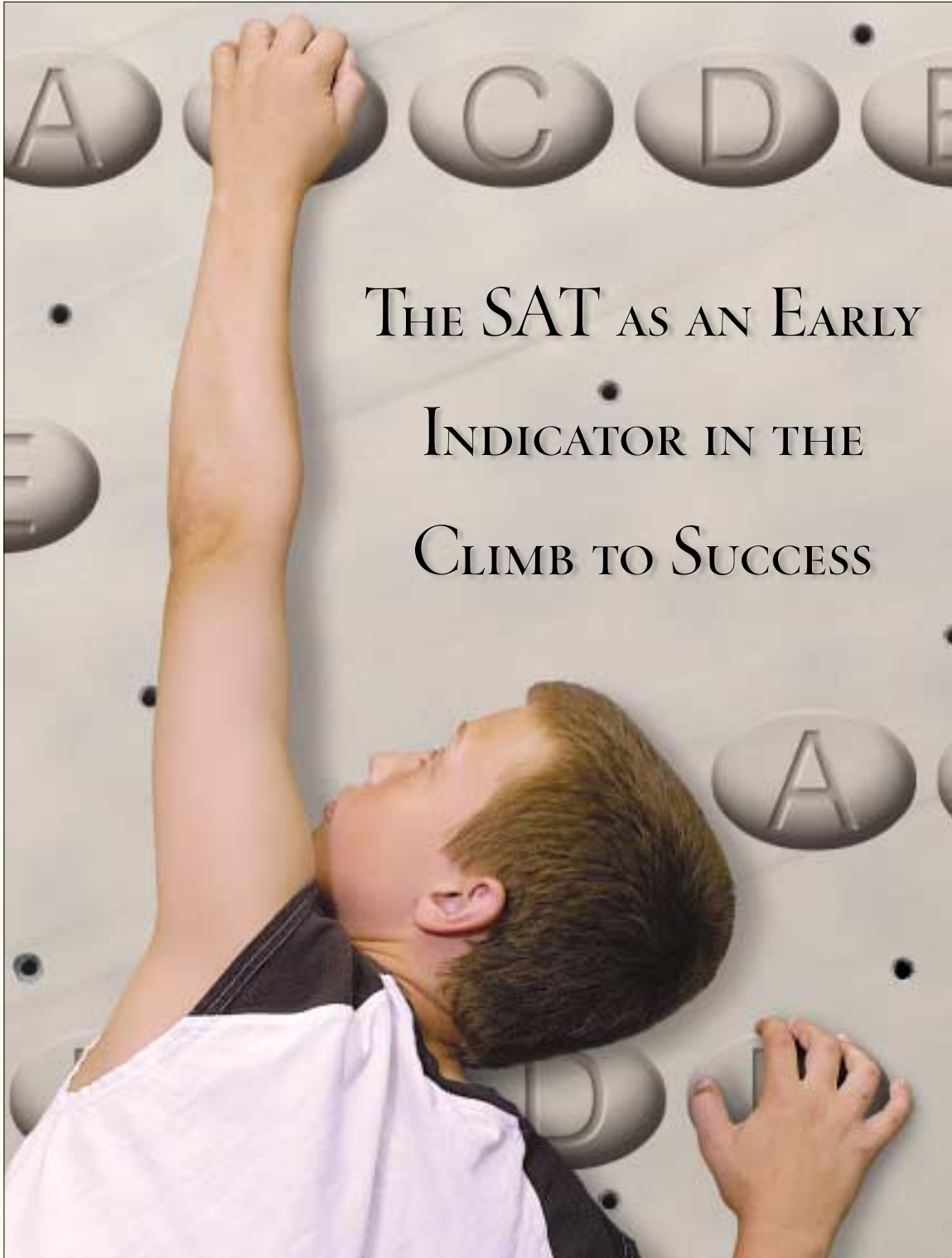


Ideas in Action

PEABODY COLLEGE *of* VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY



THE SAT AS AN EARLY
INDICATOR IN THE
CLIMB TO SUCCESS

CONTENTS



2 Peabody Columns

- College Launches New Professional Institutes 2
- Peabody Ranked Among Top Five for Third Year 2
- Schoolchildren Connect to British Peers Online 2
- Steiger Wins Distinguished APA Award 2
- Faculty Notes and Honors 3
- Media Mentions 3

4 Above and Beyond

- New Research Finds SAT is Accurate Predictor of Future Success*
- An "Evildoer" by Any Other Name: How Labels Shape Our Attitudes Toward Violence 5

6 Classroom Culture Clash

- Researchers Win Nearly \$3 Million to Improve Learning Skills in Highest-Risk Preschoolers 7

8 Innovation for the Innovative

- Peabody Offers Professional Development for Charter School Leaders*
- Vanderbilt, Nashville Schools Forge New International Partnership to Train Principals 9

10 Reaching Out

- New Center Strengthens Commitment to Communities*
- Peabody Researchers Receive \$3.9 Million Grant to Improve Delivery of Human Services 11

12 Selected Grants



With flowers blooming and commencement looming, we look on the world as if through new eyes. And with this fresh perspective comes a new edition of *Ideas in Action*—our first spring issue. Like spring itself, it arrives with a keen sense of potential, one of the themes of the current issue.

For example, our lead story highlights a recent finding my research partner, David Lubinski, and I observed: the SAT, taken as early as age 12, appears to serve as a valid predictor for later career success. I am personally a little uncomfortable running this story as our lead, but we think this finding is significant. It reinforces the importance of identifying and developing the talent of our most promising students.

Potential is common to several other features:

✿ **On language and literacy.** Robert Jiménez, professor of language and literacy, is engaged in research aimed at understanding cultural differences in Hispanic learning. With the rapid growth in our country's Hispanic student population, it is critical that we know what these differences are and how they might shape alternative approaches to instruction that will help these learners fulfill their potential.

