



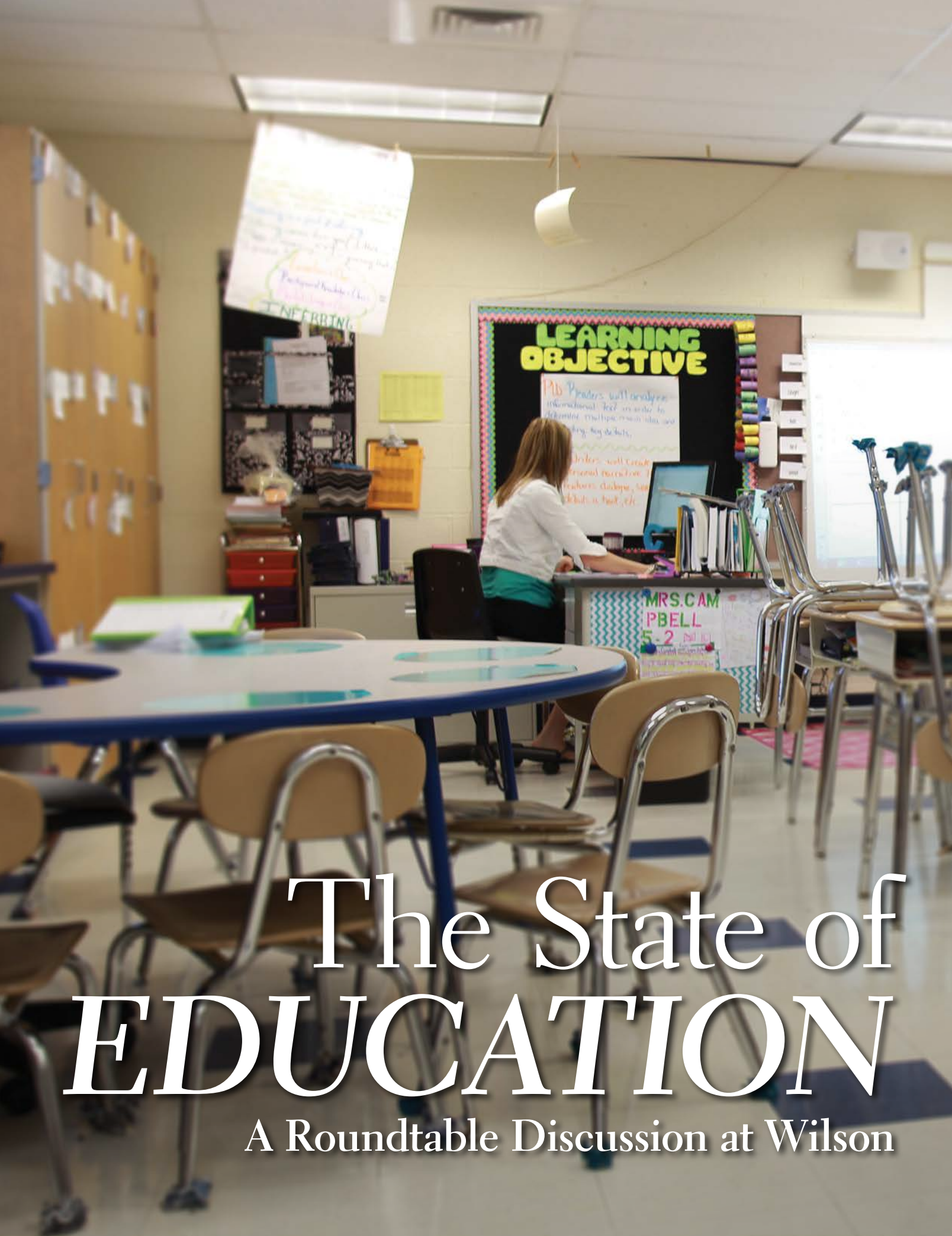
WILSON

The State of *EDUCATION*

Wilson faculty and graduates discuss the important issues and personal challenges of education today

