

Hearty Alphabet Soup

VCU's School of Education has produced many of Virginia's teachers for generations; in April this year, *U.S. News and World Report* ranked the School 39th of 1,500 teaching colleges. In 2001-02, the School took in \$302,000 in grants *per faculty member*. "Only one of the top 50 Schools of Education had a higher average," points out Dr. William Boshier Jr. '69MEd, the School's dean.

The School is also emerging as a leader in educational policy. An alphabet soup of VCU-affiliated centers and institutes gives food for thought and learning to K-12



Dr. William Boshier Jr.

teachers, principals and students in Virginia and beyond. "VCU's School of Education has become a local, regional, and national hub for research and practice on a range of issues that include disabilities, language development and educational leadership," says Boshier. "We are becoming a trusted source for insight into the issues confronting legislators, school board members, administrators and teachers. I see it this way," he adds. "The School of Education is a bridge between the policy makers and the classroom."

These Centers also make financial sense in times of deep budget cuts, Boshier points out. "As we get fewer higher education funds from the state, one way we can sustain our programs is to use profit mechanisms in a public environment. Through

Feeds K-12 Teachers, Principals, Superintendents—and Students

projects for state and local agencies and school systems, the Centers typically pay their own way."

Many of us cringe at the phrase "school policy," recalling high school years when the most desirable objectives always seemed to be "against school policy." But don't think dress codes and detention, think supports for learning, grounded in research. "The SOL (Standards of Learning) program is a policy. Vouchers are a policy," Boshier says.

School policy comes from a variety of sources—public opinion, parents, school boards, state boards of education and legislatures. It's complicated machinery—and Boshier understands it well. Before taking over as dean two years ago, he had been superintendent of Henrico and then Chesterfield County Public Schools. As Virginia State Superintendent of Public Instruction, he helped design the Standards of Learning. In 2000, Virginia was one of the first states to establish standards, even before the mandate of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Who Will Carry the Standards?

As dean of the School of Education, Boshier works closely with Dr. Jo

Lynne DeMary '72MEd, Virginia's first woman superintendent of public instruction, to solve problems so students can learn more and better. DeMary and VCU are collaborating "on several programs to better prepare teachers and school leaders," she says. The collaboration is a natural, according to DeMary's former deputy superintendent, Dr. Ken Magill '65BS/B '69MS/E. "On the campus in downtown Richmond," says Magill, "we are located at the seat of state government—where the action is."

Like many other states, DeMary explains, "Virginia has large numbers of principals and superintendents reaching retirement. And the role of educational leadership is changing with standards and accountability."

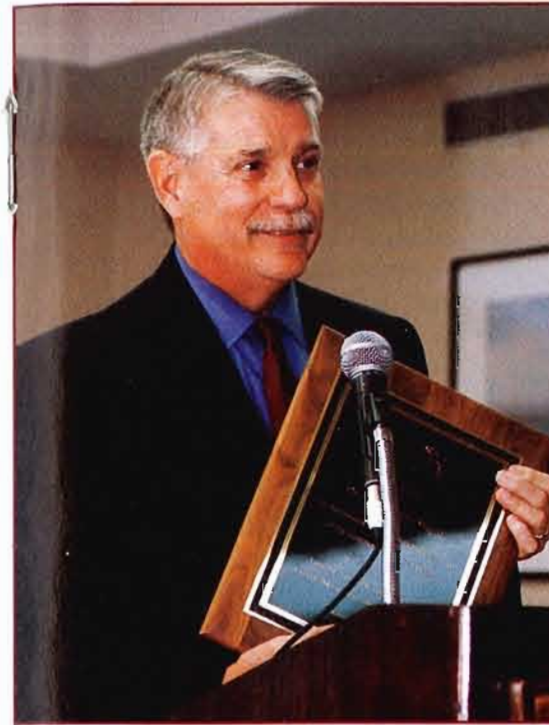
With help from VCU's state-funded Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI), Virginia applied for and got a State Action for Educational Leadership Project (SAELP) grant from the DeWitt Wallace Foundation.

"SAELP is certain to reform the preparation of educational leaders for the 21st century," says DeMary. Virginia was one of 15 states chosen from 30 states that applied.

