Award-Winning Teachers

Stephanie Rhodes ‘00

Stephanie Rhodes, social studies teacher at Sanderson High School in Raleigh, N.C., was named Wake County’s 2011 Teacher of the Year, the first in the school’s history. As part of the award, she received a $1,000 check from corporate sponsors and a $2,500 award toward participation in the Center of International Understanding’s global study program.

When she isn’t teaching, Stephanie enjoys travel. She also plays softball and is involved in community service with her church.

Carolyn L. Webster was named Roanoke County Teacher of the Year, Regional Finalist for Virginia Teacher of the Year. Carolyn splits her time between Burton Center for Arts and Technology and William Byrd High School where she teaches theater and ninth-grade English. She has been with the county since 1991.

Carolyn says her teaching philosophy “is to connect with students, to find out what their passion is and help them realize that their passion can help find them a future.”

Patrick Swope ‘03

Patrick Swope was recognized by his peers for the Gilman Award for Teacher of the Year at Maude Tревett Elementary School and also as Henrico County’s Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year. He coaches the boys’ varsity lacrosse team at Godwin High School and, as a member of the Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, has made professional presentations throughout the state. During his spare time, he runs and plays in city sport social leagues.

Ashleigh Fisher ‘99

Ashleigh Fisher, an 11-year teacher veteran in Roanoke City, was named the Reading Teacher of the Year by the Virginia State Reading Association. With the $500 award money she received, she is establishing a book club for boys at her school, Westside Elementary in Roanoke City. Ashleigh also serves as an adjunct professor at Radford University and was recently recognized as Reading Teacher of the Year by the Roanoke Valley Reading Council.
Message from the Chair

A Call to Teach

I entered the dentist’s office and met a hygienist I hadn’t seen in previous visits. When I introduced myself, she said, “I know who you are. You sent my daughter to Germany.”

She was the mother of an RC graduate who had completed her student teaching abroad. For the next half hour, I heard how the former student had met a U.S. Army officer while teaching in a Department of Defense Dependent School, subsequently married the gentleman, had a son, moved to Hawaii, and completed the family’s first graduate degree. In the midst of the story, I heard that wherever Karen taught, school personnel would ask, “Where did you study? It’s obvious you’re prepared.”

Reflecting on that day in the dentist chair has brought me back to my calling to teach. I became a teacher because I felt somehow it was my purpose for living – a response to my faith. I was to share with others what teachers had so generously given to me. At Roanoke College, I quickly learned the Education faculty also perceived their work as a calling. We were not just gatekeepers of knowledge, but members of a community seeking to share understanding, learning the ways of wisdom, and caring for people. Marin Luther would describe our work as a vocation, and this vocation was something we also wanted our students to know. Roanoke College’s Freedom with Purpose statement captures this sentiment: “Education in the liberal arts frees us from purposelessness into productive careers and lives of service, in which our work to discover what is good, true, and beautiful leads on to work for good in the world.”

The front page of the newsletter captures a sampling of successes of graduates who have gone on to excel in the field, reaching beyond facts and skills and meeting the challenges of calling a new generation to lives of purpose and learning. There are many more of you who are unsung heroes – daily facing classrooms that are pressured from countless outside sources; yet you inspire students who dare to be inspired and you wrestle with questions of how to meet the needs of diverse students and bring justice to students who have been forgotten.

With these thoughts in mind, I congratulate our alumni and encourage you to continue listening carefully to your call to teach. As Parker Palmer says in his book, *A Hidden Wholeness* (2004), “When we catch sight of the soul, we can become healers in a wounded world – in the family, in the neighborhood, in the workplace, and in political life...”

With graduates of such noble commitments, it is not surprising that teachers are the most generous donors in the nation. Taken separately, many of these gifts may appear small but they are not insignificant. As a group, they can work to provide the Education Department with features that are more common on other parts of campus – renovated buildings, endowed professorships, scholarships, and program seed money. As you consider how you can help ensure that future generations of RC teachers are making a difference in student lives, please consider where you began your studies of pedagogy and plan to give so that others can hear the calling and join the vocation of teaching.

More often than not, giving comes through a bequest from a teacher’s estate – the value of a home that is paid for or the remainder of a retirement fund. These assets can pay for scholarships and professorships and serve as a great legacy for generations of young people to come. If you are interested in learning more about how you might help educators of the future, please call Rick Poggendorf at 540-375-2043 or send him an email at rpoggendorf@roanoke.edu. Together we can continue the call to teach.

