SEEL: Learning to Read by Playing
Dear Alumni, Faculty, Staff, Students, and Friends,

Welcome to the 2011 fall issue of McKay Today, the David O. McKay School of Education’s alumni magazine. I am excited to introduce this issue with its focus on early education. I care personally about early education for several reasons. As an associate dean for the McKay School of Education, I understand that preparing educators for young children is a complex process that deserves careful research. As a faculty member and researcher in the area of children’s early language development, I know that acquiring early literacy skills can greatly impact children’s success in school. Finally, and most significantly, as the developer of Systematic and Engaging Early Literacy (SEEL), I know how young children can gain competence in important academic skills through motivating and meaningful opportunities to use and practice skills.

Readers can learn about SEEL on page 2. I wrote the article with my colleague and friend Kendra Hall-Kenyon. We both hope that whether you are a teacher, a parent, a grandparent, or a friend of a small child, the ideas in this piece will help you and the children find ways to enjoy reading and writing together.

If you are a parent or grandparent, you might want to begin by reading “Parent Involvement: The Beginning Defines the Future,” on page 8. In this article my colleague Byran Korth defines some of the concerns that many parents experience when they first try to become involved with their child’s school experience. Byran reminds us of the importance of a parent’s role and offers some guidance in becoming a partner with the child’s teacher, in or out of the classroom.

Browsers can view candid photos of a preschool classroom in our section Education in a Changing World on page 16. Many will find useful tips on kindergarten readiness skills in the pullout section that parents may want to post for future reference. In addition, teachers and scholars can read about research by McKay School faculty and students on various aspects of early childhood education, investigating the latest ideas and the most effective methods and models for early education programs.

If you have young children, teach young children, or enjoy young children, this issue of McKay Today was created to be interesting and useful to you. I hope that you thoroughly enjoy every word and illustration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Culatta

Associate Dean
Talks About Early Education

Barbara Culatta

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In a kindergarten family night, a “big sister,” then in first grade, stopped the show to give her version of the SEEL literacy program: “We got to pretend to be Jack and pack Jack’s backpack. We packed the backpack with snacks that crack and stack, and we took the backpack and snacks on a trip to find tracks.” By the time she had also described the red rockets that only touched things that start with R and the big balloon cat that got fat, wore a hat, and sat on a mat, the parents all understood why their children were actually enjoying learning letters and sounds.
The McKay School of Education, as a way to help children with communication disabilities learn to read. SEEL is based on research that shows that incorporating playfulness into meaningful instruction increases a child’s engagement and retention. SEEL has expanded to include all early readers and is now even available in Spanish. Culatta says that SEEL is unique because of its integration of age-appropriate activities into the learning experience. She adds, “SEEL activities develop a heightened level of engagement that permits children to store skills and language examples in their long-term memory.”

As SEEL expanded, other McKay School faculty members added their expertise and efforts. These include Kendra Hall-Kenyon, Byran Korth, and Jolie Hill. Other researchers have also added to the program, Gary Bingham, Ann Sharp, John Wilkinson, and Barbara Lawrence were the most recent. SEEL’s impact has been felt in several Head Start classrooms in Utah and Rhode Island, in Title I preschools, in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms in Utah, and in Spanish/English classrooms in Utah and Guatemala. The SEEL team continues to work to expand the impact of the program, a parent/family component was the most recent addition.

In its simplest form, SEEL instruction blends child-centered activities with state-of-the-art strategies for teaching early literacy skills. Children’s encounters with sounds in words and reading patterns solidify in their memories because they focus on and care about what they are learning. SEEL blends engaging instructional interaction strategies and conversations to ensure that children acquire strong reading and writing skills. The interactive conversations of SEEL make reading practice natural and meaningful. Teachers do not present or perform—they participate and play.

For example, a teacher might put Bb all over a large box to make a bus. Teachers could assign children B names like Bob, Betsy, Billy, etc., and help children write Bb on bus passes and classroom “buck.” Students could climb in the box to “board” the bus. The entire class might chant “b-b-b-b-b” as the bus bumps and bumbles along to the bakery, where the children are expected to buy pretend buns, bagels, and bread.

SUCCESSFUL METHODS

We have seen good ideas from SEEL become great ideas as the teachers insert their own creativity and excitement into the instruction. There is something magic about what happens when teachers are playful with their students. This is the power of SEEL. When teachers catch the SEEL vision and make it their own, both teachers and children enjoy the learning process, and the children are successful.

—KENDRA HALL-KENYON

My passion for SEEL comes from observing children’s performance and participation. Children exhibit such energy and enthusiasm for the learning process because they are focused and involved. I believe that children love the learning environment because it uses a lot of representational play. In this way teachers put lessons in contexts that children understand—like taking a bus ride or taking care of pets.

—BARBARA CULATTA

SEEL Supports Reading Skills

Pre-reading and early reading skills are interrelated. For example, children need to be aware of how sounds function if they are going to connect sounds to letters, and they need some letter-sound relationships to observe and practice sound function. Comprehension and vocabulary are necessary if these skills are to be meaningful to the children. Listed below are important skills that are part of the SEEL program.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the capacity to identify and manipulate the sounds in words. To teach this skill, SEEL instructors interact with children in ways that frequently expose them to key sounds. Children also learn to take the sounds apart and put them together again.