CEPI is coordinating the \$250,000 grant, which has led to the Fairfax School District receiving a Leadership for Education Achievement in Districts (LEAD) grant, worth \$1 million a year for the



Dr. Jo Lynne DeMary



Dr. Ken Magill

next five years. "Through SAELP, VCU has become part of a national network studying policy and practice in educational leadership," Boshier adds.

Magill also worked on the SAELP grant. With that funding, he says, "we're looking at the environment for school administrators, to see what might make people hesitate to go into administration." Some of those barriers might be laws, regulations or policies that limit a principal's authority. "Principals now are held accountable for the academic performance of students in their schools; but they don't always have the authority to do things that will help students improve. In some localities, for example, principals don't have the final say in who is on their staff."

He adds, "The salary increase for moving into administration isn't usually a significant amount. For many teachers, it's not enough to make up for the added hassles. The SAELP study may uncover more difficulties, and then we can make some changes."

VCU has had a special focus on identifying and training educational

leaders since the late 1980s when school superintendents realized that something more had to be done. Talent, energy and good will just aren't enough for good teachers to become masters, for teachers to make the leap to principal, to superintendent. "They came to the School of Education and said, 'Will you help us find our future leaders?'" says educational consultant Dr. Mary Ann Wright '84MEd '97PhD/Ed.

With Virginia State University, VCU began the Central Virginia Leadership Academy (CVLA). The Academy's Professional Enhancement Program (PEP) is designed to sharpen the abilities of principals, graduate students on the administrative track, lead teachers, and people going into education as a second career. The program takes a flexible 24 hours—one day a week for a month, or concentrated weekends. "PEP trains them to think on their feet," says Wright, a former director of CVLA.

Stephen Covert '96MEd, principal of Ni River Middle School in Spotsylvania, Virginia, has been through the program and now trains prospective administrators. "My first administrative role model is a VCU alumnus. He led by example, and set high standards for himself and for others. He took every decision with respect to a clear vision he had, and well-articulated to others. I'm proud to say my mentor is my father, Bernice Covert III '81MEd, who was principal of the Spotsylvania Career and Technical Center for many years."

Covert and his father were ready for challenges because VCU "framed our courses in the context of real-world settings and examples." And so does CVLA.

The program includes eight hours of intense, timed simulation activities. "In the real world, you don't have unlimited time," says Covert. "You make the best choices you can in the time you have."

For In Basket, "we pepper them with a variety of issues that an administrator might face in a day."

Twenty rapid-fire desktop challenges in 90 minutes throws participants one problem after another—anything from hearing out angry parents to finding a gun in a child's locker.

"They have glassy eyes at the end," adds Wright.

Participants also work in leaderless groups, appear before hypothetical school boards, and write and evaluate school improvement plans. Activities are videotaped and documented, and participants are evaluated on 14 leadership skills like judgment, sensitivity, and oral and written communication. All the information is fed into a computer,