Sincerely,

Jim Reynolds
**News from alumni**

**W. David High '80**, was awarded the Graduate Enrichment Fellowship at West Virginia University and also the West Virginia University Dissertation Fellowship which allows him to concentrate on his research dealing with elementary science education. He recently spoke on this research at the 15th annual GLOBE Partner meeting in Bethesda.

**Kevin Harris '81** was appointed Floyd County School Superintendent. He previously was personnel director for Carroll County Schools. His resume also includes work in Montgomery and Amherst Counties as a teacher, coach and summer school principal.

**Tim Overstreet '93** was recently appointed principal of Staunton River Middle School.

**Bill Pratt '95**, physical education teacher at Glen Cove Elementary School, has instituted the “One Step at a Time” program for fourth- and fifth-graders. The students were issued pedometers and once a week, converted steps to miles to record their walking progress. The goal is for each student to cover as much as Virginia as possible by tracking steps on their pedometers.

**Greg D’Addario ’10** served on a panel of Arlington Public School teachers in a conversation with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Virginia Secretary of Education, Laura Fornash. Greg teaches first grade at Long Branch Elementary School.

**Student teaching abroad**

by Brynn Scozzari

When I first considered student teaching in Monaco, I was thrilled to find a way to live abroad and study in a way that did not conflict with my time-consuming music major schedule. I could understand enough French to get around Monaco, but I was not sure about what my teaching would entail. Would I teach in French or English? What if the students could not understand me? I definitely encountered a language barrier. Teaching music and movement to four-year-old children who only understood Russian seemed quite impossible at first. However, I spent a great amount of time working with teachers who showed me how to communicate to students without speaking in their native tongue. Using hand gestures, movements and over-the-top visuals with the young children seemed difficult, but incredibly, after working with them for just seven weeks, not only did their language skills improve, but their music and movement skills developed.

The students in my classes range from ages three to 17. Language barriers and cultural differences can be challenging. However, I have learned that even though these children come from all over the world, children are children. They want to play, learn, feel special, appreciated and loved, just as adults do. I am learning not only to be a teacher, but to be one small member of an enormous human race.

*Note: Brynn Scozzari (music education) and Kate Hubbard (elementary education) spent the fall student teaching at the International School of Monaco.*

**Phi Beta Kappa inductees**

Education students make up one-third of new Phi Beta Kappa members! Congratulations to our own pre-service teachers **Kara Drabick, Meagan Thompson** and **Sarah Witt** on their recent induction into Phi Beta Kappa, the nations’ oldest and most widely-known academic honor society. In the fall, they, along with four other Roanoke College students, were selected on the basis of scholarly achievement, broad cultural interests, and good character.
Creating and supporting learning communities – or – the real way of leaving no child behind
by Katie Elmore

The recent news from President Obama allowing states to opt out of the unrealistic pass rates required under “No Child Left Behind” seemed like a reason to celebrate! Cautious optimism, however, keeps my celebration in check. Will “Race to the Top” simply replace a flawed initiative, with yet another spurious measure of school success?

At times I fear we are simply raising a nation of game show contestants. While it may be important to know who the first woman bank president was, it is imperative to create schools where learning is once again a source of joy. Our children are our greatest hope for fixing the messes we have made of this world. We must embolden them to think outside the box. We need to teach them not to just answer correctly, but to question the answers they have been given.

Reality Check: We live in a world with serious problems. We are further away from living peacefully on this planet than ever before. We have clean water, enough food and building supplies for us all to live, but we have yet to figure out a way to divvy it all up. We are decades behind in discovering the medicines needed to cure our many diseases. In the U.S., the number of families living in poverty is at an all-time high. Students in our public school classrooms will need to find solutions to these problems and to problems yet to arise.

Politicians, school boards and parents need to work together to fine-tune new visions of our schools, thus creating communities where:

• all children are successful, certainly not “left behind”
• creativity and innovation are rewarded instead of discouraged
• individual differences are supported and learners are nurtured
• teachers work in community/collaborative support
• and human relationships are built and fostered.

The secret to creating a positive learning community is found within the teacher-student relationship. Good teachers already know this little secret.

They’ve known it from the moment they first stood at the front of a classroom. Shaping a life requires creating a relationship. Teachers can foster positive relationships if allowed more time to do so: time for meeting each student’s needs, time to discover individual interests and time to inspire and encourage. A year-long test prep curriculum is time so sadly squandered.

What exactly do these “learning communities” look like? Answering the following questions can help us disclose the reality...

• Do teachers work with students instead of doing things to them?
• Does the curriculum facilitate the process of discovery?
• Does the testing program improve student motivation?
• Do the assessments actually measure the desired outcomes?
• How much money is invested in the administration and scoring of these tests?