✿ **On professional development for charter school leaders.** Charter schools have supporters and detractors, and some recent data regarding their effect on student achievement is not promising. Nevertheless, if such schools are to have a chance at success, we believe we can help their leaders come to terms with the many challenges facing school administrators in general, and charter school administrators in particular.

✿ **On community.** Peabody is a college of education *and* human development. Our commitment is not only to learners but to the communities in which they live. A new center seeks to develop the potentials inherent in communities by offering the social science expertise of Vanderbilt faculty.

I hope you will find these and related stories interesting—and helpful. And I hope you will give us your feedback. Our greater commitment is to fulfilling the potential of ideas. We're interested in yours, too.

Sincerely,

Camilla P. Benbow
Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development

Peabody Columns

College Launches New Professional Institutes

This summer, Peabody College will initiate a new series of short-term institutes designed to provide continuing education experiences for practitioners in K-12 and postsecondary education, called the Peabody Professional Institutes (PPI).



Timothy Caboni

In its inaugural series, PPI will offer four professional development programs building on the college's experience training educational administrators. Timothy Caboni,

assistant dean for external relations and organizer of the institutes, said, "Peabody is committed to producing positive changes in educational organizations—locally, nationally, even internationally. PPI is one way we hope to do this."

This year's offerings include:

- Higher Education Management, June 11-15
- Independent School Leadership, June 18-22
- Academic Library Leadership, July 9-13
- Charter School Leadership, July 30-August 3 (For more on a precursor to this summer's institute, see p. 8)

"We have designed each institute as an intensive and transformative experience," said Caboni. "They will draw upon the intellectual resources of the entire Vanderbilt campus and will also include outstanding scholars, administrators, and policy makers from across the nation." The institutes rest on the philosophy that good practice is best derived from a strong theoretical knowledge base.

"Our goal is to foster mutual engagement. We want participants to leave here as part of a network of change-oriented leaders," Caboni said.

For additional information on PPI, or to download an application, visit the PPI Web site at www.vanderbilt.edu/PPI/. Interested individuals may also call (615) 343-6222 or send an e-mail to PPI@vanderbilt.edu.

Peabody Ranked Among Top Five for Third Year

U.S. News & World Report has again ranked Peabody College among the top five graduate schools of education in the nation. Released on March 31, 2006, the latest rankings again accord Peabody fifth place overall among the top 50 schools. The college has been included in the top five for the last three years. Among the highlights:

- Special education was ranked first in the nation for the fourth consecutive year.
- Peabody's overall score rose 6 points, from 88 to 94 (on a scale of 100).
- The college was the third most selective in its doctoral admissions among all 50 ranked schools.

U.S. NEWS SPECIALTY RANKINGS

Peabody had seven programs included in the magazine's specialty rankings:

Special Education	1 ST
Administration/Supervision	2 ND
Curriculum/Instruction	7 TH
Education Psychology	10 TH
Education Policy	6 TH
Elementary Education	6 TH
Higher Education Administration	10 TH

Schoolchildren Connect to British Peers Online

Students from two Williamson County elementary schools shared research with their counterparts at a British elementary school through a unique online conference at Vanderbilt Jan. 25.

Students from Scales and Hunter's Bend elementary schools in Williamson County had been exchanging e-mails and conducting research in tandem with students from St. Clare's Catholic Primary School in Chester, England, for the previous two months. They presented their final results at the event, which is part of the Children Connecting Cultures research project led by Lori Schnieders, assistant clinical professor of human and organizational development.

"In researching their own square mile of existence and then by teaching it to fellow researchers from a different part of the globe, I believe the children see how the diversity that makes us who we are

is really not so different from others separated geographically from us," Schnieders said. "The researchers involved with this project believe that 'kid to kid,' the children will find solutions to problems through understanding and will stop responding to violence with violence."

Steiger Wins Distinguished APA Award

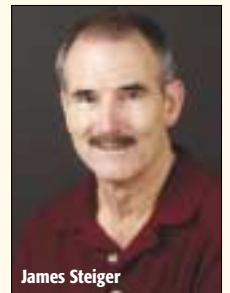
The career contributions of Vanderbilt Peabody psychologist James Steiger have garnered him the American Psychological Association's Division 5 Samuel J. Messick Award for Distinguished Scientific Contributions.

"This award is presented annually to an individual who has a long and distinguished history of scientific contributions to evaluation, measurement and statistics," said Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey, associate professor and chair of the Department of Psychology and Human Development. "This is a notable and well-deserved honor."

Steiger's research focuses on quantitative psychology, multivariate statistics and the development of statistical software. He is the author of numerous journal articles and book chapters on the use of statistical methods in psychology.

"Jim is a spectacular scientist with a distinguished record," Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Nicholas Zeppos said. "I remember meeting Jim when he interviewed and thinking he was quite simply one of the best minds I had ever met."

The award is endowed by the Educational Testing Service in memory of testing pioneer Samuel J. Messick. The APA has invited Steiger to give an address at its 2006 convention in New Orleans, where he also will be presented with a plaque and monetary award.



James Steiger



Lori Schnieders



Faculty Notes and Honors

ROBERT CROWSON, professor of education, and **ELEANOR MCLAIN**, a staff member in the Peabody Dean's Office, served as the Nashville organizers for the 2005 University Council for Educational Administration Conference.

TIMOTHY CABONI, lecturer in the Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations, has been appointed assistant dean for external relations.

DAVID DICKINSON, professor of education, has been appointed to the Institute of Education Sciences standing review panel on language. Dickinson also presided over a California Department of Education workshop for the California Preschool Instructional Network and delivered a keynote address at the Center for the Advancement of Reading.

STEVE ELLIOTT, Dunn Family Professor of Educational and Psychological Assessment, delivered a keynote speech, "Alleviating Frustration for Those Dealing with Students," at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Institute for Learning Partnership.

DALE FARRAN, professor of education and psychology, was appointed to the IES standing review panel on preschool.

JAMES GUTHRIE, professor of public policy and education, and **MARK BERENDS**, associate professor of public policy and education, are serving on the IES standing review panel on systems and reform.