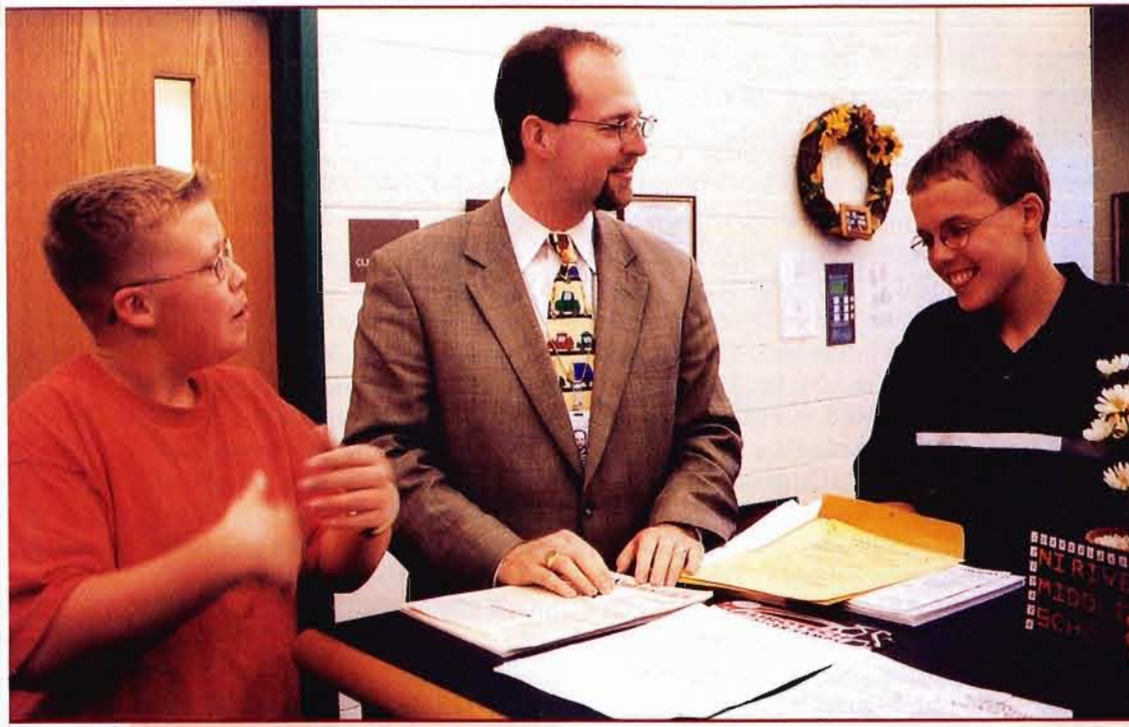
More Than K-12

Centers affiliated with the VCU School of Education provide research and technical assistance to schools and communities.

Partnership for People with Disabilities works with disability service providers, K-12 schools and school divisions, universities, professional organizations, and state and local agencies to expand opportunities to people with disabilities and families. The federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities has recognized the Partnership as a university center for excellence in the field. The Partnership operates over 20 federal and state programs, with a staff of more than 100 professionals and students.

Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) supports better educational opportunities and success for children and youth with disabilities and young children with disadvantages or at-risk for school failure. VCU T/TAC offers quality training and technical assistance in response to local, regional and state needs.

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) conducts research and training on disability issues and return-to-work strategies. RRTC's Benefits Planning and Resource Center (BARC), provides regional technical assistance and training to the Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach Programs funded under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act of 1999. "When someone from anywhere in the U.S. calls with a technical question about Social Security disability benefits, they're talking to someone from the VCU School of Education," says Dean William Boshier Jr.



Quality Time. The principal's office is obviously not a dire place for Ryan Coddington and Blake Anderson, sharing enthusiasms with Principal Stephen Covert at Ni Middle School.

and, in the end, students get a detailed report about their strengths and weaknesses.

The state is now mandating teacher mentoring programs," says Wright, "and mentoring and coaching would be a natural place for PEP to expand. But to create more programs, CVLA needs more funding."

"Go to the principal's office."

"Professors who demonstrate a genuine interest in our education and growth are a hallmark of VCU," says Covert. He and Ken Magill, now on VCU's graduate faculty teaching educational leadership, are two of them.

In K-12, the middle school block is notorious. Just as the curriculum gets harder, students are whipsawed by hormones and social angst (and a kind of sleeping sickness). Covert is a calm center in a storm. "Students at this age need definite boundaries, and crave predictability."

He continues, "Adolescent learners also must be surrounded by educators who understand that sometimes the student who is the most difficult to love is the one who needs that love the most. Aside from

the most severe cases, administrators need latitude in crafting behavioral modification plans that work for each child, in cooperation with parents. Educating a child—in the social, emotional, cognitive and physical aspects—is really a team effort," he stresses.

That's why Magill tells prospective principals, "be sure you have all the facts before you make decisions, and that you listen to people. When parents come in feeling their child has been wronged in some way, you have to just listen at first, without interrupting to defend your position. You have to let them ventilate. When you begin to talk, separate the child as a person from the behavior. You need to show them that you, too, care about their child. 'But this is a behavior that we need to work on together.'"