For example, the teacher might teach the short a sound by introducing Andy the Anteater as a large cutout or puppet. Andy has a strange appetite—he can eat ants, apples—even alligators. The children are told Andy has an appetite for anything that starts with short a, like apples. The children help feed various pictures to Andy. If the picture does not begin with short a, such as eggs, Andy and the children give the “short a sneeze”: aaaa-choo!

As children interact and act on props and materials, teachers can repeatedly highlight the target sound pattern as they make comments, request actions, share information, express emotions, and respond to children’s comments.

PROGRESS IN WRITING

There was one area in which all children made tremendous progress: writing. At an early age, children’s writing is either systematic and engaging Early Literacy (SEEL) was initially developed 10 years ago by Barbara Culatta, associate dean at BYU’s McKay School of Education, as a way to help children with communication disabilities learn to read. SEEL is based on research that shows that incorporating playfulness into meaningful instruction increases a child’s engagement and retention. SEEL has expanded to include all early readers and is now even available in Spanish. Culatta says that SEEL is unique because of its integration of age-appropriate activities into the learning experience. She adds, “SEEL activities develop a heightened level of engagement that permits children to store skills and language examples in their long-term memory.”

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SEEL Brings Out the Best in Teachers

SEEL has been successful in helping young children learn to read—not because it has introduced new concepts and practices but because it has combined accepted practices in creative, interesting, effective ways. Teachers personalize and expand the basic SEEL lessons with their own talents and ideas.

Creativity

While receiving instruction on SEEL, several kindergarten teachers commented that they loved the program because it put the enjoyment back in teaching. In today’s school environment, teachers often feel there is little creativity and individuality—a place for their own personality—in teaching. One of the real strengths of SEEL is that teachers can follow the basic instructional principles and make them their own. When teachers personalize instruction, it becomes more powerful, and teachers then better know how to meet the needs of their students.

Playfulness

In SEEL, children experience enjoyment, and, as a result, they want to learn more. A preschool teacher of SEEL related, “Engagement is a word teachers hear a lot about in education. When children are engaged in learning, their understanding is deeper. However, in many classrooms children are sitting passively listening throughout the day—and children are often not excited about what they are learning. Implementing SEEL is active for the teacher and active for the child. There is no facet of SEEL that is passive.”

Another seasoned kindergarten teacher agrees. She says that SEEL strategies are engaging students’ best shot at being prepared to enter first grade. She adds, “Nothing compares with SEEL. It’s so developmentally appropriate for the age group. It is what children do naturally. They play.”

Clarity

Research shows systematic and explicit instruction is the most effective way to teach reading—particularly for those children who are struggling. The SEEL program makes it clear what children are expected to learn. Teachers model skills frequently and prominently. The varied repetition and intensity of exposure ensures that children understand and can acquire reading concepts and skills. The playful exposure and opportunities to practice make learning engaging. After demonstrations by the teacher, children often play with sound patterns or vocabulary rules on their own.

I love SEEL.
I cannot imagine teaching without it.

—STEFANIE HALL
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—BARBARA CULATTA

SPONTANEOUS PLAY

After demonstrations by the teacher, children will often play with patterns or sound awareness on their own. I remember a time when I presented a lesson on posting a black backpack. While getting ready to go home, the children were putting animal tracks that they had made into their backpacks. The children spontaneously began to play with the -ack pattern and highlight the sound pattern in their interactions with each other. They said, “Are you putting your track in your backpack? Here is my black backpack. But my backpack isn’t black. I’ll pack my backpack with snacks.”

—BARBARA CULATTA

Comprehension and Vocabulary

Instructors teach comprehension using good books, which they read and dramatize with emotion. Teachers involve children in conversations about the story and elaborate about important ideas. This supports comprehension. For example, Mouse Mix, a book about a mouse who makes a mess in a family’s kitchen, is read with comments about how real mice would not make sand castles out of brown sugar or use a knife to spread peanut butter. The teacher will ask the children to predict what the family will think when they wake up and see the mess the mouse made. Children spontaneously began to play with the -ack pattern that they had made into their backpacks.

—KENDRA HALL-KENYON

For more information about SEEL visit education.byu.edu/SEEL. For a referenced version of this article, please visit education.byu.edu/magazine/SEEL.

SPONTANEOUS PLAY

I got excited about SEEL when I think about what this instruction does for those children who struggle most in school. I recall a visit that Barb and I made to a school in inner city Washington, DC. We were working in the classroom of a student teacher and did some in-class demonstrations. As the children engaged in the SEEL lesson activities, the behavioral problems became all but nonexistent. The children were participating, and, most important, they were enjoying the learning process. Young children, regardless of their skill level, deserve this kind of instruction—and, in truth, they need it in order to be successful. Children who struggle in school often lose the love of learning very early on because there is no enjoyment in the learning process. SEEL activities are systematic and explicit, but they also ensure that the learning process is playful, engaging, and interactive. To me, this is what ensures success with SEEL.