CRAIG ANNE HEFLINGER, associate professor of human and organizational

development, was honored with the Making a Difference Award by the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.

CAROLYN HUGHES, professor of education, was named Reviewer of the Year for the journal *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*. The award recognizes scholarly and thoughtful contributions to the journal and dedication and service to both RPSD and TASH, an international association for the equity, opportunity and inclusion of people with disabilities.

ROBERT JIMÉNEZ, professor of language, literacy and culture, received a Fulbright Alumni Initiative Award from the Council for International Exchange of Scholars for the Transnational Literacy Researchers Program: A U.S.-Mexico Collaboration (see p. 6).

KEVIN LEANDER, associate professor of language and literacy, was elected associate co-chair of the National Council of Teachers of English Research Assembly for 2006. Leander will co-chair the assembly in 2007.

ANDREW PORTER, Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy, and **RICH MILNER**, assistant professor of language, literacy and culture, received Vanderbilt Diversity Awards.

LEONA SCHAUBLE, professor of education, was appointed to the IES standing review panel on math and science.

A team from the Departments of Teaching and Learning and Special Education has been selected to edit the National Reading Conference Yearbook. **VICTORIA**

RISKO, professor of language and literacy education; **YOUNG KIM**, assistant professor of education; **KEVIN LEANDER**, assistant professor of language and literacy; **DEBORAH ROWE**, associate professor of early childhood education; **ROBERT JIMÉNEZ**, professor of language, literacy and culture; **DONALD COMPTON**, assistant professor of special education; and **DAVID DICKINSON**, professor of education, will serve as editors for three years.

MEDIA MENTIONS

Peabody faculty often serve as expert sources for the news media. Below are just a few outlets in which our faculty have recently been mentioned or quoted:

Education Week: Joseph Murphy, Andrew Porter

Kansas City infoZine: James Guthrie

Los Angeles Times: Steve Graham, Andrew Porter

Nashville Business Journal: Elizabeth Dykens

Nashville City Paper: Lori Schnieders, Doug Perkins, Pearl Sims, Claire Smrekar, James Guthrie

New York Times: James Guthrie

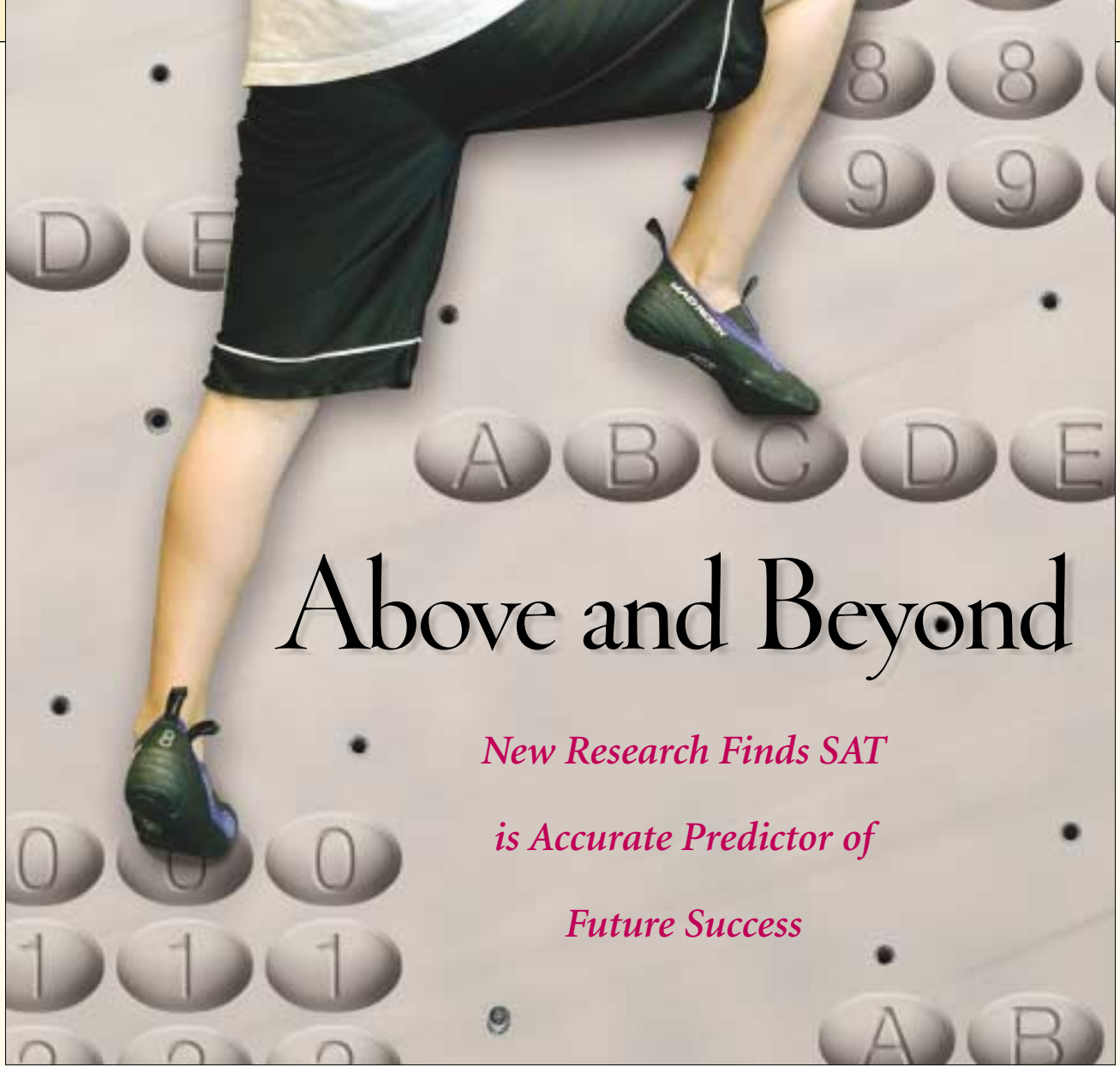
The Philadelphia Inquirer: Carolyn Hughes

The State, South Carolina: James Guthrie

The Telegraph: Daniel Levin

The Tennessean: James Guthrie

WebMD: Jessica Giles



Above and Beyond

*New Research Finds SAT
is Accurate Predictor of
Future Success*

Students with extraordinary scores on the SAT at age 12 go on to achieve exceptional life success into their 30s, researchers have found.