Magill adds another duty of the school leader. "A principal must create an environment that's nurturing and safe, physically and emotionally, for students and for faculty and staff. If the teachers and staff don't feel good about things, it will be impossible for a principal to implement his goals. It's important to set expectations and then give

people the opportunity to meet them; don't keep changing the expectations as you get close to them."

Creating that supportive space is difficult. As a private consultant, Magill works with Visiting International Faculty, a cultural exchange program that recruits highly qualified teachers from 42 countries for Virginia school districts.

"Unfortunately," he says, "many of them find that their biggest culture shock is classroom discipline. Teachers in the U.S. don't have the respect and esteem that foreign teachers do, and that's a shame."

Severe state budget cuts make a principal's job a lot harder. Covert comments acerbically. "I think any administrator would say that maintaining a highly motivated faculty—ready on a daily basis to provide engaging and challenging lessons to students—in the face of unfounded criticisms and outdated state funding formulae is a daunting task—not to mention unfunded and often contradictory federal mandates."

In this climate, Covert is particularly grateful for PEP. "It's a wonderful learning opportunity, bringing together school leaders from various districts, who can share ideas and collaboratively work on real solutions to questions of policy and practice. The program is adaptable to what is going on now, but it also has such a good foundation in theory and practice," Covert emphasizes. "Regardless of what trends come our way, it will be relevant."

Listen Up, and Listen Down

"Listen," says Magill. Education, says Covert, "is a team effort." Superintendent DeMary maintains the same principles on a statewide level. "Input from teachers, principals and parents is critical to making

effective policy," she says. "The more field-based information policymakers have, the more our policies are aligned with best practices in the schools. Decisions made in a vacuum can only result in ineffective policy—or even worse, damaging policy." The School of Education informs policymakers in several ways.

Each spring, the CEPI releases the Commonwealth Education Poll, a major barometer of Virginia public opinion about K-12 education. In April 2003, although 43 percent of Virginia voters thought K-12 schools were underfunded, only 32 percent supported a tax increase for education. Have SOLs made schools better? No, said 43 percent; 42 percent feel SOLs have helped.

CEPI also writes legislative briefs on issues in education. The non-partisan briefs at the center's website quickly get to the heart of each issue—endearing them to General Assembly members who had to consider over 3,000 pieces of legislation during this past year's "short" session.

"In a day when people have more information than they can handle, the most valuable resource is analysis," says Boshier, also CEPI's

executive director. "Our website can get 10,000 hits a month."

"Impartiality is a key," adds Dr. Richard Vacca, VCU professor emeritus of education law and CEPI senior fellow. "We don't try to take a stand one way or another," he says. "We present the information, and lawmakers draw their own conclusions." See for yourself at www.cepi-online.org.

The Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium (MERC) at VCU is definitely a two-way bridge between area schools and the educational experts on VCU's faculty. In 1991, seven metro Richmond school boards and VCU "came together to see if they could leverage their resources to conduct research that school divisions alone could not typically afford," says Boshier.