—BARBARA CULATTA
When my first child began formal schooling, little did I know an important journey was beginning for my wife and me. We lived in a state that had full-day kindergarten, but I hadn’t thought about my young son riding a big yellow bus and being at school for six-plus hours a day with hundreds of other children and adults. It was an intense time, not necessarily for my son but for me as a father. Up to this point my wife and I had been the only primary adults in our son’s life and I wasn’t ready to relinquish the ability to protect him from the influences of others. Now other adults were going to spend more time than I spent with my son and nearly equal the time he spent with his mom. This was the first time I recall thinking about and discussing with my wife the role we would be playing in our son’s formal schooling. After being a teacher herself, my wife was willing and able to be home as we raised our children. Thus we decided that going to the school weekly to help in the classroom was important—a pattern that we have tried to maintain in the elementary grades of each of our three children.

A second, very different experience has also taught me how important family interaction is in early education. After completing my doctoral degree in human development and family studies with a focus on early parent-child interactions, I was invited to co-direct the early learning program at my university. At first I wondered how my background and training in parenting and parent-child relationships would serve me as a co-director of a large early learning program serving more than 200 children from birth to kindergarten. I quickly learned that my understanding of family dynamics was critical in enabling me to ensure that the needs were met of all those I served. As a preschool administrator, my client was not an individual but a family. In addition to meeting the needs of the young child in my program, I had to ensure my services met the expectations of that child’s family. Educators must realize that few other jobs require such close attention to the family of the individual who is directly receiving the service. A child’s home life will always be an essential part of his or her education. Parents and teachers who understand that fact and act on it will better ensure a child’s future success both personally and professionally.

Evolving Trends in Parent Involvement

The nature of parent involvement in children’s education has evolved over the years along with social and economic change. Prior to the 20th century, families in many places had a high level of control over creating schools, hiring teachers, and...
Fortunately, parental involvement can take many forms.

**Early Involvement—Standing at the Door**
As a father and a professor of early childhood education, I believe personally and professionally in the powerful statement that parents are children’s first teachers and that they play a central role in children’s early development and learning. In addition to being informed by my own experience and training, I’ve encountered decades of research linking parent-child relational interactions and family characteristics with young children’s growth and trajectories for success in education and in life.

Sooner than many parents expect, children are exposed to the influences of peers and other adult relationships. This can easily lead parents to question their ability to protect and influence their children, particularly when young children begin the journey of formal schooling. After years of knowing they are vital to their children’s physical, social, and cognitive development, many parents feel they need to take over the teaching of their children. Thus parents perceive a loss of control, and they withdraw. During this significant transition, many parents of young children sense that their desire to be involved is threatened, and they begin to feel confused, unqualified, or even insecure about their parental responsibilities. Such feelings can lead parents to think they are incapable of being involved in their child’s education.

I distinctly recall having these feelings. I struggled with the inner battle of feeling experienced, yet unqualified to contribute to the education of my own children. After the birth of my son, I was encouraged to become involved, I still perceived a boundary around school as the turf of a trained teacher, which made me feel uninvolved. In fact, the door may have always been open to me as a parent, however, it felt well guarded and protected.

**The School Journey**
Whether the educational journey begins as children enter childcare, preschool, kindergarten, or the primary grades of elementary school, it is essential that parents do not abandon or underestimate the central role they continue to play as their young children enter school. Parents must understand that their influence does not diminish or become less important as their children experience more of the world around them.

I tell my preservice teachers that the influence of the family, especially the parents, does not mysteriously disappear when a child comes through their classroom door. Children bring their family and parents with them to school in terms of their personality, view of life, motivation, attitude, feelings, and way of interacting with others. Thus it is important for parents and teachers to partner so that children are understood and develop voices, even as they are learning skills of expression.

These early years ultimately define a child’s attitude and actions toward school. Parents need to work hard to maintain the level of influence they have come to believe in, while finding new and effective ways to influence their children, who are now spending six-plus hours a day with other adults and peers. Parents also need to understand that in today’s culture, teachers leave training programs better prepared to enter into partnerships with parents. New teachers are aware of the unique family and cultural factors that define and influence parents’ willingness to be involved and the type of involvement that is comfortable.

**Going into the Classroom**
Going into the classroom regularly to assist the teacher or to coordinate class parties does not fit many people’s circumstances. Thus parents may easily conclude that “school involvement isn’t for me.” Even though I know that research consistently confirms that parents’ involvement in their children’s education has a significant impact on their development and academic success, I doubt that any parent would quit a job to go to school. Yet in my experience, parents already know how important involvement is but have circumstances. Thus parents may easily conclude that “school involvement isn’t for me.” Even though I know that research consistently confirms that parents’ involvement in their children’s education has a significant impact on their development and academic success, I doubt that any parent would quit a job to go to school. Yet in my experience, parents already know how important involvement is but have circumstances.

Frequently, parental involvement can take many forms. If parents gathered to share the ways they have been involved in their child’s education, some common responses would be found. First, some parents would talk about involvement from the standpoint of what they do at home with their children, whether it is monitoring homework or engaging in learning activities with them. Second, others would emphasize their efforts to engage in communication with teachers regarding the classroom performance and progress of their child. Other responses would include attending school activities, helping in the classroom, or becoming involved in school organizations.