The research, published in the March issue of *Psychological Science*, discovered that these students were as likely or more likely than a comparison group of students in their early 20s enrolled in the nation's top science, engineering and mathematics graduate programs to receive a medical degree, earn an annual salary of at least \$100,000 or secure a tenure-track position at a top 50-ranked institution. Students in both groups were approximately 35 years old at the time of the survey.

"What is most interesting about this research is that, traditionally, early measures of ability were not thought to relate to future creativity," David Lubinski, a lead author of the study and professor of psychology, said. "Our research found that there is in fact a direct relationship."

"Instruments such as the SAT assess much more than book-learning potential. Assessing exceptional cognitive abilities early uncovers a population with remarkable potential for occupational roles requiring complex infor-

mation processing and creativity," the authors wrote.

"Never before has a sample of future scientists of this caliber, with nearly equivalent numbers of men and women, been psychologically assessed so comprehensively and tracked over time."

Lubinski and Camilla Benbow, Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education, led the research. Both are investigators in the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development. Their co-authors were Rose Mary Webb of Appalachian State University and April Bleske-Recheck of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

The 12-year-olds were identified as part of a nationwide "talent search" using the SAT. Students scoring higher than 700 on the mathematical portion of the test or higher than 630 on the verbal portion were identified as being in the top one-in-10,000 for their age in the United States. The average SAT math and verbal scores for high school juniors and seniors are around 500.

The study tracked 380 of the high-scoring students beginning in the early 1980s. The students were surveyed in 2003-2004 on their education, career, success and life satis-

faction. Former graduate students who had been enrolled in a top-ranked engineering, mathematics or physical science program in 1992 also took the survey in 2003-2004.

The survey found that members of the SAT group were more likely to earn higher salaries and just as likely to hold tenure-track positions at top research universities as the graduate student group, and were 50 times more likely than the general population to earn doctorates.

"It is impressive to find members of both groups obtaining comparable top tenure-track positions," Benbow said. "Whereas this type of success might have been expected of the graduate school group as they were already on an academic track when we identified them, the SAT group was only identified with one very high test score at age 12. At that age, they had not narrowed their career



Camilla Benbow

interests in the same way the graduate students had when we began tracking them."

The SAT group was also marked by earning very high salaries, with a greater percentage of this group than the graduate student group earning more than \$250,000 per year. Those in the SAT group in corporate positions appeared to be earning a high salary as a result of their creativity and leadership.

Both groups were much more likely than the average American to hold a patent: 32.1 percent of the male and

20.9 percent of the female graduate student group held at least one patent, as did 17.8 percent of the male and 4.3 percent of the female SAT group. In comparison, 1 percent of the overall U.S. adult population holds at least one patent.

Both groups reported high overall life satisfaction, including career fulfillment, perceived success and positive relationships with significant others.



David Lubinski

The research has implications for the ongoing national conversation about the United States' need for more science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professionals. "Here we see that an existing tool, the SAT, which already is in wide use, can help us identify those most likely to excel in exactly the fields where we have a great need. And if we can identify them at an early enough age, then we can also develop the academic supports and curricula that will help ensure their success," Benbow said.

The research was part of the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth which is tracking more than 5,000 gifted adolescents identified between 1972 and 1997 throughout their adult lives. The study was initiated by Julian Stanley, a former Peabody faculty member who died in 2005, while at Johns Hopkins University.

To view the report, visit www.psychologicalscience.org.

Ashley Toth of the Association of Psychological Science contributed to this article.

An "Evildoer" by Any Other Name: How Labels Shape Our Attitudes Toward Violence

New research by Jessica Giles, assistant professor of psychology, reveals that beliefs about people who have committed violent acts are strongly influenced by the words used to describe those people.

"Noun labels have a powerful influence on our thoughts and beliefs about others. Potential jurors who repeatedly hear a defendant being called a 'strangler' in the press might be more likely to support a death sentence for that defendant," Giles said.

Giles's found that both children and adults are more likely to have a negative, fixed view of people described with a noun, such as "evildoer" or "murderer," than a person described as "someone who does evil things" or "someone who commits murder." Giles presented the research at the meeting of the Cognitive Development Society in San Diego, in October.

"We use nouns generally to describe things whose essential nature does not change: brick, house, dog," Giles said. "We learn at a very early

age that nouns are used to describe something's fundamental character. As a result, when we hear a person being described with a noun—murderer, sex offender, criminal—we tend to automatically infer that that person cannot and will not change."

Giles has conducted multiple studies examining the impact on adults and children of using nouns to describe violence and aggression. In a recent study, 90 adults were given surveys about what they believe causes violence, their perceptions of the effectiveness of criminal rehabilitation and their attitudes toward legal sanctions. In one version, the survey questions used the word "murderer"; questions in the other version used "people who commit murder." She found that participants whose surveys used the term "murderer" were more likely to respond that the person described is inherently

violent and will not change, more likely to endorse punitive legal sanctions and less likely to view rehabilitation as effective.

The effect of noun labels is also strong in children. Preschoolers who heard a character described as an "evildoer" were more likely to infer stability over time and resistance to intervention than were children who heard a character described as someone "who does evil things whenever he can." The same held true in additional work using the label "bully."

The research strongly suggests that children use nouns as powerful cues for making sense of people and their behavior.

"The way we talk to our children about violence and aggression has an early and lasting impact," Giles said. "We know that the use of labels like "bully" to describe children who have misbehaved can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. We need to focus on changing the behavior and building the child's strengths as opposed to pigeonholing him or her based on a label."