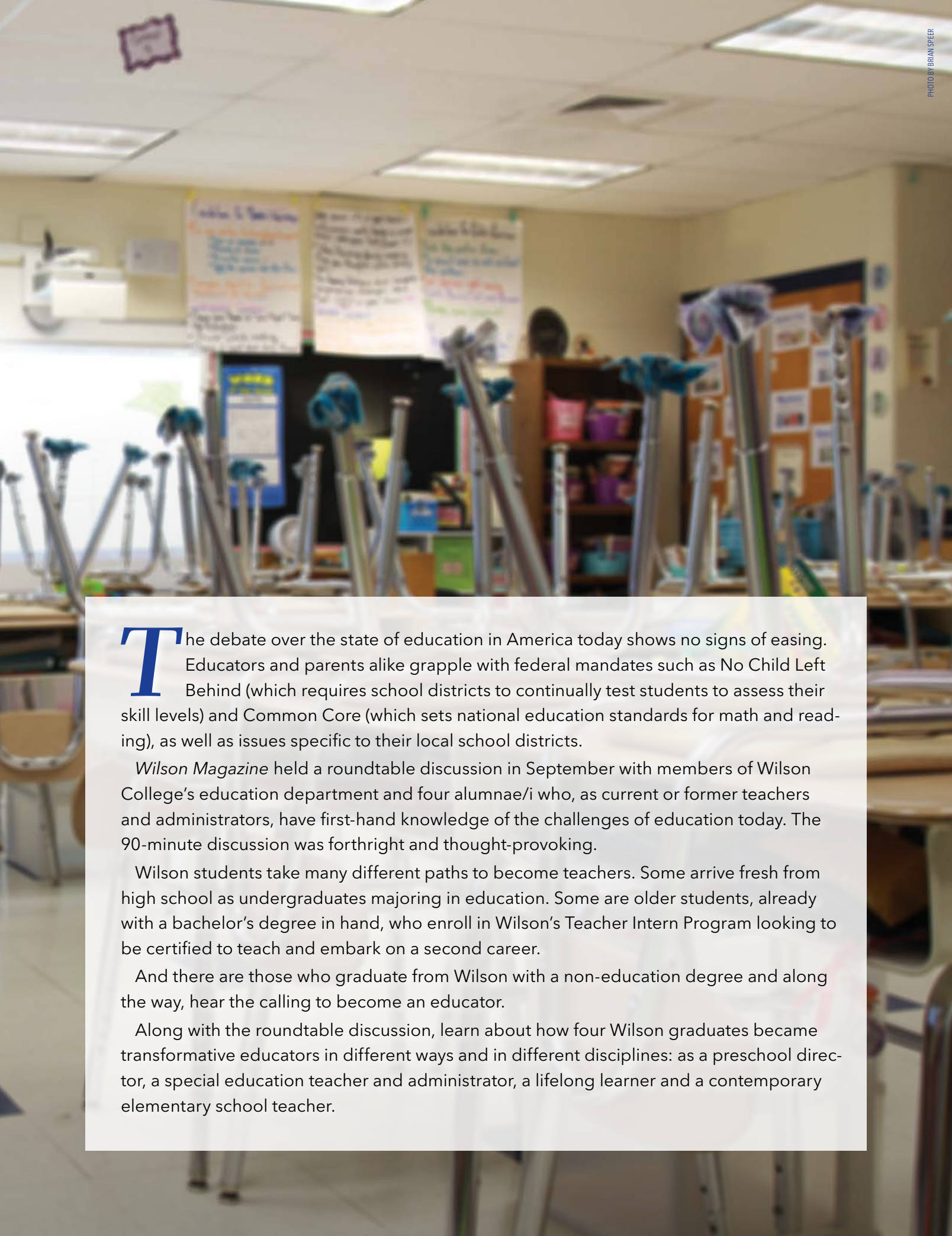
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The State of *EDUCATION*

A Roundtable Discussion at Wilson



The debate over the state of education in America today shows no signs of easing. Educators and parents alike grapple with federal mandates such as No Child Left Behind (which requires school districts to continually test students to assess their skill levels) and Common Core (which sets national education standards for math and reading), as well as issues specific to their local school districts.