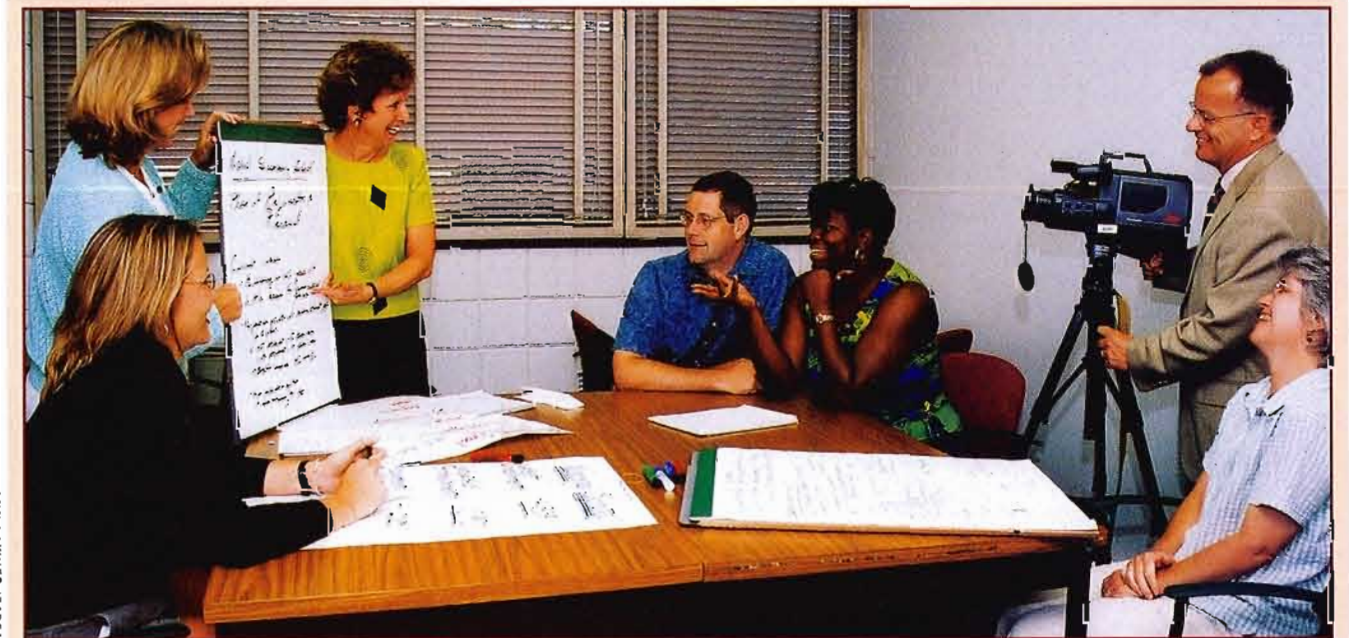
This is policymaking that moves from the bottom up before it goes back from the top down. "MERC is action-oriented," says MERC's director, VCU's Dr. James McMillan. The consortium decides on its research topics each year from problems that come from the schools. Teachers and principals can see what they need to know, now, to teach their students more effectively.

They are on MERC's council, choosing topics with policymakers and shaping studies with faculty researchers.

A major worry in public education is losing students who are at risk because of poverty or other family and personal struggles. Many studies have looked at kids in trouble to try to fix what went wrong. A recent MERC study asked 62 successful kids from six school districts, "How do you do it?" The results provided some new insights on resilience," says McMillan.

The students were eager, thoughtful and direct. School divisions could see immediate practical applications. "Have more activities for the students to become involved in," students said. They wanted teachers who were supported and expected them to succeed—"She was strict but she was nice." These students had a strong sense of their own effectiveness. They were successful because they chose to be, and they gave themselves credit for it.

Another study proposed ways of structuring summer school to improve SOL scores for students having trouble. Suggestions included "enrolling struggling students in



"Principal" Kathryn Kirk (in blue) is live on tape, presenting a school problem to other PEP leadership students, a.k.a. School Board. After nodding and wincing at the tape, and hearing solid questions and suggestions from Tanya Smith (seated left), program director Mary Ann Wright, Rich Hall, Ellen Hebert, facilitator Harold Saunders and Melanie Haines-Bartolf, Kirk is a lot more convincing the second time around.

Algebra I during summer school, focusing courses on preparing for the test, and keeping class sizes small."

Retaining quality teachers is critical if schools are to meet new high standards. According to a MERC study, schools keep good teachers by listening to teachers' needs; supporting meaningful professional development; reducing class size and loads; strengthening mentoring for new teachers; and rewarding teachers' professionalism.

MERC studies sometimes convince school boards of necessary spending. "Local schools have also used our technology results to argue for further technology resources," says McMillan. www.vcu.edu/eduweb/merc

META-Teaching

Today's teachers have to cope not only with academics but with social issues like drug and alcohol abuse, gangs, HIV/AIDS, school shootings. Children of new immigrants from the Sudan, El Salvador and Russia struggle to comprehend higher math and American History in a language

foreign to them. Budget cuts mean teacher layoffs and larger classes, when research shows that low teacher-student ratios are the most important element in better learning. Lower salaries make it difficult for teachers to bring up and educate their own children. When school systems can afford to hire them, there's a nationwide teacher shortage.