Jessica Giles

Classroom Culture Clash



Robert Jiménez, professor of language, literacy and culture, is sitting with a graduate student, Brad Teague, before a computer in Jiménez's Wyatt Center office. He's working with the student on the conclusion of a research paper. "This might be a good place to add a sentence about the current debate," says Jiménez.

It is. With comprehensive immigration reform on the national legislative agenda, this spring makes for an interesting time for Jiménez and his peers. Jiménez's research focuses on the learning needs of Mexican-heritage students. Politically, the rhetorical heat is on. "The most extreme proposal is to build a 700 mile fence. That would be many times what it would cost to fix the New Orleans levees, and we can't even find the money to do that," says Jiménez.

Beyond the rhetoric

Among school-age children, English language learners have a tough time. In the 2003 National Assessment of Educa-

tional Progress, only seven percent of fourth grade limited English learners were proficient in reading. Math scores for the same grade level, and for 8TH grade, as well, were similar.

Then there's No Child Left Behind. On the positive side, the 2001 act requires states to pay attention to these learners. They must be tested, their scores must be reported separately, and they must meet requirements for adequate yearly progress (AYP). But this leaves a big question: how can schools ensure that students are learning the content they require given their language needs? As Jiménez points out, the narrow curriculum increasingly being adopted by schools reduces the opportunity for English language learners to build vocabulary and practice skills.

Jiménez's research focuses on elucidating cultural differences between Mexican students and their native-English speaking peers. Over the last four years, with funding from the Fulbright Scholar Program and more recently from Vanderbilt's Center for the Americas, Jiménez has undertaken a study of students, classrooms, and families in Puebla, Mexico, about 60 miles southeast of Mexico City. Jiménez is part of a working group of Transnational Literacy Researchers, comprised of faculty and graduate students from Vanderbilt and the University of the Americas, in Puebla.

"I wanted to find out how Mexican schools teach reading and writing, especially what teachers and others consider valid or acceptable literacy instruction," says Jiménez. "So I observed classes at a local school and interviewed teachers and students. Over time, this expanded to several more schools. I also went into the community to see how people make use of reading and writing in their everyday lives." He observed several marked differences in reading, writing and speaking.

"In Mexican classrooms, students had more freedom to speak. They're not as closely regulated. Kids talked a lot more, and they talked more loudly. There was overlapping speech. In the U.S., this kind of speech would be considered interruptive. But the speech was usually task-oriented, even though it didn't follow the same protocols."

In an American classroom many teachers would view such speech as disruptive. Previously engaged students are now seen as discipline problems. "Other researchers have documented teacher judgments that such speech is rude, or ill-mannered. They feel as though they have to spend more time teaching politeness," Jiménez notes. These differing norms leave Mexican-heritage students confused.

About 11 percent of Latinos are sorted into special education categories, somewhat lower than the national average. But for those who don't actually have learning disabilities,

the effect can be stigmatizing. “Special education instruction is not helpful in the ways that one would expect,” says Jiménez. “These are students with cultural differences. And what they need to overcome these differences is access to higher vocabulary English in classrooms and the curriculum. Content in special education classrooms can be simplified and watered down. Unfortunately, this is too often true of instruction in ESL classrooms, as well.” In time, many more Latinos than whites or blacks drop out of schooling altogether. “In some urban areas, the numbers can be as high as 70 or 80 percent,” says Jiménez.

In Puebla, Jiménez noted another important difference:



Robert Jiménez

Mexican students did a lot of writing but not a lot of authoring. They copied and reproduced texts. For Americans imbued with a constructivist approach to learning, this seems rather old fashioned. But as Jiménez says, the same approach is practiced in many parts of the world. “Students bring this concept

of learning with them, but it’s not a productive strategy in this context. Someone says, ‘describe this using your own words.’ Well, what does that mean?”

Familiarity breeds content

With data collection now finished in Mexico, Jiménez and his colleagues plan to develop a better understanding of how Mexican students are taught in American classrooms. Jiménez says, “We’ll be doing a one-week retreat in Puebla in May to write reports and develop fresh proposals for funding.”

How can American schools come to terms with the growing Latino population and the resultant implications for learning, especially with the new emphasis on school accountability? It begins with better understanding, Jiménez says. “Our long-term goal is to help teachers understand what parents and students’ prior educational experiences have been. Is it possible to create more familiarity? Why don’t we let kids talk?” If the experience of a new school can be made more similar, with the appropriate kinds of instruction to build language skills quickly, these students can succeed, he argues.

“We’re looking at the things we can do to best support pre-service teachers. We want to offer them good instructional practices.” Toward that end, Peabody has recently

Growing Pains

During the 90s, the population of English language learners grew by 105 percent.

The U.S. population currently includes more than 35 million Latinos, 20 million from Mexico.

In 2001-02, almost 4 million public school students (1 in 12) received special assistance to learn English.

Three quarters of limited English proficiency students speak Spanish.

inaugurated a new undergraduate minor in teaching linguistically diverse students. Jiménez hopes that a new master’s degree in the same area will follow.

“There are so many factors besides teacher language,” Jiménez says. “The cardinal principle of instruction is to really know your students

in order to make instruction understandable. Typically, teachers share a similar background with their students and there are a lot of shared cultural assumptions.”

Aside from taking cultural differences into account, the question of what comprises good instruction is also politically charged. “I get most excited about so-called two-way instruction, or dual immersion. It’s got the strongest research support,” says Jiménez. But he may be facing an uphill battle. In recent years, voters in California, Arizona and Massachusetts have supported propositions that have greatly scaled back bilingual education.

Learn more about the Center for the Americas’ Transnational Literacy Research at: vanderbilt.edu/MexicanLiteracies.

Researchers Win Nearly \$3 Million to Improve Learning Skills in Highest-Risk Preschoolers

Getting very young, at-risk children on the path to future academic success is the goal of a new research study being undertaken by Ann Kaiser, professor of special education, and David Dickinson, professor of education.

The two will work with preschoolers in the Head Start program in Birmingham, Alabama. The study is one of the first interventions that will simultaneously address curriculum, language content and teaching strategy in an attempt to improve language and literacy skills in the highest-risk Head Start enrollees.