It is important that parents understand that all aspects of parent involvement are important and not feel pressured to engage in every aspect. Parents should become familiar with options and commit to those that fit their circumstances.

**Equally important is a willingness to adjust and change strategies as both circumstances and needs change over time. However, patterns of early involvement often set the foundation for later involvement.**

Along with ways to be involved, the reasons for being involved will also change. As with my experience, it may simply begin with a desire to stay connected to one’s children. Teachers or schools may meet this desire or willingness with invitations or opportunities to be involved. Parents may become motivated to be involved by simply observing the success of the teacher and wanting to be part of their child’s growth and development. On the other end of the spectrum, parents who are concerned by a child’s lack of progress may become
Motivation of Head Start Teachers

When parents’ circumstances allow them to come to school, there is a range of ways to be involved. Children feel the support and encouragement of their parents when they see them at school performances or in the classroom assisting the teacher. In-class assistance can be broken into three levels of involvement. The first level, likely the most common, is parents assisting teachers by preparing materials or filing paperwork. The second level is a more active approach with parents usually functioning as “classroom parents” who organize and coordinate classroom events. At the third level, parents are involved in the actual classroom instruction by implementing activities and leading discussions. This third level is sometimes overlooked, but parents are very capable of doing these things. Regardless of the level parents involved as they question the strategies sent home from the school, or contacting the teacher with questions or concerns, communication with the teacher is an important aspect of parent participation.

Involvement at Home

At home, parents need to move beyond just monitoring and checking off homework, especially with younger children. They need to become personally engaged in the homework activities. Interactive engagement between the parent and the child leads to positive child outcomes. I can remember coming home from work and finding my son excited to have me go on a “letter treasure hunt.” Yes, this early literacy activity was good practice for his developing literacy skills, but possibly more important was the motivation he developed because he was doing the activity with his dad.

Active engagement is important. This is evident in recommendations regarding parent-child book reading. Not only is it important for parents to read to their children, but it is also equally important that the reading experience be interactive. By asking their child to define words, predict what will happen next, explain why something happened, and express their feelings and ideas as if they were a character in the story, parents can enhance young children’s learning and development. Teachers need to encourage parents to engage in such interactive activities at home.

Another way to be involved at home is to learn about and develop appropriate expectations for what academic success looks like in your child. Many parents can have expectations that are too high or too low and thus diminish the motivation and performance of their child. Because they have raised their child from infancy, parents have a unique perspective and understanding of the child’s needs, personality, and tempera- ment, and they need to use that knowledge to develop appro- priate and challenging expectations regarding your young child’s educational experience.

One way I continue to be involved in my children’s educations is by asking them about their day or about what they are learning. Doing this correctly takes practice and patience. If the parent is not careful, this interchange can turn into a quick, one-sided conversation. Parental questions like “Did you learn anything today?” or “What did you learn today?” often lead to simple “no” or “nothing” responses from the child. Parents need to cue their young child with something more specific, such as “I see you drew a picture of a bear and practiced the letter B today. Tell me about your picture.” Once the child begins sharing, the parent should carefully listen and build off what the child says. In this way a meaningful, interactive conversation develops. Over time the child gets into the habit of sharing, remembers more details, and looks forward to sharing. Regardless of circumstances, this type of parental involvement can be enacted by almost all parents and caregivers, sending a clear message to the child that they care about the child and what he or she is learning.

Parents need to know what parents do with their children during homework activities, the nature of their interactions outside of educational activities is also important. Research has found that positive parenting has implications for children’s aca- demic development. Positive parenting is defined by adolescents (a) a perception of support and understanding, (b) a low degree of parental support, including behaviors that develop strong bonds between parents and children; (c) a balance of regulation, including appropriate expectations and structure regarding a child’s behavior; and (d) an acknowledgment of the child’s independence self, whereby parents avoid intruding, exploiting, or manipulating the child.

In essence, parents who make an effort to learn about and improve upon their daily parenting behaviors and interactions with their children are involving themselves in their child’s education just as much as if they were physically to go into their child’s classroom and assist the teacher. Positive parent-child interactions are equally important components of effective teaching and of influencing the teacher-student relationship. Thus preservice and inservice teacher training should not only address specific curricula but should also include ways to deliver the curricula to incorporate these important attributes of positive parenting.

In the end, it is the interactions between parent, child, and teacher that can lead to the greatest benefits. Whether it is through participating in homework activities, learning about proper expectations, developing positive everyday relationships, assisting the teacher in the classroom at some level, attending school functions, or developing a pattern of commu- nication with the teacher and child, parents have a broad range of ways to become interactively involved in their young child’s education. As parents make involvement a priority, not only will young children benefit during these crucial first years of formal education but parents will also develop habits and patterns of involvement that enrich their lives as well as the lives of their children.
Going Mobile with Little People

By Roxanna Johnson

Evolution to the Application
That definition resonates well when contemplating the evolution of teaching tools—from preschool up. Many of us are rather awed by the variety of technologies developed in our lifetimes. What adult over 40 doesn’t remember the characters Dick and Jane from early readers? Sesame Street and other educational TV programs followed, and Big Bird and Cookie Monster became American icons. Then interactive computer games came on the scene. With the refinement of touch software, the most recent early-education technologies are smartphone and iPad applications—aka apps.

