility and get his master’s degree in education.

“I can be the first person in my family to graduate from college, and Jamonte can be the second,” Jamie says. “I want the people in our neighborhood to realize that if the Grahams can do it, and they live right across the street, then we can do it, too.”

El Logrador

David Pérez II, BS’97, MEd’01

David Pérez II began to drift off track around the time he started high school. Growing up in a low-income district of Brooklyn, N.Y., Perez began hanging around with the wrong crowd as he reached his midteens. His mother, Enid S. Hernandez, had raised him alone, remarrying when her son was 10, although David says his stepfather did not play a central role in his life. Searching for prestige and credibility, David joined a gang. From that point forward, his life became a perilous tug-of-war between his buddies in the gang and his mother’s determination to free him from their influence.

He got into fights, got arrested for truancy and flunked nearly all his courses. One day, David learned that there had been a fight between two guys. At the end of it, members of his gang had jumped one of the guys and slashed him with box cutters. They had crossed the line, David thought, and he wanted out. However, he soon discovered that joining a gang meant that he couldn’t just leave. His former friends began stalking him, threatening to cut him up, even threatening his family. To dodge them, David would change his routine every day, going to school late and leaving classes early. He carried his own box cutter with him for protection and was expelled twice for taking it to school. He bounced in and out of schools all over New York and eventually was picked up again for truancy.

By this time, David was two academic years behind, and his mother was at her wit’s end. “She decided to pull me out of high school,” David says. “My sister was 6 and my brother was 2, and she said, ‘You’re a bad influence on your siblings. I can’t do this anymore. Go get your GED.’” This was the first time

in his life he felt that his mother was giving up on him. “It shattered me,” he says.

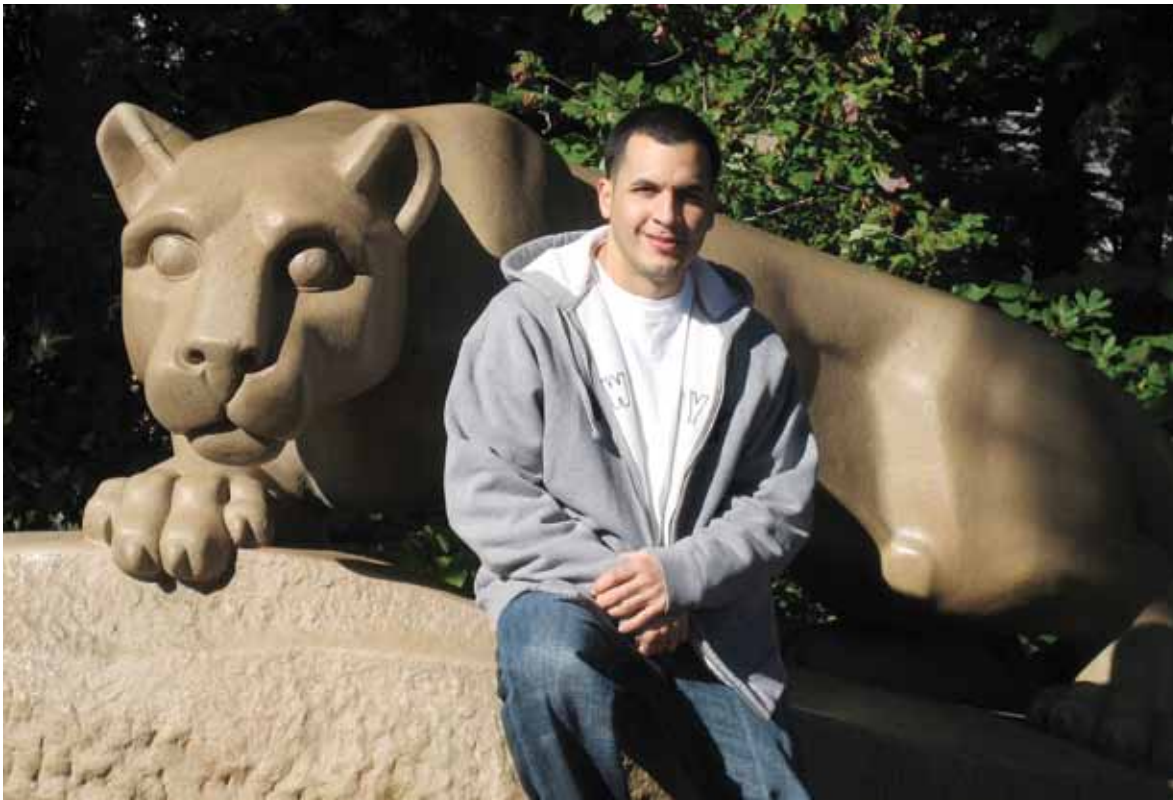
But Enid Hernandez did not give up. She continued to search for options for her son. David ultimately wound up at Pacific High School, an alternative school for students who washed out of traditional high schools. The school was underresourced—the encyclopedia set was missing several volumes, the college catalogs were almost a decade old and library books had pages torn out. The school counselor told him: “You don’t have to be here if you don’t want to. But if you want to finish high school, we’re here to help you.”