“Effective early intervention during the preschool years for children at highest risk for school failure may improve their chances of learning to read and to learn from reading in the early school years,” said Kaiser. “Bringing together the big three—curriculum, linguistic content and teaching



David Dickinson



Ann Kaiser

strategy—in a single intervention is the best we can do in teaching young children.”

Kaiser and Dickinson were awarded a \$2.99 million, four-year grant from the Institute of Education Sciences. Participants will include 480 children and 60 teachers.

“We will target those children with special needs and children with the lowest language scores in each of the 40 classrooms randomly assigned to the new intervention,” Dickinson said. “Our intervention will include a curriculum that I helped develop, *Opening the World of Learning*, and an intensive natural language teaching approach, *Enhanced Milieu Teaching*, that Ann Kaiser developed and refined. We will compare the performance of children receiving these interventions with that of children in 20 other randomly assigned classrooms who will continue to receive the current instructional program.”

“These are the kids most at risk,” said Kaiser. “If we can show effects with them, we will have done something really important.”

Innovation for the Innovative

Peabody Offers Professional Development for Charter School Leaders

Charter schools continue to be one of the education choice movement's most intriguing, and sometimes polarizing, subjects of discussion. While the verdict is still out on the effectiveness of charter schools when it comes to student achievement, one fact is incontrovertible: the number of charter schools across the nation continues to grow—from essentially none a decade and half ago to around 3,500 today. Charter schools serve more than a million students in 40 states and the District of Columbia.

The increasing number of charter schools and charter school leaders is giving rise to a new demand for professional development, knowledge sharing and networking. A conference held at Peabody in January, the first of its kind, offered an initial response to this need targeted at leaders of Tennessee charter schools. The conference served as an intensive boot camp on running the business side of a school.

“Running a charter school is very much like running a large small business,” said Randy Dowell, founding principal of KIPP Academy Nashville. “As a charter school leader, not only do I have final control over my entire budget, which will be close to \$1 million in just our first year, I also have to know how to calculate cash-flow statements, fundraise, communicate with the press and recruit and retain a new class of students every year, all with less money and staff than other public schools. This weekend gave me the chance to develop those skills.”

Charter schools receive public dollars but have greater control over their budget, staff and curriculum than traditional public schools. Tennessee currently has 12 charter schools teaching more than 2,000 students.

The conference was jointly sponsored by the Tennessee Charter School Resource Center and the Peabody Professional Institutes (PPI), an outreach arm of the university that provides short-term educational experiences for practicing administrators from across the nation.

“This is an important component of Peabody’s ongoing commitment to improve education at local, state and national levels,” said Timothy Caboni, assistant dean for external affairs and chair of PPI. “Participating in the

training of school leaders allows us to translate the cutting-edge research done here at Peabody into a useable form that has immediate utility for practitioners.”

Conference topics included school finance, leadership, business operations and non-profit governance, with presentations by Caboni; James Guthrie, professor of public policy and education, director of the Peabody Center for Education Policy; Jeanne Allen, president and founder of the Center for Education Reform; Chris Barbic, founder and head of YES! College Preparatory Schools; and Kevin



Chavous, former Washington assemblyman, author and public education advocate.

“Not only was this weekend a powerful statement on the strength of the school choice movement in Tennessee, it speaks to the incredible commitment that our charter school leaders have to their continued development,” said Jeremy Kane, executive director of the Tennessee Charter School Resource Center.

An idea for the reform minded

In an op-ed published in *The Tennessean* coinciding with the conference, Guthrie argued that charter schools offer an avenue toward school improvement in Tennessee. “Tennessee has had a charter school law for three years. During this time, twelve public charter schools have been started.

This is too slender a number and it is too early to judge their full effectiveness. However, in the absence of other major state initiatives, charter schools offer more practical promise than virtually any other presently available strategy for improving Tennessee's troubled education system," he wrote.

"Some assert the principal problem is money. Their claim is that our schools are under funded, our classes too large, and our teachers paid too little. In some instances they might be right, but to accept such explanations too quickly may risk a false diagnosis... The manner in which money is deployed appears to matter as much or more as how much is provided."

Guthrie cited a mix of competition and performance incentives as a desirable stimulus for public schools.

"It would be useful to expand school choice, particularly for low-income families who cannot now afford private schooling," Guthrie said.

One argument voiced by opponents of charter schools is that they will skim high achieving students from district schools, leaving them essentially worse off. However, a recent white paper ("Making Sense of Charter Schools") by Ron Zimmer and Richard Buddin of the RAND Corporation, suggests that the students enrolling in charter schools tend to have lower achievement scores before enrolling. Zimmer and Budin also argue that black students are more likely than white students to attend a char-

ter school. The two have been systematically studying charter schools in California.

As for incentives, Guthrie suggested that Texas along with large school districts in Houston and Denver may offer models for future pay-for-performance plans. However, designing such plans is extremely difficult "where schools and teachers have little say over the 'raw material,' students, for whom they have instructional responsibility."

Guthrie stressed that there is no one size fits all solution. To be successful, competition and performance rewards must be adjusted to local circumstances. "This

"Running a charter school is very much like running a large small business. ... not only do I have final control over my entire budget, which will be close to \$1 million in just our first year, I also have to know how to calculate cash-flow statements, fundraise, communicate with the press and recruit and retain a new class of students every year, all with less money and staff than other public schools. This weekend gave me the chance to develop those skills."

Randy Dowell
FOUNDING PRINCIPAL OF KIPP ACADEMY NASHVILLE

calls for leadership. Board members, superintendents, principals, and teachers, when prompted, can render local schools better. Charter schools can be a catalyst for motivating just such local reform leadership."

In the meantime, Peabody will continue to offer professional advice and support to those working to make charter schools successful. A second institute for charter school leaders is planned for this summer, this time with participants from across the nation.

The keynote address from the charter school conference can be viewed online at www.vanderbilt.edu/news/lectures?id=24433.