Current early-childhood apps allow parents and educators to address three critical components of learning more effectively than they could with their predecessors:

- Apps adapt and shape the learning experience.
- Apps help parents and teachers keep track of what children have learned.
- Apps customize a child’s experience based on performance.

Apps vs. Desktops
Are apps an improvement over desktop games? For small children, the answer is yes. Keyboards are not intuitive to small children. Whether using keyboards for learning or for fun, both child and adult usually end up frustrated by a frozen screen because the child has a difficult time linking certain buttons to functions. Compare that scenario to watching a two-year-old view pictures or draw on an iPad or smartphone using a tiny finger to touch and command.

Richard Culatta, educational technologist and father of three, describes that comparison using his son as an example. James, who is two, easily swipe the screen of an iPad to view family pictures. Yet when Culatta tried to show pictures on the computer to James, coaching him repeatedly on how to change the picture, the pair eventually gave up the task to futility and frustration. James continues to enjoy using the iPad to view pictures and to learn.

Other benefits of apps for young children:

- Increased web safety
- No buttons to trash or delete
- Intuitive interface
- Decreased cost

Lower costs may be argued from a standpoint of personal budget. However, if you compare the impact of buying a classroom of iPads to buying a classroom of laptop computers, the reasoning comes into focus. Additionally, for a child with any type of disability, iPads are much more affordable than a $3,000 special education or alternative communication system.

The Access Question
Access is always an issue with new technology. Educators constantly worry about children without access to the latest technology—currently smartphones and iPads. But let’s consider what Culatta refers to as “the continuum of access.” Although not everyone has a smartphone or iPad today, there are hundreds of thousands more devices in use now than there were last year. “There will be a point when every phone will be a smartphone,” predicts Culatta, who supports the continuum of access theory by comparison with internet accessibility. Although most children now have access to computers and online searches through either private or public means, Culatta recalls that five to seven years ago, internet access was much less available. “Not everyone has these touch-screen tools now, but they will,” concludes Culatta.

Parent Interaction
Technology never has been, nor ever will be, a substitute for parent or teacher involvement. Those who truly want children to learn will supervise, teach, and respond to a child’s efforts to learn, regardless of the instructional tool used. Babysitting is not the purpose or potential of early-education applications or of any other technology.

Thus many apps are developing parent components with the ability to show which skills a child has mastered or needs to master. Additionally, for a child with any type of disability, iPads are much more affordable than a $3,000 special education or alternative communication system.

Research shows that the educational achievement gap begins at birth.

Early Education App Categories and Recommendations

Literacy
- Monster at the End of This Book—Sesame Street
- Touchu Books

Creative Programs
- Tunetastic
- Oscilloscope

Education Games
- Motion Math
- Alphabet Zoo

For a referenced version of this article, please visit education.byu.edu/news/magazine/focus
Early Education Lab

The McKay School of Education has a long history of collaboration with the Child and Family Studies Laboratory, which is part of the School of Family Life. Under the direction of Anne Ure, the activities in the lab involve many participants from across campus, including McKay School students who do practicum work in the lab. The following pages outline ways that the two BYU colleges collaborate to serve children in the community and provide experience and research opportunities for the McKay School Departments of Early Childhood Education, Communication Disorders, and Special Education.

Entry-Level Practicum
Students who are deciding whether they want to work with young children can take an entry-level practicum class. Most students who choose this class are in early childhood education, the School of Family Life, or the McKay K-6 program.

Paid Teaching Assistants
Once students have successfully completed the entry-level practicum, they can apply for paid positions in the preschool or kindergarten if they are working toward a degree in early childhood education or another appropriate area.

Student Teaching
Students majoring in early childhood education spend their final semester at BYU working in the lab to receive mentoring and training in either the preschool or the kindergarten. This experience parallels the student teaching other teacher candidates are doing in public school classrooms.

Communication Disorders
First-Year Graduate Students
Under the supervision of their mentor, first-year graduate students provide speech therapy for children in the preschool and kindergarten. During sessions with a child, the graduate student receives feedback from the supervisor.

Second-Year Graduate Students
Second-year graduate students provide speech therapy for additional children. They work directly with the parents to set up needed assessments for the children and to counsel with the parents concerning assessment results. Some children begin therapy immediately, and others undergo additional testing and/or wait to see if the problems will self-correct. The graduate student meets with the child twice a week and writes a final report for the parents at the end of the year.
Communication Disorders Class in Diagnostic Procedures
Students in ComD do a full evaluation on several children as part of their class in diagnostic procedures. After meeting with a child and his or her parents, they write a full evaluation on the child. Professor Bonnie Britton, from the Department of Communication Disorders; Lee Robinson, director of the BYU Speech and Language Clinic; and Anne Ure, director of the Child and Family Studies Laboratory, work together to direct the ComD students.

Counseling and Special Education
Director Anne Ure also works with Barbara Smith and Melissa Heath from the McKay School Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education to evaluate students for special education services. Parents may request assessment for their child. Sometimes the family will be referred to outside services on or off campus.