Bill Gates, a generous guardian of New York’s public schools, claims that high schools today are all but obsolete in their ability to foster the type of learning we need. In our beautiful Roanoke Valley, public schools rank as some of the best in the nation. Are rankings based on test scores enough to lull us into a false sense of confidence? If we continue to treat test scores as the only legitimate measure of learning, we perform a great injustice to our children and ultimately to ourselves.

Along with most parents I know, I hope to equip my daughter with many of the tools she will need to navigate this life she has been given: deep faith, solid values, self-confidence, work ethic and a desire to help others; but ultimately, I cannot give her all that she will need. I require some help from the schools where she will spend the majority of her waking hours. Strong test scores may bring bragging rights, but not necessarily the skills she will need to create a better world for herself and for those with whom she will share this planet.

Lewis Thomas may have said it best: “We can take some gratification at having come a certain distance, but it should be a deeper satisfaction, even an exhilaration, to realize we have such a distance to go.”

Classroom resources

ClassWish.org is a nonprofit which can help get resources for your classroom. Teachers can visit the site to create “Wish Lists” of the items they need to equip their classrooms. Visitors to the site can see what is needed and make tax-deductible donations to help. Many companies match employees’ donations which can double their funding. Once the funding amount has been received, ClassWish will ship the items directly to the teachers at no cost.
Guest alumna, Karin Carneal ’08

At the Title I school where Karin Carneal teaches fifth grade, she learned quickly that she has no control over her students’ home situations, but she does have seven hours every weekday to encourage them, and to provide guidance and mentorship. Her highest priority, she says, is for her students to know that she cares about them. She has learned to be on the side of the children, to make decisions that demonstrate to her students that they are valued and loved.

Since she has embarked on her teaching career, budget crises and personnel changes have forced Karin to move grade levels three times. But it has not come without some benefits – she has had opportunities to form relationships with many more students, parents and teachers. She is most touched, she explains, when former students see her in the hall and exclaim how well they are doing.

Karin acknowledges that none of this would have been possible without the “in-school” experiences that were a part of her teacher preparation at Roanoke College. Karin felt she was “set up for success” as she searched for a teaching position, stating that the education faculty was always working with her to help her reach her goals, both before and after graduation.

Looking forward to the next chapter in her life, Karin is happily making plans for her wedding in May. She is also pursuing a master’s degree at the University of Virginia and it is fueling her passion to understand and work with underserved socio-economic students. She encourages all future teachers to never give up! Karin knows that students need caring, attentive, and loving teachers and adds that she doesn’t want to see the deterrents of politics stand in the way of teachers responding to their callings.

Dear New Teacher,

You are truly about to enter the most exciting profession. There is not another profession in which you could influence people in so many ways and make a difference in so many lives. There is also not another profession in which your heart is touched on a daily basis, and you have so many people making a difference in your life.

There are going to be frustrations along the way, and you will have days when you feel like giving up. But don’t give up! You will think you are at your lowest point and then a child will say something or do something that will make you forget about all the bad! It makes it all worthwhile!!

The biggest piece of advice I could give you is, no matter what you are told, kids are not test scores! And those children who spend so much of their childhood with you will not remember the test scores you helped them achieve. They will instead remember the experiences you gave them, the smiles you gave, the tears you wiped, the encouragement you provided, the guidance you gave to get them back on track. They will remember you cared!

Good luck and congratulations,
Codé Sizemore ’02

MSCI presenters Tim Thomas of James Madison University and Katie Elmore of Roanoke College, encouraged teachers at the June 2011 Copenhaver Institute to remember the reasons they were first called to the profession. The participants were encouraged to write letters to first-year teachers. A letter written by Codé Sizemore, an English teacher at William Byrd Middle School is published below. If you would like to write an encouraging letter to a first-year teacher, please send it to the Education Department at RC. We will make sure it is delivered to a first-year teacher!
13th Annual Margaret Sue Copenhaver Institute

Understanding by Design: Prioritizing and Targeting Actions to Improve Student Learning

The Institute will be held on the Roanoke College campus, June 18-20, 2012. The featured keynote speakers are Dr. Grant Wiggins and Dr. Kay Brimijoin.

The Institute will also offer a range of breakout sessions, technology workshops, service learning projects, and time allotted for designing programs to implement in schools. There will be opportunities for collegial interaction, including breakfasts, lunches and afternoon receptions.

The cost to accepted participants is $120; the fee includes participation in all Institute events, two nights lodging at Roanoke College, and session materials.