Wilson Magazine held a roundtable discussion in September with members of Wilson College's education department and four alumnae/i who, as current or former teachers and administrators, have first-hand knowledge of the challenges of education today. The 90-minute discussion was forthright and thought-provoking.

Wilson students take many different paths to become teachers. Some arrive fresh from high school as undergraduates majoring in education. Some are older students, already with a bachelor's degree in hand, who enroll in Wilson's Teacher Intern Program looking to be certified to teach and embark on a second career.

And there are those who graduate from Wilson with a non-education degree and along the way, hear the calling to become an educator.

Along with the roundtable discussion, learn about how four Wilson graduates became transformative educators in different ways and in different disciplines: as a preschool director, a special education teacher and administrator, a lifelong learner and a contemporary elementary school teacher.

Roundtable Discussion

Lynn: This evening we are going to focus on education, focus on a variety of topics and your thoughts on the past, present and future of education. To start, I'd like you to reflect on something positive, something that you feel is an accomplishment.

Logan: I was in the Navy 20 years ago and was trained as an optician. Several years ago, an opportunity for a state grant came up and with that, we created a vision care program. Over the past two years, my students in this program have made more than 500 pairs of glasses for kids in the city school district, for free. This spring, I had my first group of students graduate from [one of] the only two colleges in New York state where you can go to for optician training. It was such an amazing feeling to look at these kids walking across the stage and realize that they did it because of things that I taught them that really, really excited them.

Samantha: Last year my team and I got published in the *Journal of Science and Mathematics* for how we are teaching math. Four years ago, our school got a 50 percent pass rate on our end of the year mathematics test, so we totally changed the way we taught math. We really believed in what we did. We ended up the next year with an 89 percent pass rate.

Melissa: So I'm coming from a different lens, as a principal. It's my third year as the leader of a very large building. I do miss working in a teaching capacity in the classroom. But yesterday I had a moment that reminded me I chose the right path, for the right reasons. I have more than 1,000

kids, and I make it a point to try to get to know every one of them. I went to a youth leadership meeting yesterday. A lot of former students were there, and when the conference leader said, "Does anyone know Mrs. Cashdollar?" in back of the room 15 to 20 hands went up. He said, "Really? Tell me something about her." And one of the kids, probably one of my toughest kids, said, "She knows everyone's name." It may sound silly, but I think that was a really good moment to remind me why I chose to do what I do.

Cynthia: I went into the principalship for a school (in Chambersburg) that was on school improvement on the state watch list. I sought Eric's (Michael) advice and he got me started on how we were going to approach pulling a building out of school improvement. Over a period of three years, it really was a revolution in terms of our instruction, the supports we provided students, the relationships we built with students and the teachers and the staff. We all were able to pull the building out of school improvement. We ended up being proficient and we had growth, one of the highest of the elementary schools in the district. But it was a tough journey.

Lynn: What are the challenges you face today in education?

Melissa: Sometimes as the administrator you have to find it in yourself to champion or cheerlead when you know there are demands on you that are out of your control. When there are things you may not agree with, you have to champion the efforts and with a positive attitude, rally the troops in the right direction ... You have to find it within yourself to be that

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Roundtable Participants



LYNN NEWMAN

Chair, Education Department, former elementary school teacher and primary reading specialist



BETH BYERS

Director of Teacher Intern Program at Wilson, former elementary school teacher



ERIC MICHAEL

Director, Master of Education program, former high school principal and assistant superintendent for Chambersburg Area School District



MELISSA CASHDOLLAR '01

Current principal of Chambersburg Area Middle School South



CYNTHIA HENRY '93

Retired elementary school principal, intervention specialist, special programs coordinator, fifth-grade head teacher for Chambersburg Area School District



SAMANTHA VANCE GATES '10

M.Ed., third-grade teacher in Winchester, Va., School District



LOGAN NEWMAN '01

Secondary education teacher in Rochester, N.Y., School District, Navy veteran

Educator prepares children to **TAKE NEXT STEP**

By Gina Gallucci-White

Catharine MacKorell Brennan's interest in Montessori education began with a lecture during her junior year at Wilson, when she was studying the social aspects of inner-city neighborhoods in Detroit as an exchange student at Merrill Palmer Institute.