Counseling and Special Education Teaching Assistants
BYU students who are majoring in counseling, special education, or early childhood education are hired as teaching assistants to give one-on-one help to children with special needs.

We cannot care for children without educating them, and we cannot educate children without caring for them.
—Gallagher and Mayer

Early Childhood Licensure
Nationally, licensure requirements differ greatly from state to state. In response, some national organizations have developed position statements such as that of the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE) quoted below. This statement specifically addresses early childhood certification for teachers of children eight years old and younger in public school settings.

The teacher certification/endorsement required in state funded pre-kindergarten programs, kindergartens, and primary grade classrooms should be specific to early childhood education.

Teachers qualified to meet the unique developmental and educational needs of children between the ages of 3 and 8 are knowledgeable about the developmental and learning characteristics of these children and use this knowledge to inform appropriate teaching techniques and assessments. Since teacher preparation and certification should be relevant to the teacher’s position, NAECTE recommends that state certification agencies and school districts adopt the following policies:

- Require an early childhood certificate and/or endorsement for those teaching in classrooms for children five years old and younger in state funded pre-kindergarten and in kindergarten programs.
- Give priority in hiring and placement to teachers with an early childhood certificate and/or endorsement for public school classrooms for six, seven, and eight-year-olds (1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades).
- Require that early childhood certification and/or endorsement be based on completion of teacher preparation programs that meet professional preparation standards consistent with those established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

To access the licensure requirements in your state, contact your state department of education. Additionally, the School of Human Environmental Sciences at the University of Arkansas compiled a list and included it in a paper titled “An Inquiry to Ascertain Student Age Ranges for Public School Teacher Licensure.” The paper is located at arkansasagnews.uark.edu/1353.htm.

Parent Involvement
Parents are involved in many class activities as part of the training of the student teachers. Under the guidance of the head teacher, student teachers plan activities that highlight what the children have learned over their seven-week project. Parents are invited to come to the class to share their favorite story or family tradition at the end of the school day or to join the class and share their expertise on a topic that interests the class. The preschool and kindergarden teachers communicate with parents through their Web site via a class blog with pictures and captions and with notes for home placed in the child’s cubby.
Jean Maycock Larsen
Class of 1953, 1960
Jean Maycock Larsen has devoted her life to families—her own and countless others who have been influenced by her research, classes, and programs. During Jean’s 15 years as coordinator of the BYU Early Childhood Education Program, she oversaw the collaboration between the School of Family Life and the McKay School of Education. Her programs emphasized developmentally appropriate practices. She included parent education as a crucial part of her programs and involved parents in their children’s BYU preschool classes.

Among Jean’s research projects was a longitudinal study on “The Impact of Preschool on Educationally Advantaged Children.” It involved many students, extended for decades, and led to numerous presentations, publications, and careers. She served as a mentor to undergraduates and graduates, generously providing opportunities for them to become involved in research, participate in presentations, and co-author publications. Her concern for her students extended beyond their graduation.

Jean’s LDS Church service and callings utilized her knowledge and expertise in child development. She served on the Church Family Home Evening Writing Committee, authored the Relief Society mother enrichment training materials, and co-authored a guidebook, workbook, and audiotape for training nursery leaders.

Jean has also been active in local, state, national, and international organizations and advisory boards and has been a consultant on early childhood matters. She has worked with the Governor’s Literacy Initiative, the State Office of Child Care, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, to name a few.

Jean worked at BYU for 45 years. She graduated from BYU with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and served a mission in Argentina before earning a master’s degree in child development. Later she earned a PhD from the University of Utah in educational psychology. After teaching in the public schools, she joined the BYU faculty in 1960. Jean and her late husband, Dean, are the parents of four and grandparents of 17. In retirement, Jean is deeply involved with her family, she also volunteers regularly at the temple and in the community. Jean says her life continues to be complete and fulfilling.

Alumni
John E. Jacobson
Dr. Jacobson currently serves as dean of the Teachers College at Ball State University. He holds degrees in elementary education, curriculum instruction, and educational administration, as well as a doctorate in reading education from BYU. He has researched, published, and presented extensively on the role of the administrator in teaching reading, chaired various professional and governmental committees and boards, and helped in the development of online degree and certification programs. He also has a wealth of knowledge and experience concerning charter schools. “Throughout my career I have applied numerous innovations that I first learned about while at BYU,” said Jacobson. “BYU’s ecosystem of learning—educational experience unique in all the world”—He and his wife, Marsha, have five children and 10 grandchildren.

Audrey Lutter
Class of 2008
Audrey graduated in special education with a focus on severe disabilities and taught in Provo and Boise before moving to New York. She is currently working in the New York Center for Autism Charter School in Manhattan. The school specializes in applied behavior analysis, which Audrey studied at BYU and is now applying in working one-on-one with her students. She says that combining a spiritual education with secular content at BYU has helped in her work by giving her mental and physical strength as well as help in guiding her students when logic and science fail. In a field where it’s easy to get burned out and in which good people are needed to improve the system, she advises, “Stay motivated and passionate about the field.” Audrey is married to Eric Lutter.