David recalls, “I made a choice then. I was praying to God to give me one more chance.” At the end of

nationally recognized college access and leadership development program that sends diverse groups of students (i.e. posses) to highly selective postsecondary institutions. David applied and was accepted to attend Vanderbilt University. He’d never heard of it before.

Since his mother couldn’t afford to make the trip with him, David boarded a plane alone in the late summer of 1993, carrying a word processor in a box and one suitcase full of clothes.

His arrival in Nashville was marked by culture shock. “I grew up in Brooklyn around a lot of racial and ethnic groups. For me, being Puerto Rican was central to my identity. When I moved onto campus, I felt like an outsider,” he says. “The transition was



COURTESY OF DAVID PÉREZ

David Pérez II, BS'97, MEd'01, is now finishing a Ph.D. in higher education at Pennsylvania State University.

his first semester at Pacific, he made As and Bs. When his mother saw his grades, she called the school to be sure he hadn’t stolen someone else’s report card.

To make up his missed classes and graduate on time, David overloaded on classes, attending Pacific from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m., signing up for extra independent studies and then heading off to night school. As swamped as he was with work, his grades remained excellent. Teachers at the school began to suggest to him that he should go to college, and one teacher told him about The Posse Foundation, a

very difficult. Of all my peers in Posse, I did the worst academically that first semester. I earned a 1.33 GPA, and I was placed on academic probation.”

He was so miserable that after being in college for three months, he hadn’t even unpacked his suitcase. He phoned his mother and told her he was going to leave. He was in over his head. “No,” she answered firmly. “I know you’re going to make it. You can do this.”

One of David’s friends from Posse came over, unpacked his suitcase and put away his clothes, tell-

ing him that being at Vanderbilt was rough on all of them, and he would just have to figure it out. Which he did. By the end of his second semester freshman year, his GPA had edged up to a 2.5. Semester by semester, his GPA slowly inched a little higher, by a tenth of a grade point or so each time.

Still, he felt a chronic sense of guilt that his family was sacrificing so much for him to be at Vanderbilt. While the Posse scholarship paid for most of his expenses, he knew that his mother was refusing to take out loans to support his education and was juggling her finances to come up with the needed funds. He worried that she was getting behind on rent and that his younger siblings were being denied things she could no longer afford.

One day late in his sophomore year, when David was feeling conflicted about placing such a burden on his family, he spotted a notice seeking applications for student residence assistants, or RAs, for the upcoming school year. RAs would have their housing paid for by the university and receive a stipend. The deadline was in two days. Fortuitously, the area director for his residence hall, Richard Jones, had left his door open. He noticed David standing there, came out into the hallway and asked, “May I help you?”

After David explained his situation, Jones told him that if he could get him an application and a resume, Jones would guarantee David a spot on his staff. David had never seen a resume, much less created one, so he called his mother. She didn’t know how to write a resume either, but she knew of someone in Brooklyn who might be willing to help. David was hired.

“My junior year I took flight as an RA,” he says. “I loved helping students who needed assistance. And I was the only Latino out of 20 to 25 RAs, so I found I could be a voice in this area of campus life.”