Often, the students would have tea at the institute's administration building and guest lecturers would speak on a variety of subjects. One lecturer discussed Montessori education, which offers a child-centered curriculum with a focus on independent learning.

"I saw her demonstration and I said, 'Wow,'" Brennan '76 said. "That is the way to teach little children. Ever since that demonstration, I just had it tucked in the back of my head—Montessori education sounds kind of interesting."

Several years after graduating from Wilson with bachelor's degrees in religious studies and psychology, the Charleston, W.Va., native met two Catholic nuns who were involved with a Montessori school in Lexington, Ky. Brennan became a preschool teacher at that school for three years, and her experience only confirmed her initial impression.

"I just absolutely fell in love with Montessori education," Brennan said. "I am a perfectionist and that seems to fit quite well with Montessori education. I just look at the world a little differently than the way the public school system does." Public schools have norms and standards but for Brennan, Montessori education means, "I'm going to supply you with an environment that is going to help you develop to be the person that you are meant to be and not what some curriculum says this is what you should know."

Brennan took some time off to raise four children and relocate to Topeka, Kan., for her husband's job. After her youngest started kindergarten, she landed a teaching position at the Discovery School Montessori Preschool in Topeka. She recently began her 24th year at the school and has served as its director since 2000. "We are looking to prepare the children to take that next step in their education, which will be kindergarten," she said.

Brennan acknowledged that coming from the Montessori perspective, she finds it difficult to send children who have been in her school for two years to a public school where they are subject to the No Child Left Behind philosophy and testing. "We strive to allow children to develop through discovery and learn through their senses. [To] take in information at their own individual pace," Brennan said. "Public schools are not set up to allow for this kind of learning philosophy. We do what we can to prepare our children for what is ahead without compromising our philosophy, but it is not easy."

After spending nearly a quarter of a century at the school, Brennan considers the all-natural, outdoor classroom space her legacy. Begun in 2006 with the help of a group of parents, the area includes a Native American teepee, hay bales, flower garden and a slide built into a hill. She plans to expand the area over the next school year to include a vegetable garden and a pond. "One of my parents asked, 'Are you ever going to be finished with that play yard?' and I said, 'No. I don't think so.'"



PHOTO BY JEFF JACOBSEN

leader and convince others to follow you, even though you can't guarantee at the end that it's going to work the way you want it to work. That's a big challenge for me.

Samantha: It's important to have that great attitude, like Melissa said, but one of the biggest challenges is keeping that great attitude in the face of adversity. We recently regrouped this year and I now teach most of the below-level readers for most of the day. It can be so frustrating and yet so rewarding all at once. You have to keep trying to find what works for the kids.

Melissa: Well Sam, I'm a big believer—and I know Cyn is too—that you put your best teachers with your neediest students. If you were in my building, that's why you'd be in that room. From my side of the fence, my frustration would be if I were to place you in that position year after year after year, then I'm burning out someone who has a passion and a love for the position. And I don't want to lose people

Logan: I teach in Rochester, which is either the third or fifth-most impoverished school district in the nation, depending on what article you read. Our school is now under the direction of the University of Rochester, specifically the Warner School. So there are lots of changes. Everyone had to reapply for their job. Fifty percent of us got back in. Challenges—there's a lot of new stuff, a lot of it really, really good, a lot very difficult to embrace. And you just don't have the time you would like to work with the students as much as you want to. It's like you're always running and it wears you out quickly.

Eric: I think many of our accomplishments have yet to be seen because we never know the lives we have touched until, many times, years later. For a lot of us, we may never know all the lives we touch.

Logan: I distinctly remember John McDermott (a former Wilson professor) and what he always said: "Be happy if you really touch just one student in your entire life because then you'll know you've made a difference." Samantha, you're talking about teaching those high-needs students and I'm up here in this high-needs area. The nice thing about teaching high-needs students ... I know that every year I'm making a difference to some of them.