Vanderbilt, Nashville Schools Forge New International Partnership to Train Principals

A delegation of leaders from South China Normal University, one of the top 10 education colleges in China, visited Nashville in November to formalize a partnership to train both American and Chinese principals in effective leadership, education and management skills.

"This is a three-way partnership between South China Normal University, Vanderbilt and Metro Schools," said Pearl Sims, director of the Leadership Development Center in the Vanderbilt Peabody Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations. "No one has done anything like this before with principals."

The new partnership will enable Nashville principals to learn from and exchange ideas with



principals in the city of Guangzhou in the Guangdong Province of China and will create new exchange opportunities for students and faculty at both universities.

"One area is an exchange of principals with the Guangzhou city schools and Metro Nashville Schools," James Guthrie, chair of the department and professor of public policy and education. "Second, SCNU will send master's degree students here for coursework. And they also want our faculty to go to SCNU to train their faculty on how to train principals."

The partnership is the brainchild of Peabody visiting scholar Hong Wang, vice director of the Principals Leadership Development Center at

SCNU. While participating in the Principals' Leadership Academy of Nashville (PLAN), Wang saw an opportunity to share techniques with her colleagues at SCNU, as well as to share with Nashville's principals lessons learned by their Chinese counterparts.

"When I was talking with some principals who are participants in PLAN, I felt like there were so many commonalities in the schools that principals are facing, both Chinese principals and American principals," Wang said. "I thought there might be a good opportunity for them to learn together and exchange ideas."

The visit by leaders from SCNU followed an earlier visit to the Chinese university by Sims, Guthrie, Professor Ellen Goldring, graduate student Xiu Cravens, and Metro Nashville Director of Schools Pedro Garcia in April 2005.

Reaching Out

New Center Strengthens Commitment to Communities

Peabody has long been known for its commitment to learners, including those who are disabled or at risk. But another dimension of the Peabody mission may be somewhat overlooked: the college's long tradition of helping people live in strong, healthy communities.

Recently, a new Center for Community Studies has brought together psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists to study and address issues facing communities.

"The center is an effort to pull together and expand on a lot of the various research projects we are already doing in communities locally, nationally and even internationally," said Douglas Perkins, center director and associate professor of human and organizational development.

"For example, Professor Bill Partridge, an anthropologist, leads a summer field school for international education in Ecuador, where our graduate students work side-by-side with Latin American graduates and scholars on community development projects. Our work ranges from international projects, such as that, to local projects, such as a community assessment we did for South Nashville on behalf of the Woodmont Community Organization," he said.

The center is organized around six topical working groups:

- Healthy communities
- Schools and community
- Organizational change
- Urban neighborhoods
- International communities
- Religion, spirituality and community

"The work groups represent clusters of researchers and projects as well as student interests," Perkins said. "We come together within these projects and sometimes within larger work groups to share ideas and discuss proposals for future research."

Center efforts include research, dissemination, outreach and capacity-building components. One emphasis that spans all six work groups is applying social science methods to generate data a variety

of agencies, institutions and individuals can use to build healthier, more vibrant

communities. Center researchers work with community-based organizations to plan, collect and analyze data and to develop recommendations.

One project that exemplifies the center's efforts both to partner with others and to strengthen communities is

Professor Craig Anne Heflinger's collaboration with Tennessee Voices for

Children and the Center for Family Research at

the University of Georgia to address disparities in health and health care access for rural populations. Heflinger and colleagues are conducting a qualitative study using in-depth interviews and non-obtrusive data gathering to examine service use and outcomes for children with behavioral health problems. The study is being conducted both in Georgia and Tennessee.

Maury Nation, assistant professor of human and organizational development, conducts research focused on school-based drug, alcohol, and violence prevention programs. Nation is particularly interested in understanding and preventing school bullying. He also is collaborating with the Nashville Prevention Partnership to prevent alcohol and drug use among middle-school students.



Professor Isaac Prilleltensky is leading a three-year action-research partnership among five local health and human service organizations. After one year, various partners are adopting new strategic plans, creating new programs, revising mission statements, developing innovative funding proposals, and establishing participatory structures within each agency.

Other collaborations in Nashville include such organizations as The Neighborhoods Resource Center, the Nashville Civic Design Center, and Tying Nashville Together. On the national level, the center has worked with PICO, a network of faith-based community organizations.

The center has its roots in a long history of excellence in the field of community psychology, as embodied by the work of emeritus professor John R. (Bob) Newbrough. Newbrough was recruited to the college in the 1960s to lead an earlier incarnation of the center, originally part of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center.

As community psychology has evolved—emphasizing action research and community empowerment—members of the Department of Human and Organizational Development have adjusted degree offerings and curriculum, as well. Peabody now offers a doctoral program in community research and action and a master’s degree in community development action. Students in these programs have opportunities to participate in center workgroups and collaborations.

The center was given impetus in May 2004, when



Douglas Perkins

Perkins led a national conference at Vanderbilt that brought together community research experts from the United States and abroad.

“The conference was designed to present some prominent examples of effective interdisciplinary community-based research and also to brainstorm how to do this

type of work more effectively,” Perkins said. “A lot of us, including myself, were coming out of psychology and have been working with colleagues from other disciplines for some time. But there are still remarkably few good models for doing that well, and so this conference was geared toward that. At the same time, the conference was also geared toward gaining recognition for our center here as it was coming together.”

For more information about the Center for Community Studies and a schedule of its colloquia and meetings, visit peabody.vanderbilt.edu/ccs.



Peabody Researchers Receive \$3.9 Million to Improve Delivery of Human Services

Never ones to fear a challenge, Pearl Sims and Isaac Prilleltensky certainly have their hands full now. The Peabody faculty members were recently awarded a \$3.9 million grant from the Tennessee Department of Human Services to partner with that agency to improve service delivery across Tennessee. This is the agency that handles the state’s welfare program, food stamps, child support and applications for some TennCare benefits—in short, some of the most used and thorniest public services in the state.

“DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge is very interested in improving customer service and in modeling at the state level efforts that they are already supporting with their smaller partner agencies,” said Sims, director of the Peabody Leadership Development Center. “She asked us to submit a proposal to help her agency accomplish this goal, which resulted in this grant.”

The effort will take place over three years and will be carried out by a team led by Sims and Prilleltensky in partnership with the Department of Human Services, Tennessee State University, the University of Memphis and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

“The design team will include some of the best researchers and practitioners in Tennessee and will focus on effectively using technology to train staff and improve the organization as a whole,” Sims said.

“Our goal is to shift the way human service agencies have traditionally done their work—from focusing on deficits to focusing on strengths, from changing people one at a time to changing organizational and community conditions and from managing crises to preventing them,” said Prilleltensky, professor of human and organizational development.

Under Lodge’s direction, the new Peabody project will take a three-pronged approach that maps out strategies to improve customer service, benchmarks against best practices used by other states and agencies, and tracks the effort as a research project so that it can be used in the future by other states. The team will begin at three DHS pilot sites—Memphis, a rural area and a mid-size community—and then will look toward applying what they have learned in more areas of the state.

“We hope to serve as a relationship broker between state officials in Nashville and the local employees,” Sims said. “We want to meet the needs of the workers who work on the front lines of some of the hardest situations in our state.”

Selected Grants

JULY – DECEMBER, 2005

As reported by the Vanderbilt Office of Sponsored Research.

(Does not include grants of less than \$25,000.)

LEONARD BICKMAN, Psychology and Human Development; \$230,630, Public Health Service, “Children’s Mental Health Services Research Training – Year 13”

DAVID COLE, Psychology and Human Development; \$346,575, Public Health Service, “Developmental Origins of Depressive Cognitions”; **JUDY GARBER** and **BAHR WEISS**, co-principal investigators

DAVID DICKINSON, Teaching and Learning; \$2,240,000, Institute of Education Sciences, “Improving Language and Literacy Outcomes for Preschool Children at Highest Risk for Reading Problems.” **ANN KAISER**, Special Education, co-principal investigator

ELIZABETH DYKENS, Psychology and Human Development; \$2.5 million, Administration on Developmental Disabilities, “Vanderbilt Kennedy Center University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities”; \$980,922, National Institutes of Health, “Roadmap Initiative”

STEVE ELLIOTT, Special Education; \$87,449, Department of Energy, “Enhancing the Hawaii State Alternate Assessment: Development, Implementation and Validation”

DALE FARRAN, Teaching and Learning; \$256,768, Wayne County Board of Education, “Wayne County Early Reading First Evaluation”

DOUG FUCHS, Special Education; \$150,000, Department of Education, “Center for Research on Learning Disabilities”; **DANIEL RESCHLY**, **LYNN S. FUCHS**, and **DONALD COMPTON**, co-principal investigators

LYNN S. FUCHS, Special Education; \$710,126, Public Health Service, “Understanding/Preventing Math Problem-Solving Disability”; **DOUGLAS H. FUCHS**, **DONALD COMPTON** and **CAROL HAMLETT**, co-principal investigators. \$180,000, Department of Education, “Identifying and Promoting Outcomes for Students with Disabilities in Mathematical Problem Solving”

JUDY GARBER, Psychology and Human Development; \$42,553, Public Health Service, “Sequential Treatment Alternatives to Relieve Depression (STAR*D) Child Study”

CRAIG ANNE HEFLINGER, Human and Organizational Development; \$239,400, Public Health Service, “Rural Child and Adolescent Mental Health”; \$68,000, State of Mississippi Mental Health Services, Community Treatment Alternatives for Children

STEPHEN HEYNEMAN, Leadership, Policy and Organizations; \$37,000, Council of International Exchange Scholars, “New Century Scholar Grant”

CAROLYN HUGHES, Special Education; \$250,000, Department of Education, “Multidisciplinary Program in Severe Disabilities: Accessing the General Education Curriculum”

CRAIG KENNEDY, Special Education; \$200,000, Department of Education, “Collaborating with General Educators to Improve the Education of Students with High-Incidence Disabilities”; **CAROLYN HUGHES** and **ROBERT HODAPP**, co-principal investigators

JOSEPH MURPHY, Leadership, Policy and Organizations; \$158,440, Department of Education, “Distributed Leadership”

ANDREW PORTER, Leadership, Policy and Organizations; \$400,000, The Wallace Foundation, “A Proposal to Develop and Test an Education Leadership Performance Assessment”; **STEPHEN ELLIOTT**, **ELEN GOLDRING** and **JOSEPH MURPHY**, co-principal investigators

ISAAC PRILLELTENSKY and **PEARL SIMS**, \$3.9 million, Tennessee Department of Human Services, “Improving Service Delivery”

DEBRA J. ROG, Center for Evaluation and Program Improvement; \$456,620, Public Health Service, “Collaborative Programs for Homeless Families”; \$85,816, Westat Corporation, “Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with

Children”; \$60,902, Public Health Service, “Evaluation of National Collaborative for Homeless Children and Trauma”; \$53,560, Public Health Service, “Evaluation of National Collaborative for Homeless Children and Trauma”

ROBERT D. SHERWOOD, Teaching and Learning; \$109,430, National Science Foundation, “Sherwood IPA (Intergovernmental Personnel Agreement)”

THOMAS SMITH, Leadership, Policy and Organizations; \$25,000, National Academy of Education, “Will They Stay or Will They Go? Using Organizational Theory to Examine Policy Effects on New Teacher Turnover”

MARK WOLERY, Special Education; \$250,000, Department of Education, “Preparing Personnel to Work with Young Children with Autism and Their Families”

RUTH WOLERY, Special Education; \$32,500, Tennessee Department of Education, “Susan Gray School Early Childhood Education Program”; \$25,000, Tennessee Department of Human Services, “Susan Gray School Child Care Food Program”

PAUL YODER, Special Education; \$371,044, Public Health Service, “Effects of Intensity of Early Communication Intervention”





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