Graduates of VCU's five-year Extended Teacher Preparation Program leave campus ready to teach and support their students. Teachers earn both a Master of Teaching from the School of Education and a B.A. or B.S. in a subject area through the College of Humanities and Sciences. The curriculum is infused with SOL-related material, and every student spends a semester doing a practicum, an internship in a local K-12 classroom. Students learn to use new technologies through the School's two state-of-the-art labs.

The School offers an endorsement in teaching English as a Second Language, and recently won a \$1 million federal Title III grant from

the Office of English Language Acquisition. VCU will be training ESL teachers and paraprofessionals in four Richmond area school districts and among our VCU students. The grant is renewable every year for five years.

The standards movement is pushing teachers as well as students, and school systems across the country are offering substantial salary increases to teachers who earn National Board Certification.

It's a lot more than paperwork. Teachers must make a year-long analysis of their knowledge and skills. They prepare a portfolio by videotaping their teaching, collecting student work samples, and making detailed analyses of their teaching methods. They face rigorous tests in their core subjects at an assessment center. National Board Certification lasts for 10 years and can be renewed.

"Fifty percent don't make it the first time," Boshier comments. The Candidate Support Program of VCU-affiliated Metropolitan Educational Training Alliance (META) is there to

help teachers through the process. In 2001, the Richmond area had only one nationally board-certified teacher. By 2003, with a META-boost, it has 15—five of them graduates of VCU's School of Education.

Math Motivator

Math teacher **Lisa Hall '93Med** is policy made personal for students at Adams Elementary School in Henrico County. Today's schools risk losing accreditation—and federal funding—if they fail to meet standards. Low SOL scores in math resulted in a state 'warning' to Adams. Hall came to the rescue in 2001 when federal policy expanded Title 1 programs to fund intensive math teachers as well as reading specialists.

As a resource teacher for the whole school, Hall was looking for snappy ways to help students learn addition, subtraction, times tables, and understand how to apply these "math facts." After she saw some math games at a workshop, she applied for grants to buy materials and make kits for every classroom. In

2002, Dominion Resources gave her \$4,000, and ToyotaTIME came through with \$9,700.

Teachers and parents have assembled 36 kits with 13 games in each one—"all 730 kids have used them," she says proudly. These days, Adams is a school where "every kid counts." Classrooms clatter with the click of dice and children calling out numbers, as they add, subtract, multiply and divide, to play "Eight Eyeball Rings Are Enough," or "Seven Snakes." This year, Toyota-TIME dollars bought materials for more kits so parents can practice with children at home.

Players have to use strategy and know math facts as they collect eyeball rings for their fingers whenever they roll eight. "The games are so much more fun to them than using flashcards or being drilled." The real payoff is that math scores have risen from the 50s to the upper 80s. Adams Elementary is now fully accredited, and in May 2002 was one of four schools in Virginia to receive the Governor's Award for Outstanding Improvement.



Math Madness! Title 1 Math teacher Lisa Hall and Krystyne Bradley, Kendra Esparza-Harris and Sean Taylor play "Lucky Triples His Friends" at Adams Elementary School. Hall bought materials for math games kits with a \$9,700 grant from Toyota-TIME and \$4,000 from Dominion Resources.

ANN LAWYER '78BFA

What the Word Bird Told Us



Rained in. As long as they can READ with favorite author Jane Belk Moncure, Kiara Slade, Justin Hundley, Kayla Thompson and Christian Brown don't seem to mind the rain on their "Alphabet Soup Parade." Preschool Special Needs Coordinator Amelia Foster gathered 400 Caswell County preschoolers who met in Yanceyville, North Carolina for the event.

As a teacher of young children, **Jane Belk Moncure '52BS/E** didn't just smile at the cute things her students said. She wrote them down.

"I had a suitcase full of stories," she recalls. Her first publication came when she was teaching at a nursery school on 5th Avenue and 12th Street in New York City. Photographer Morris Jaffee had followed her class around for a whole day, taking pictures he thought the school could use for a class booklet. She looked through the photos and realized, "there's a whole book here." She wrote words to fit the pictures and, without scheduling a meeting, walked into the offices of Lothrop, Lee and Shepherd "and handed it to an editor." Her off-the-sidewalk approach worked—the firm published *Pinny's Day at Play School* in 1955.