Eric: I tend to frame the challenges to education today into three categories: resources, which include money and community support; time; and—I wouldn't have said this five years ago—culture. Although we provide a lot of lip service to how important education is, I see the international students at Wilson, the work ethic that they have, and I'm not sure we have the culture for education in the U.S. as much as we did in the past.

Logan: There's lip service but there also seems to be an antipathy to educators and public education. Reformers

keep talking about how we need to fix education, and how education and educators in the U.S. are so terrible. They tell us how to teach and what to teach, but the reformers really have no education background. We see this so much in the media that it becomes a detriment to what we are trying to do, because they are constantly telling our students: your teachers are terrible, the schools are bad and the curriculum is no good for you. It's it like what we say about bad music lyrics—if you keep listening you'll believe them.

Cynthia: Many parents today just do not have or understand the skills needed. They don't understand the concept of having books and paper and pencils at home, or the value of reading books aloud to your children. It's not that most parents don't care—they do. But they are working two jobs, there are a lot of stressors. They're tired. They just don't have the time.

Logan: My other thought on this is: For so long we heard that if you want to be better in life, you have to go to college. We still have that college-for-all mentality, but people are going to college and still have menial jobs. And we have gotten rid of all of the important classes! [In Rochester] we don't have wood shop and metal shop or any other classes where kids can learn the other important skills such as perseverance, critical thinking and teamwork—all things you learn in hands-on programs. We need to get back to those programs.

Samantha: And Logan, it's so important what you said because so many of the jobs we're teaching for now may not exist in 10 years.

Lynn: I'd like to tie this into the Common Core debate. What do you think are the positive and negatives on Common Core?

Cynthia: It's important to be consistent with teaching standards at grade levels so that students receive consistent instruction on the standards. That said, I do not believe the Common Core is benefiting the advanced and the higher students at all. At all. I think we have stifled creativity and problem-solving for advanced students.

Melissa: Two big words that pop up: conformity and uniformity. I think they are big themes in PA [Common] Core. The positive is the conformity. There wasn't consistency before that and there were children all over our district, and all districts, receiving inconsistent instruction and experiences. So the consistency part I view as a big positive. It forced everyone to reflect, think, plan and then start to move towards a level playing field. That got turned and viewed as uniformity. In the workshops, I see the teachers who hold their hands out to me like they have been handcuffed. [They think] everyone must do everything the same way, at the same time, in the same text; hence, the handcuff mentality. That is

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A lifetime of work in **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

By Coleen Dee Berry

When she graduated from Wilson with a degree in political science and went on to get a master's degree from Georgetown University, Jacqueline Elder Murren '69 envisioned a career with the U.S. Foreign Service. But circumstance brought her back to teach a special education class with the newly formed Lincoln Intermediate Unit 12, serving Adams and Franklin counties.

And she found her true calling. "I thought, *this* is what I should be doing," Murren said. "The kids were so much fun to work with, and you could see so much progress if you got them early enough." She taught three days in classroom and spent two days doing home instruction, while teaching in the preschool program.

For the next 37 years, Murren devoted her talents to the LIU, working in the capacities of special education teacher, instructional adviser and supervisor of the various programs of preschool, life skills support, occupational/physical therapy and hearing and vision support. "I was a troubleshooter for a lot of my career," she said. "I went where they needed me."

LIU 12 is one of the 29 intermediate units formed by the Pennsylvania State Legislature in 1971 to give consultative and advisory support to local school districts. One of the LIU's initial mandates was to provide school districts with special education instruction and support.

Murren attended Western Maryland College (now McDaniel College) to get her master's degree in special education and her certification to teach. During her career with the LIU, she worked with special education students from grades K-12, with conditions ranging from behavioral/emotional problems and Down syndrome to severe mental and physical challenges.

"Parents who care for handicapped children really are heroes. Back when I first started working, there just were not a lot of services and support available for these parents—especially those who were living in some of the more remote rural areas of Franklin and Adams," Murren said. "The home visits were very important so parents could get that one-on-one instruction and support many so badly needed."