Friend of Education: Olene Walker

I was fortunate to be born into a family in which both parents were educators. My father was a principal and then superintendent of Ogden School District, and my mother was a teacher. I had three brothers who were near my age and a sister almost 16 years younger. Our family believed the girls needed a college education as well as the boys, though in the 1930s and ’40s that was not always the case. I was never asked if I was going to college—only where.

While I had many outstanding teachers, my favorite was a fourth-grade teacher, Charlotte McGrath, who made every student feel loved and important. In addition to the basic curriculum, she taught critical ethical values. I recall that one day, during the lunch hour, two friends and I went to a small store to buy some penny candy. As we went out the door to return to the school, we saw an elderly woman struggling with two large bags of groceries. We offered to carry them to her home. After delivering the groceries, we hurried back to our classroom to tell Mrs. McGrath about the good deed we had done. She asked us if the woman had paid us. We told her that she had given us each a nickel. Mrs. McGrath replied, “I want you to know that carrying the bags of groceries was of great service, but if you were paid to do it, it wasn’t service, it was work. True service is when you give of yourself to help others, not to earn money.”

In the fifth grade I had a teacher who was ready to retire. When we returned to school after Thanksgiving, we discovered he had retired, and our strict but wonderful Mrs. McGrath would be our teacher the remainder of the school year. It was a joyous day for the entire class.

Olene Walker was Utah’s 15th and, to date, only female governor. Prior to becoming governor she served as lieutenant governor for 10 years and as a member of the legislature, including a term as majority whip. Her experience of service and leadership is extensive in the state as well as the nation, including service on key committees, in the Senate, and in education. Among her impressive honors and awards are the Brigham Young University Outstanding Graduate Award and Utah’s 2007 Person of the Year.

Audrey Lutter grew up in Georgia and graduated from BYU in special education. She has worked professionally in resource settings, first with special education students and later with students with autism. After a mission in California, she returned to Utah to teach in Title I preschools; at present she is a teacher, mentor, and inservice instructor in a preschool in Provo School District. Stephanie says that her religious education at BYU helped develop a perspective and attitudes that have influenced her work with students and parents. She feels that early childhood is a critical time to influence children, setting them in a positive direction in life. Her advice is to focus on the child, not the curriculum. Stephanie feels it is a privilege to be with her students.

To read about other McKay School alumni, please visit education.byu.edu/news/category/alumni.
Impact of Technology on Parent-Child Reading
Kathryn MacKay, a former kindergarten teacher and current PhD student in the McKay School of Education, has had a lifelong interest in books. While teaching kindergarten, MacKay saw the benefits of using children’s literature in developing key literacy skills. Since beginning her doctoral program at BYU, she has become particularly interested in parent-child picture-book reading—long recognized as a critical component of young children’s early literacy experiences. MacKay focused her work on examining the ways technology is changing the definition and reading of children’s picture books.

Online books have added the elements of video, audio, and interactive graphics to the picture book-reading experience. The iPad is also changing the activity of reading to a child. Because of this impact and some of the related unknowns, MacKay is investigating the nature of interactions between parent and child as they read the same picture book first on an iPad and then in a traditional picture book format.

Participants in the study are nine pairs consisting of a parent and a child between the ages of five and six. Because prior access to and experience with technology may influence the results, researchers will assess the subjects’ prior experience with both printed and technological books. Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss and The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter will be used for the study; both are available in a traditional printed format as well as in an iPad app. These texts were chosen because (1) their longevity in print has proven their overall appeal to children and (2) iPad apps are available in a traditional printed format as well as in an iPad app.

Participants in the study are nine pairs consisting of a parent and a child between the ages of five and six. Because of the technology, researchers will assess the subjects’ prior experience with both printed and technological books.

A pilot study is currently underway to determine the appropriateness of the selected texts and the types of changes that seem to develop around the technology. The researchers will also interview the parents participating in the pilot study to understand their perceptions about the nature of the experience. Information gained from the pilot will help shape the coding systems developed for the larger study.

MacKay hopes to learn about the nature of the parent-child interactions during a picture-book reading using an iPad application. She will measure how much of the talking is related to reading skills, to meaning, and to technology. She will also compare how the talking is similar to and different from the talking that occurs during a traditional book reading.

School Notes
McKay School faculty and students have received various honors and awards since the spring 2011 issue of McKay Today. A few of these are highlighted below.

Diane Hancock
Diane Hancock was honored with the School Psychology Faculty of the Year Award by the graduating class of 2011. Hancock is the executive secretary for Counseling Psychology and Special Education. Recent graduates voiced deep appreciation for her consistent support.

Barry Newbold
Barry Newbold, former superintendent of Jordan School District, joined the McKay School as a part-time faculty member fall semester. Newbold will be working in the Center for the Improvement of Teacher Education and Schooling (CITES), teaching a Foundations in Education class, helping with the Principal’s Academy, and acting as liaison between CITES and several private and state education organizations.

Tim Smith Elected Fellow by APA
Tim Smith, chair of the Counseling Psychology and Special Education Department, was awarded the Fellow status by the American Psychological Association. This annually awarded honor is given to individuals who have made a significant contribution to the field of psychology. Smith was nominated by his peers, who found his work to have “consistent national impact, particularly in multicultural psychology and the psychology of religion.”