Happily engaged in campus life and feeling useful, he continued to work as an RA until he graduated from Peabody in spring 1997. His last semester GPA was a 3.5, and he finally made the dean’s list.

David went on to receive his master’s degree at Peabody, worked for a while, and now is in the final stages to receive a Ph.D. in higher education from Pennsylvania State University. His dissertation research is a study of minority, particularly Latino, males from impoverished communities who have risen above debilitating life circumstances to excel in college. He does not like to speak of “achievement.” Instead he prefers the Spanish term, *lograr*, which is weightier than “to achieve.” It means to reap the benefits of one’s labor and exertions.

“*Lograr* implies a struggle or sacrifice, a price that had to be paid to be successful,” David explains. “I paid a tremendous price to be successful. My entire educational career has been a painful process.” He is now a *logrador*, he says, because Posse gave him immediate access to relationships with friends in similar situations and to faculty who were invested in him, even though he was ill-prepared for college. Somebody always came through for him in the clutch.

“Richard Jones was one person,” he says. “I wasn’t sure I could stay in college. But all I needed was one person to broker the deal.”

For disadvantaged students, the path to success can turn on the gentlest of exchanges—like when an adult rises from his chair, steps into a hallway and asks, “May I help you?”

And a proud, hesitant young man musters up his courage to answer, “Yes, maybe you can.”



Profile: Stacy Flores, Class of 2011

McAllen-Looney Endowed Scholarship recipient

Mention teaching to senior Stacy Paola Flores and her voice rises with excitement.

"I'm really passionate about education," the Houston native says. "I just love teaching. I want to teach high school English, but I wouldn't mind teaching English to middle school students simply because I taught sixth-grade students last summer and really enjoyed it."

Flores is a secondary education/English double major with a minor in English Language Learning (ELL). She appreciates the McAllen-Looney Endowed Scholarship that has enabled her to attend Peabody and pursue her dreams.

"My family doesn't come from a lot of money, so the scholarship has been really, really important," she says. "I'm grateful to receive it. It is a large portion of my financial aid."

Flores graduated from YES Prep Public School started by Peabody graduate Chris Barbic, BS'92, as a charter school (YES College Preparatory Schools) in one building with 58 students. YES Prep now serves 3,500 students

Your gifts to Peabody open up a world of opportunity for our students.

For information on how you can give, please contact Amanda Trabue at (615) 322-8500 or amanda.trabue@vanderbilt.edu.



Stacy Flores, a rising senior, plans a career teaching English to middle or high school students.

from sixth to 12th grade at seven campuses spread across Houston (see the article on page 25).

Approximately 90 percent of YES students are first generation college-bound, 80 percent are economically disadvantaged and 95 percent are either Hispanic or African American. The school was named one of the top 100 high schools in America by *Newsweek* in 2006, 2007 and 2009 and by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2008 and 2009.

"I'm really interested in going back to YES Prep and teaching on one of its campuses," Flores says. "I would like to use my ELL minor to be a source on the staff in designing curriculum, because I know the two languages [English and Spanish]. I learned both languages simultaneously. I know where the students are coming from, because I have that background, too."

—Lew Harris

Madden scholarship is a family affair

Brothers John, BS'88, and Steven Madden, BS'91, credit their successful careers to the training they received in human and organizational development at Peabody. That's why they, along with their father, John P. Madden, established the Madden Family Scholarship. The scholarship will benefit an undergraduate student majoring in human and organizational development (HOD) at Peabody.

"One of the biggest challenges in business today is understanding the people you work with and how they react to different situations," says Steven, president of Ashburn Chemical Technologies in Houston. "Human development is, in my opinion, the application of managing and interacting with people in the workplace. My work mirrors what I learned in earning my degree."

John, who is the managing director of Falcon Investment Advisors in Dallas, was in on the ground floor of the HOD program—a member of the second class.

“There was a very supportive administration and a very caring faculty,” he says. “I had an internship my senior year that exposed me to the financial markets. That led to my first job at Bankers Trust in New York.”

The brothers say that the real impetus for creating the scholarship came when they realized the positive impact their education had on their lives. They encourage other Peabody graduates to follow in their philanthropic footsteps and to consider how their classroom experiences impact their lives today.