Her biggest accomplishment, Murren said, was the establishment of a summer program for LIU special education students. "The kids made so much more progress if they did not take the summer off," she said, noting that her program was in place ahead of Pennsylvania's mandate in the mid-1980s that the required 180 school days for special education kids be spread year-round.

Wilson prepared her well for her teaching career—even though she did not major in education. "Wilson taught me to think on my feet, something I am eternally grateful for," Murren said. "They taught me to be a problem-solver—and believe me, I've had to deal with solving many problems over the years."

Murren finds herself encouraged by the state of education today. "I think we are achieving at a higher rate than ever before. I know a lot of people don't like No Child Left Behind, but I think it has brought about higher expectations and in general, teaching at a better level," she said. "Graduation rates have risen, absenteeism is down. I think at least in Pennsylvania, we are in a good place."

Although Murren retired from the LIU in 2010, she found herself back at work in 2014 for the Littlestown School District, when the district's director of special education was asked to step in as acting superintendent. "They called me to see if I could help," said Murren, a longtime resident of Littlestown. "I was hired as special education consultant and helped run the school district's special education program for six months. It was actually great to be back working at a school again."



PHOTO BY JAMES BUTTS



PHOTO BY JEFF JACOBSEN

Catharine MacKorell Brennan '76 leads her Montessori preschool students on an outing.

not a positive. That's consistency taken to extremes. So the uniformity piece is where we are now in the process. Creativity will be [the] gateway to the next step. If we don't think of a creative way to do it, there will always be some group who will be left on the side of the road.

Logan: I really like the idea of standards. What I don't like are the prepared modules in Common Core that the teachers have to do. It's what Cyn said. There's a lack of creativity. Common Core causes issues simply because it does not allow teachers to do one of the things that they got into profession for—to be creative and teach kids the way they need to be taught. My buddy and I talk about this and call it the "one-size-fits-none" model.

Samantha: We do not have Common Core in Virginia. I do like the Virginia standards; they are extremely rigorous. We do find that when kids come from out of state, they have gaps. They do Common Core and we're not, so the standards aren't the same. But I think our standards lend themselves a little better to our situation.

Lynn: If you could wish for anything for your district, or for the current state of education, what would that be?

Cynthia: My grandson is attending a career magnet school. Now throughout his entire educational career—he will be 15—he has hated school with every ounce of being. I have never ever seen him as excited as he is this year. He absolutely loves the career magnet school. I'm on the bandwagon here for more of these programs.

Beth: That's our best hope for students, is that they find their niche and they reach their potential. And that's something that can't always be measured on a test.

Logan: When I started teaching this vision care program, the big difference with this type of program versus AP biology is that I can see in my students the application of knowledge so much more completely, and I see them enjoying doing something rather than reciting facts.

Melissa: My wish is that every child who spends the time in my building feels valued. What a shame and what failure I would feel if the kids can't give one example of a time when they were successful in the classroom. If you have one little soul that walks through the building with no example of educational value or success, then we have failed that child, because that child then becomes the parent of a child and they won't respect the system, they won't feel connected to the school system and it becomes cyclical.

Samantha: I wish that all kids would love learning. I hear a lot of them say they hate reading and hate school. Just to hear some of them say now in my class that they like reading or that they are good at reading now, when they have felt all along they were terrible at it—it's just a great feeling.

Logan: The one thing I would like to see us get rid of is the [constant testing] or the value-added model that we see all over, because I feel that is really destroying education from the inside. It's not realistic, it's not real. I think it's taking the heart out of education. Common Core goes along with that.

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Savoring the "AHA! MOMENT"

By Gina Gallucci-White

Jessica Campbell '11 knows how to multitask. While earning her bachelor's degree at Wilson, she held down a full-time office manager job, attended classes and had two small children at home.

"Trying to juggle a full-time job and then coming home and trying to do the papers was stressful at times, but I definitely have an amazing husband that entertained the two kids whenever I had to write papers and my parents would fill in for me whenever they could," she said. "It was definitely stressful at times but we made it through it."