Today, Moncure has written more than 200 well-loved children's books. Her *Word Bird* series, *Sound Box Books* and *Magic Castle Readers* have introduced millions of children around the world to reading. Her advice on writing for children is simple: "Don't write down to them, write with them."

Many books for early readers use a limited vocabulary of phonetically simple words. Moncure didn't. Her collaborators wouldn't let her. "They wanted 'alligator.' They wanted 'astronaut.' I'm a

teacher-writer," she explains. "I wanted to find words children would respond to. One little boy wanted us to use 'dromedary.' He knew what it meant, too. 'They got one hump,' he said. 'Camels got two.' The children loved that word. They all started dancing and chanting 'Dromedary, dromedary.'"

A controversial issue in early reading is phonics. Moncure insists that her *Sound Box Books*, written in the 1970s and recently republished, "are beginning letter-sound books. They are not 'phonics' books. There is not a one way to read—phonics." Most parents define phonics as learning letter sounds. For educators, the term implies a rigid approach to reading which emphasizes drills on the sounds without the motivation of actually reading books with good stories. By itself it doesn't make hungry readers, and research shows that in many cases phonics alone doesn't make readers at all.

Moncure fondly remembers her early days of teaching, and "the wonderful Mrs. Pearl Burford," a VCU professor of early elementary education. Burford placed Jane at Richmond's Matthew Maury Elementary School for student teaching. In 1951-52, "Miss Belk" taught "junior primary," a combined kindergarten/first grade. Although in a

poor neighborhood, "Maury was a very, very creative school." Every day in her class, five- and six-year-olds "were learning to read by writing their own stories. 'Writing to read,'" she comments, "is not really new."

At Maury, Moncure turned empty refrigerator cartons into magical places for her children and told them stories about the "Word Bird." When Moncure was a little girl, she used to visit her grandparents on their farm in South Carolina. Her grandfather, "Papoo," kept a special flower container with a little bird on it on the porch. He'd fill the bird with coins and peppermint sticks, and shake them out, piñata-style, for his grandchildren. Inevitably, Moncure filled her bird with words and shook them out for her students.

From 1957-59, Moncure was the first president of the Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education. "This organization, since its inception, has worked to establish high standards for young children's programs and for good educational opportunities for teachers who work with young children." The VAECE, with other groups, established some of the first early childhood standards in Virginia.

Moncure, who was also an Early Childhood Instructor at VCU, returned to campus in 2000 to receive an Alumni Star award. She spent a morning visiting VCU's Child Development Center and donated several sets of books. "That center is a great asset for young teachers in training. I was very impressed with the quality of the program."

Although she left teaching in 1979 to concentrate on writing, Moncure still works as a school consultant and volunteer. She spent a year exchanging emails with struggling third grade readers in Tacoma, Washington. "I invited them to write some stories for me. And they were good. Any grandmother could do that with a child." In fact, she reminds parents, "You are your child's most important teacher. Today so many extra things are pressed onto little children. Parents can make sure they have some relaxed, quality time together."

She recalls her own idyllic summers on her grandparents' farm, "Riding the farm mules...swimming in the lake...picking cotton." And of course, "listening every single night to my grandfather's homemade stories from the bottom of his big brass bed, with all the grandchildren spell-bound all around him."

With that kind of encouragement, Hall's creativity and fundraising are expanding exponentially. "I have a new hobby," she says happily. "Next I'm thinking about schoolwide 'Math Motivators,' funded by a \$4,000 grant from Scott, Stringfellow." On Math Fridays once a month, kids who answer the most math facts get to wear buttons that say "Math Master." Occasional Math Madness Saturdays are really popular with third to fifth graders.

Dominion gave her another \$4,000 in 2003 for Math and Science Family Workshops. Hall's latest grant application includes stipends for teachers who've been volunteering at

Math Saturdays, and a digital camera to document students' activities and achievements.

Hall sharpened her grant-writing skills in a VCU course in research methods. "We basically worked on one paper the entire semester, bit by bit, and it was picked apart by the professor every week," she says. "It paid off."

