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MCKAY TODAY  
FALL 2021

DAVID O. MCKAY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

A group of people are seen from behind, sitting in a white inflatable raft on a river. They are wearing life jackets and holding blue paddles. The river is surrounded by lush green forests and rocky, forested hillsides under a cloudy sky. The raft has a yellow circular logo on its side.

## Growing with the Flow: The Eddies and Currents of Working Morally

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Returning to Teaching—What's Up with the Tech? p. 6

Establishing the Facts Surrounding Guns in Schools p. 10

Guided Across the Globe: A Teacher's Story p. 18

# Computers Don't Care; Teachers Do

**Richard D. Osguthorpe**  
Dean



This past spring I found myself in a fifth-grade classroom collecting data in one of our partnership schools as part of a study exploring student perceptions of their caring relationship with their teacher. In this classroom, I passed out the survey, provided instructions to the students, and was about to begin reading the questions aloud when I noticed a male student enter the classroom late and take his assigned seat in the front corner of the classroom, immediately placing his head down on his desk. I approached him with a copy of the survey and placed it in front of him, but he pulled the hood of his sweatshirt over his eyes, turned his head in the opposite direction,

and ignored my inquiries. It was evident that he was angry and frustrated. I surmised that he had experienced some challenges in his home that morning before arriving late for school, so I whispered to him that it was okay for him to not participate, and I commenced with my administration of the survey to the other students.

After verbalizing several questions, I noticed with great surprise that this disengaged student was filling out the survey. He still had his head down on his desk, so I assumed that he was just randomly circling responses. However, after collecting the surveys and proceeding to the next classroom, I read through his responses, and they stopped me in my tracks. Not only had he paid close attention to each question, but he had also given his teacher the most positive possible rating for establishing a caring relationship with him. Despite his obvious frustration,

hurt, and anger, he could not help but pick up his pencil and describe the care, compassion, kindness, and comfort of his teacher.

Given the circumstances of schooling during the pandemic, this experience served as a powerful reminder of the importance of in-person learning and the meaningful connection that can develop between teachers and students in school settings when they create caring classroom communities and individual caring relationships with students. Teaching is much more than the simple delivery of content, and the disruption to in-person learning during the past two school years has heightened our awareness of the importance of teachers and the relationships they build with their students to facilitate learning. In short, we have learned that computers don't care; teachers do. And they care in ways that provide an opportunity to learn for every student—even those who might not feel like learning when they first arrive at school.



ILLUSTRATION: JING JING TSONG

BRADLEY SLADE

BRADLEY SLADE

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## School News

The McKay School is continually producing outstanding research and events. For more school news, please visit [education.byu.edu/news](https://education.byu.edu/news).

### Chowen to Lead Educator Preparation Program Accreditation



Brent Chowen was appointed director of the BYU Educator Preparation Program Accreditation Office. He previously served as the interim director.

Chowen served for three years as an associate professor in the BYU Teacher Education Department. Prior to arriving at BYU, he worked in the School of Education at Brigham Young University–Hawaii, where he served as a classroom professor, clinical field supervisor, department chair, and accreditation lead for BYU–Hawaii’s Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC).

### Graham Receives Experiential Learning Award



Charles Graham received an Experiential Learning Award from BYU’s Office of Careers and Experiential Learning.

This award is given to faculty who have been pivotal in progressing students’ educations and careers. As a member of the Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology (IP&T), Graham has instilled many students with a love of lifelong learning through his dedicated mentorships.

One of Graham’s student nominators said, “He has given me the courage to engage in challenging situations. Frustrations became learning experiences.”

### Cutrer-Párraga Recognized for Excellent Teaching and Service



Elizabeth Cutrer-Párraga has received the 2021 Faculty Women’s Association Teaching Award. This colleague-nominated award honors recipients’ “dedication to teaching excellence” in preparation, methods of teaching, examinations, advisement, and evaluations.

As an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education (CPSE), Cutrer-

Párraga is known for her inclusive teaching as she honors her students’ unique backgrounds.

Cutrer-Párraga cultivates an environment in which her students can be brave; she openly but appropriately acknowledges her own personal struggles to model self-acceptance. Her nominator has shared, “Beth teaches the Christlike conviction that everyone can succeed when we adapt our teaching to their needs.”

### Miramontes Recognized for Excellent Mentoring



Nancy Miramontes has received the 2021 Faculty Women’s Association Mentoring Award. This colleague-nominated award recognizes each recipient’s outstanding record of mentoring both students and colleagues.