All that hard work paid off. This September, Campbell was recognized by the Chambersburg Lions Club with a Teachers Excellence Award. Nominated by her principal at Hamilton Heights Elementary School, she was shocked to win. "I got a little emotional," Campbell said. "Being a third-year teacher, I just wasn't expecting something like that. It's awesome to be appreciated for the work that I do for my kids."

Growing up in the Fort Loudon, Pa., area, Campbell joined the workforce after graduating from high school, but at age 24, chose to continue her education at Wilson because of her grandfather, Alan McKee. His career spanned 30 years at Wilson, beginning as a security guard and rising to director of operations. "When I was thinking about going back to school, I wanted to do Wilson because that's where he spent most of his [career]," she said.

When she began classes at Wilson in 2005, Campbell had decided to pursue an accounting degree. Watching her children grow influenced her to switch her major to elementary education.

"I had a few teachers here and there that always inspired me to want to be a teacher," Campbell said. "The [Wilson] staff and the professors gave a lot of great constructive criticism and feedback to push you, but also helped you grow as a student."

She credits Lynn Newman, chair of the education department, as being a mentor and counselor. "I can't say enough about Dr. Newman," Campbell said. "She is an amazing lady."

After graduating, Campbell continued to work her office manager job four days a week and substitute teach on Fridays and sometimes other weekdays. "The company that I worked for was very, very flexible ... They knew that I wanted to be a teacher so they were flexible in regard to letting me go and substitute when something arose," she said.

By 2013, she was teaching full time in Chambersburg as a fifth-grade English language arts teacher at Hamilton Heights. One of the biggest challenges she says she has faced is preparing her students to reach the standardized academic goals the state requires. "We know that our [students] are growing," said Campbell, but she finds it difficult at times to show that growth using state requirements.

Campbell now knows pursuing a degree in education from Wilson was the right move for her because she loves her job. "The kids are all unique individuals and [I love] to see them grow and to see them have that 'Aha! moment'—that lightbulb moment where it finally clicks," Campbell said. "That moment for me is why I am doing what I am doing."



PHOTO BY BRIAN SPEER

Teacher remains **LIFELONG LEARNER**

By Gina Gallucci-White

Zanada Green Maleki '71, who spent four decades teaching elementary school, art and music instruction, retired from teaching last year, but that didn't stop her from taking up a new project in education.

With online learning growing in popularity, Maleki is making videos to help students with math, reading and writing. She created the videos after speaking with a home-school community in Maine, where the parents complained that their children had trouble mastering long division.

Maleki's videos serve as learning tools that allow both parents and students the opportunity to watch the videos several times until they understand the concepts. "It's not as intimidating as having an adult with the child face to face and the kid doesn't want to say the wrong thing," Maleki said of the video tutorials.

Growing up in Washington, D.C., Maleki chose Wilson College after learning about the school during a higher education night at her high school. "The entire time I spent (at Wilson), all four years, was an experience very different from where I grew up," she said.

Graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology and a minor in elementary education, she went on to serve as a teacher for 13 years with the Houston Independent Schools District in Texas, instructing mainly fifth-graders.

With her husband's job in the nuclear power industry, the couple relocated to the Pottstown, Pa., area and then to Maine, where she acquired her master of education degree at the University of New England. Maleki taught music and art education as a substitute teacher in Pennsylvania and Maine, and then spent the next 17 years as a fifth- and fourth-grade teacher, as well as an Odyssey of the Mind coach in the Lewiston, Maine, public school system.

Maleki enjoyed working with the students, helping them untangle challenges and providing encouragement. "I wasn't a traditional teacher and I was not fond

of assigning worksheets. Rather than having students write books about their learning, I found that creating learning quiz games, projects at school and documentary videos was more productive," she said. "I couldn't stand worksheets. I preferred the interaction with the students and working with experiential approaches."

Teachers today face a myriad of challenges—Maleki can quickly list at least a dozen. Among them: encouraging a sense of wonder and discovery in students, motivating students to become managers of their own learning, striving to reach 100 per cent of student populations 100 per cent of the time—regardless of their learning challenges and increasingly diverse ranges of abilities and English language proficiencies.