An object in motion tends to stay in motion. Lisa Hall, Adams' Teacher of the Year for 2003, reports proudly that 90 percent of Adams students passed math SOLs in May.

So, the ABCs of policy go something like this. A) Look at classrooms: Who's learning? Who isn't? Why? What do they need? B) Formulate necessary policies. C) Send better policies (with funding)

back to teachers and principals to implement in classrooms and schools. The point is always the student. A fourth grader is learning long division; she may go on to study fractals and chaos theory—or to lead a software company. That boy reading with the Word Bird (see sidebar) could become a journalist and win a Pulitzer Prize.

"Every child is entitled to quality education through a public school system that is accountable for its performance," says DeMary. "I am committed to the Standards of Learning and other initiatives that enable students and public schools to reach those high standards."

Sandra Shelley is a freelancer who writes frequently for the Christian Children's Fund.



"Mother Goose"

Betty Jean Swyers died August 6, 2003. An adjunct instructor in children's literature from the late 1960s to the late 1980s, Betty Swyers was the Mother Goose of VCU—a reader's action figure. Dr. Alan Mcleod, chair of teacher education, once took her course. "She would be sashaying around the classroom and get us to follow. We'd all be singing a counting rhyme or acting out the story of the three bears." Generations of new teachers passed her joyful perkiness on to their K-5 students as a happy love of reading and storytelling.

Swyers collaborated with reading faculty on VCU's weekend Children's Literature Conference in the 1970s-80s, running Friday night "Happenings" of book-related activities with meet-the-author for kids and parents. Former chair Dr. Pat Duncan says, "She was one of the most creative people I ever met." Swyers and her husband, late faculty member Dr. William Swyers, "made a far bigger contribution to VCU than anyone will ever know," says Duncan. For a fitting memorial contribution, her children suggested, "Read a book to a child."

In Memoriam

Scholar, Patriot and Public Servant

Dr. Amin Alimard, retired professor of public administration at VCU, died of cancer on May 6, 2003, in Richmond. A former professor and dean at the National University of Iran, Alimard became a cabinet-level minister in the Shah's government, instituting reforms in the civil service code and developing a training program for public officials across Iran. His friend Dr. Frank Sherwood says, "He was a patriot above all else. He looked on his position as a duty."

After the Islamic Revolution, Alimard escaped to Turkey and later to the United States. He joined the VCU faculty in 1982, becoming a helpful and popular advisor, not only to students in public administration, but to international students in every field. Dr. Janet Hutchinson, VCU director of public administration, says, "He was such a vital man with such a broad intellect, [which] he shared with so many people, and we all benefited."

"A Tremendous Loss"

Dr. Susan Estabrook Kennedy died June 15, 2003, at 61, soon after being diagnosed with cancer. She was not only a published scholar in 20th century American history but a capable administrator, serving on myriad university boards and committees since she arrived at VCU in 1973. Her colleagues in the History Department changed its bylaws so she could serve three terms as chair. She was interim and associate dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences in the late 1990s, when she established a

development office for the college and balanced its finances.

She studied, wrote and lectured about American history in the 1920s and '30s. Her first book was *The Banking Crisis of 1933*. A second book, *If All We Did Was Weep at Home*, examined the history of working class white women in the United States. A Guggenheim Fellowship was one of her many honors. She developed a course at VCU on methodologies for oral history; she was a co-founder, past president, and journal editor of the Richmond Oral History Association.

"She was a marvelous administrator and she served all over the university," says Dr. Stephen Gottfredson, dean of humanities and sciences. "It's a tremendous loss."

"A Sweetheart" with High Standards

Mary Barbour Dixon Phillips died May 24, 2003 at 88. For 47 years, several generations of RPI and VCU students learned poise and clarity in her public speaking and diction courses—then required in many majors, including business and education. Retired theatre chair Richard Newdick remembers, "Mary taught a lot of athletes, because her part-time schedule fit theirs. She was such a sweetheart and so concerned for her students," he continues. "She was always willing to work extra time with students who needed help. But she was no softie; she had high standards."

Phillips was active in the Richmond Theater Guild for many years and starred as Emily in their 1939 production of *Our Town*. Students admired and loved her for her professionalism and concern.