“I want people to think about their success and remember the skills that helped them achieve it,” Steven says. “Those interpersonal skills—how you speak and how you listen—are part of the foundation we were given in human development.”

“Giving to Vanderbilt was an easy decision because of the quality and caliber of the students, the alumni, the administration and the faculty,” John says. “We just really wanted to give someone else the chance to have the same experiences we did.”

—Cindy Thomsen

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David Semmel, Jocelyn Bowie, Dorothy Semmel and Mel Semmel, EdD'63.

The birthday gift of a lifetime

David Semmel and his wife, Jocelyn Bowie, wanted to find a way to honor David's father, Mel, EdD'63, on his 80th birthday. They decided that a gift to Peabody supporting graduate research would be perfect. When they presented their idea to Mel—who is retired and living in Santa Barbara, Calif., with his wife, Dorothy—he was delighted.

There was just one problem. It wasn't Mel's 80th birthday, it was his 79th.

Nevertheless, the family has enthusiastically embraced the project and worked closely with Peabody's development staff to create that perfect gift. The Melvyn I. Semmel Dissertation Research Award will support doctoral candidates in Peabody's Department of Special Education.

“Research was the bedrock of Mel's career,” says Jocelyn, the director of communications and marketing at Indiana University's College of Arts and Sciences.

“Strength in research is what he

wants to foster, and this gift honors his interests and passions.”

This is not the first time Mel's name has been associated with an award from Peabody. He was named the college's distinguished alumnus in 2007.

“Being named distinguished alumnus was tremendously meaningful to him,” says David, who is general partner with venture capital firm Kettle Partners. “He was proud to have been recognized by a place that's produced so many of the great researchers in his field. It meant the world to him.”

Jocelyn and David both grew up in academic families and understand the importance of supporting graduate students.

“Ph.D. candidates in special education are the future leaders in the field,” David says. “Giving them some incentive and a little push at this critical juncture can have an enormous impact. This is a great investment for us because it's not only my father's passion, it's a really good thing to do for society.”

—Cindy Thomsen

Ana Lopez, BS'99

Model Leader

Last year Ana Lopez was rewarded for what she does best—building connections.

In October, Lopez won a 2009 Meyer Foundation Exponent Award for her work as executive director of Community Bridges. The award recognizes strong and effective non-profit leaders who have the potential for future growth and development. It came with a \$100,000 grant for her organization to be used for leadership development. In January, she was honored as a 2009 Washingtonian of the Year by *Washingtonian* magazine.

At Community Bridges, Lopez directs efforts to provide multicultural empowerment and leadership programs for young, low-income and immigrant girls of color in Silver Spring, Md. She often reflects on the skills and knowledge she learned as a human and organizational development (HOD) major at Peabody College.

"I would say that Peabody has been fundamental to my career in many ways," she says. "I think it really helped me attain the position I have now.

"The small-group development class is one that I remember often," she adds. "It highlighted to me both the strengths and challenges of building a team. In my last two jobs, most of my work has been to build infrastructure as well as to build the culture, which are [two] of the core components of what HOD is about. I also liked the class where we looked at the four different leadership models. Now I often gravitate to the leadership model that is more horizontal."

When she came on board four years ago, Community Bridges



MATTHEW WORDEN PHOTOGRAPHY

was bringing the benefits of its programs to about 75 girls in three schools. Now they are serving 250 girls in 17 schools. The group also works with an additional 200 youth through community conferences.

"Our focus is specifically girls," Lopez says. "We are trying to take a prevention approach in helping them become exceptional students, positive leaders and healthy young women. We are trying to counteract what I call the three main issues of our community—high dropout rates for our population of girls, high gang involvement rates and very, very high teen pregnancy rates."

The community in which she works is very diverse with a high immigrant population. She can relate to these girls as a native of Silver Spring who moved to her parents' native Puerto Rico for middle school and most of her high school years. The family then immigrated back to the U.S.

An honor student, she was invited to a Hispanic student recruitment weekend at Vanderbilt while considering which college to attend. "That was a deciding point for me, and I definitely don't regret my decision in any way," she says.