Julie Cloward
Julie Cloward received the Staff and Administrative Employee Recognition (SARE) Award for exemplifying valuable work traits like competency, integrity, teamwork, respect, and accountability. Cloward oversees the McKay School’s audiovisual technology lab.

EIME Program
Nari Carter is the first graduate of the newly inaugurated Educational Inquiry, Measurement, and Evaluation (EIME) PhD program. An interdepartmental program, EIME focuses on training its students to conduct educational research and become experts in measurement and evaluation.

Bonnie Bennet
Bonnie Bennet, executive secretary for Educational Leadership and Foundations, received an award for 15 years of service. Bonnie is recognized as a esteemed colleague and dear friend to her associates.
Bonnie Brinton/Martin Fujiki
Bonnie Brinton and Martin Fujiki of ComD received the Karl G. Maeser Research and Creative Arts Award for their research and contributions to the field of communications disorders. Both are internationally recognized for their work on theory and practice concerning socialization, emotion regulation, and self-esteem in children with language deficits.

Dean and Sybil McClusky Award
Jered Borup, a doctoral student in the Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology, will be honored with the Dean and Sybil McClusky Research Award at the AECT annual conference in November in Jacksonville, Florida. Borup’s work with Rick West, of the IP&T Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology, will be honored with the Dean and Sybil McClusky Research Award.

New T64 Faculty
The Department of Teacher Education welcomed three new faculty members last semester. Alessandro Rosborough will be teaching TESOL courses. David Barney is joining the Physical Education Teaching/Coaching program. Terrell Young is excited to teach children’s literacy at the McKay School.

New CITES Faculty
The Center for the Improvement of Teacher Education and Schooling welcomed Gary Carlston this fall semester. He will facilitate several projects working with school districts of the BYU–Public School Partnership.

Graham on ACE framework and OHSU interaction research will be presented at the conference.

Julie Hite
Julie Hite, EDITP, was recently awarded the 2011 Annual Research and Scholarship Award by the BYU Women’s Association. Hite has been a professor at the McKay School for more than 11 years and is known internationally for her research in Uganda.

Honorized Alumni
M. David Merrill was the 2011 McKay School’s honored alumni. Merrill graduated from the McKay School in 1961 in secondary education. He returned to BYU as a faculty member from 1966 to 1979, helping to found the Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology. Presenting to alumni, faculty, and current students, Merrill spoke on “Past Principles of Instruction.”

Bonnie Brinton/Martin Fujiki

One of a Kind, Remarkable, Extraordinary
By M. Winston Egan

S
ome weeks ago I received a one-of-a-kind request—an invitation to write a brief tribute about a one-of-a-kind, remarkable, and extraordinary teacher. Her grandchildren call her Nana. They describe her as “antsy,” “hyper,” and “always on the go.” They report that she always has cash in her purse, and she never eats very much except for the two cheeseburgers per day—one for lunch and one later in the evening for dinner.

Her house is filled with books—children’s books of all kinds. She is content to be surrounded with stacks and stacks of books—just waiting to be delivered to schools, families, and children. And she is always looking for a good deal. More than once she has arrived at my office gleefully sharing her latest purchases of discounted books. My grandchildren have been the recipients of many of these books, carefully selected based on their interests.

One of her specialties is children’s literature. Her house is filled with books—children’s books of all kinds. She is content to be surrounded with stacks and stacks of books—just waiting to be delivered to schools, families, and children. And she is always looking for a good deal. More than once she has arrived at my office gleefully sharing her latest purchases of discounted books. My grandchildren have been the recipients of many of these books, carefully selected based on their interests.

If you have been or are a teacher in Utah, elsewhere in the country, or in other parts of the world, this talented educator may have blessed you as she teaches and presents worldwide. She is consistently funny, at times a little irreverent, and always interesting. Her capacity for inspiring audiences is renowned. You cannot leave her presentations without fresh insights about helping children learn to read and to love reading.

Although she is well beyond retirement age, she continues to contribute to nurturing children and their families. She has a special gift for helping people believe in themselves and their capacity to make a difference in someone else’s life—particularly children’s lives.

When you are around this extraordinary woman, you feel her passion, her support, and her commitment to the happiness of others. She is adept in working with children and families of all backgrounds. She is never content with the status quo, nor is she reticent to speak out on behalf of those who cannot yet represent themselves well. Moreover, she is skilled in working with school board members, principals, and superintendents. She is not an in-your-face advocate, but she is one who, because of her contributions and her character, engenders respect and trust.

You cannot help but love her and admire the outstanding individual she has become. Who is this remarkable, one-of-kind, extraordinary person? Perhaps the only teacher to have been given the name “Mrs. Living”—by one of her young students—the very much alive Dr. Nancy Livingston!
Dear Gayle,

I cannot express enough thanks to you for the scholarship your generosity provided me. I am so fortunate to attend BYU. I want to be a teacher so I can make an impact on children’s lives the way so many of my teachers have impacted me. I have always loved school, and that love stemmed from my early teachers who inspired me to love to read, write, and learn. I cannot wait to instill that same joy for learning in my own students. Thank you again from the bottom of my heart.

Lizzie Fotheringham
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION MAJOR