She is not a fan of today's heavy emphasis and reliance on standardized test scores. "Somewhere, there has to be room for teaching foundational learning in between the teaching to score high on tests," Maleki said.

While she was teaching in Maine, Maleki authored *The Catnip Papers*. The 132-page book, published in 2007, was inspired by the conversations she has with her own cat, with the timeframe set during the hectic holiday season. While she was writing the book, Maleki would allow her students to critique her work by looking for holes in the story or making suggestions for content. "Essentially, my students helped me to write the book," she said. "They were my first line editors."

Maleki is looking forward to more projects in her "retirement"—more videos to create, other books to write. She said she intends to take the time to "interact with other sources of inspirational creativity as a lifelong learner."



PHOTO BY FRED FIELD

It keeps us from being creative and learning how to best help all the students.

Cynthia: So then my question would be how can we have a system in place to ensure that our kids receive a consistent education, but yet be able to deliver our instruction in a creative manner?

Samantha: One answer to that question is adjusting the way we are assessing students. Apparently the only way they're really assessed is to take a test. Not all students should be learning that way, not all students perform their best that way. So I think opening up to a more performance-based system could make a big difference.

Eric: Concerning all the testing with [the] No Child Left Behind mandate—yes, there are a lot of faults in all this, but I think, with good intentions, they were trying to level the playing field. We just haven't gotten to the right balance yet. And sometimes I'm not sure if we ever will. But there has to be ...

Lynn: ... There has to be some accountability.

Melissa: It's an unfunded mandate. There are parts of it that haven't been worked out at this point. The intention is there, the reasoning behind it is there. It's the fine-tuning that we haven't achieved yet.

Lynn: As we end this evening, what do you feel we at Wilson should be teaching our education students? What do our first-year teachers need to have when they walk into the classroom so that they feel prepared?

Cynthia: They have to understand the data. They need to understand that data drives instruction. They need to understand they are going to have standards that they have to teach to. You have to be able to do your homework and to research and plan. And then you do that creative thing.

Melissa: When I hire, I will hire 10 out of 10 times, not the content expert, but the person who is always open to learning and trying new things. Because I wish that I could predict exactly what direction education is going to go, but I can't.

Samantha: There's a huge achievement gap among minorities and you just have to find ways to reach them. Keep trying, keep being creative. You may find yourself having to teach the same lesson five different ways in the same classroom.

Logan: You have to be able to laugh at yourself and allow students to laugh at you—sometimes there's nothing better. Remember that the first year is the hardest. Everything is a new experience. It's like riding a bicycle. In order to learn, you have to fall off and in order to get better, you have to get back on the bicycle. Keep working until you can ride [the] bike around the block—fast! **W**

The Education Program at Wilson

At Wilson, those majoring in education range from traditional undergraduate and graduate students to students enrolled through the college's Adult Degree Program and those who already have bachelor's degrees seeking teacher certification through the college's Teacher Intern Program. The education program at Wilson offers associate, bachelor's and master's degrees.

Upon enrolling in the undergraduate teacher education curriculum, a student begins a program of field experiences designed to integrate theory and practice, culminating in a full-time, off-campus, semester-long Student Teaching Practicum.

The Master of Education degree is designed for both elementary and secondary teachers and is based on the premise that successful teachers will need an in-depth knowledge of pedagogy, a mastery of current theory and an understanding of research-based practices and technology to move from being good teachers to becoming great teachers.

The education department at Wilson College is accredited by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to offer certification programs in the following areas:

Early Childhood (PreK-4) and Special Education (PreK-8)

- PreK-4
- PreK-4 and special education (dual certification)

Middle-Level (4-8) Education

- English/Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies

Secondary Certification (7-12)

- Biology
- Chemistry
- English
- Mathematics
- Social Studies

PreK-12 Certification

- Health and Physical Education
- Spanish

Candidates for certification must pass all required Pearson/ETS tests. The Pennsylvania certificate is valid in 46 states.