—Lew Harris

We are trying to counteract what I call the three main issues of our community—high dropout rates for our population of girls, high gang involvement rates and very, very high teen pregnancy rates.

—ANA LOPEZ



Five Peabody higher education doctoral alums reunited in January for a campus visit. Pictured from left are: Bob Kopecky, PhD'75; Gary Tupa, PhD'73; Tom Kubala, attended '74 to '76; Larry Fuldauer, PhD'74; and Sal Rinella, PhD'77.

Ginger Irwin, BS'77, MS'79

Olympian Feats

Ginger Irwin may have experienced *déjà vu* while watching the recent Olympics in British Columbia. "At opening ceremonies when you walk in with the whole U.S. team, and you realize that you're there representing your country, it's just incredible," she says.

Irwin earned degrees from Peabody in physical education and adaptive physical education and has coached visually impaired athletes on the local, national and international level, serving as a swim coach for U.S. athletes at the Seoul (1988) and Barcelona (1992) Paralympic Games. She began coaching at the Missouri School for the Blind and has coached at national and international events for the United States Association for Blind Athletes.

Irwin learned to coach swimming while at Peabody, assisting the coach for the Vanderbilt men's swim team. She finds that much of what she learned as a coach helps in her career as an orientation and mobility specialist—teaching independent travel skills to people who are visually impaired.

"When you're coaching, you're working on building up their confidence," Irwin says, "and that's also very important when you're teaching individuals to be more independent. They have to trust you and know that you're not going to let them get hurt when you ask them to cross a street.

"Learning how to analyze sports movements," she continues, "has also helped me in working with mobility. I had a student with cerebral palsy who was visually

impaired, and every time he'd step off the curb, he would veer into traffic. Once I really watched his motor skills, and I suggested he make a more conscious effort to step off with his other foot, he was able to start with a straight line of travel and continue across safely."

Irwin's clientele spans all ages. She has worked with kids as young as 3 and adults as old as 83. "That's what I love about doing mobility," she says. "There is such a range of individuals. I never get bored with it."

As if teaching orientation and mobility is not enough, Irwin is also the village clerk for Wauconda, Ill. "I like the small town that I'm living in," she says, "so it gives me the opportunity to get involved with the village itself and give back." She also teaches courses for the Hadley School for the Blind, the largest, worldwide distance education program for persons who are visually impaired, their families and professionals.

Irwin thinks the catalyst for her work with the visually impaired may have been when she was a resident advisor in Gillette Hall during her senior year.

"A number of visually impaired girls were on my floor," she says. "Because of meeting and knowing those ladies, I realized that a visual impairment was not going to stop them from doing what they wanted to do. It's just a question of how you're going to do what you want to do."

Ginger Irwin has figured that out.

—Bonnie Arant Ertelt



BRENDA LUNG

A number of visually impaired girls were on my floor [in Gillette Hall]. Because of meeting and knowing those ladies, I realized that a visual impairment was not going to stop them from doing what they wanted to do.

— GINGER IRWIN



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Flood Relief

PHOTO BY John Russell

On May 1 and 2, Nashville received almost 14 inches of rain. The flooding that came with this historic precipitation was widespread and will affect Nashville for years to come. More than 3,000 houses were submerged, and at least 10 people in the Nashville area drowned, either in their homes or cars. The Vanderbilt Clinic suffered some flooding damage, and on the Peabody campus, the Mayborn Building and North Hall were affected.

Nashvillians by the thousands volunteered to help pull out damaged drywall, flooring and insulation and haul flood-soaked belongings to the curb for disposal. Vanderbilt students helped in this effort as well. Pictured are A&S students Chris Rockwell and Cristina Fioramonti, and Peabody students Emily Baldwin and Kelsey Blum, who were but four of the many who volunteered to help the community with flood clean-up.





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—Harold S. Pryor, MA'47

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85	8.1%	\$810	\$5,684
90+	9.5%	\$950	\$6,219

* Minimum age of 65 and minimum gift of \$10,000. Figures as of May 2010.

For more information, please contact Katie Robinson in Vanderbilt's Office of Planned Giving at (615) 343-3858 or (888) 758-1999 or katie.robinson@vanderbilt.edu.

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