As an assistant clinical professor in CPSE, Miramontes’s core objective has been getting to know students individually in order to understand and help them achieve their goals, dreams, and visions for their careers as school psychologists.

Miramontes, with enthusiasm and optimism, has provided extensive support and mentoring for students who have struggled in traditional graduate classes. Her nominator wrote that Miramontes has “worked above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that her students are successful.”

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## Professor’s Powerful Work Honored by *Pediatrics*

An article on autism screening by Terisa Gabrielsen of the McKay School of Education and other researchers was named one of the top 10 articles of 2020 by the influential journal *Pediatrics*. Gabrielsen and her coauthors studied the effectiveness of the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT), the standard autism screening survey completed by parents of toddlers at well-child visits.

The authors found that although a double screening for autism—at 18 and 24 months—is most effective at identifying autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in children, these screenings are administered inconsistently. While 73 percent of the 36,223 children studied were screened once, only 54 percent were screened twice. Hispanic children were less likely to be screened at all.

Early diagnosis is critical to getting interventions in place for children with ASD. The authors wrote, “Further work [should] be done to encourage providers to complete screens as recommended, with more efforts to screen Hispanic children.”

## Seek Learning Shares McKay School Education Research

The *Seek Learning* podcast brings educational research from the David O. McKay School of Education into the homes of educators. With guests such as Barbara Morgan Gardner and Terrell Young, the podcast offers listeners insights useful at work, at home, and in gospel living.

Episodes focus on topics such as how praise can affect children’s behavior, how expository literature helps children learn about the world, and how an art curriculum improves children’s education.

*Seek Learning* provides listeners with the tools they need to become great teachers in all aspects of professional, personal, and spiritual life.



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## Cheering Them On, Face-to-Face

McKay School faculty and staff applaud as incoming freshmen arrive for in-person New Student Orientation for the first time since fall 2019. Students were welcomed by faculty, staff, and administrators; learned about clubs, majors, and support services; took pictures; and enjoyed shave ice on the quad.

PHOTO BY BRADLEY SLADE



# RETURNING TO TEACHING



ILLUSTRATED BY  
ABIGAIL WHITE, '23

# Tackling the Technical

BY CYNTHIA GLAD

It's tough for all of us.

It can be overwhelming to keep up on educational technology, even if you're in the classroom year after year, according to Royce Kimmons of the Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology. So whether you're a seasoned educator or are reentering the classroom after a break of many years, don't sweat it too much.

Kimmons said, "I think that the answer for new and returning teachers is to focus more on developing confidence in problem solving, creativity, and learning new technologies."

But with so many technologies to learn, where does one even start?

To answer this question, Kimmons monitors and studies educational technology trends and shares his insights in journals, blogs, and other forums. He pulls data from many publicly available websites. His sources? School and district websites, research article titles and abstracts in top educational technology journals, Twitter posts with #EdTech, and more.

Last year he scraped home pages of 51,496 K-12 school websites across the United States. He then extracted all external links that these sites connected

to and sorted these links by internet domain (Google.com, Facebook.com, etc.). This resulted in 1.1 million links representing 72,640 internet domains.

Kimmons found the two most-linked-to resources among school home pages were Facebook and Twitter, at a rate of almost 50 percent. Schools are likely using these platforms as community outreach efforts. Social media sites such as Instagram, LinkedIn, and Pinterest are also highly represented.

What has he learned over the past three years?

- Google-owned domains (YouTube, Docs, Search, Drive, Sites, and Accounts) represented the top four most-linked-to domains for three years running. These domains support school and district communication by finding, sharing, and managing documents, videos, and other files.
- Scheduling and survey tools (such as SurveyMonkey, Eventbrite, and SignUp Genius) were also commonly posted each year.
- Notably, Zoom was the fifth most-shared domain in 2020 but was not among the top 25 in 2018 or 2019.
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) links were common in 2020 but were much less common in previous years.
- Emergency remote teaching pushed technologies including Zoom, Google Meet, Google Docs, and Nearpod to the forefront in 2020. These enabled coordination at a safe distance.

**“A lot of the communication had changed. Teachers use apps to communicate with families. I had to learn how to use and monitor a lot of different apps and programs that I wasn’t familiar with.”**

—ESTHER PIGG

Kimmons said that although 2020 saw a greater emphasis on a few specific tools (such as Zoom) and information sources (such as the CDC) as well as increased activity overall, the general nature of the activity did not change much, with most tools that were being used in previous years also being used in 2020 and in similar orders of frequency.

#### SHALLOW DIVES INTO A DEEP POOL

Take a cleansing breath and realize that you don’t have to learn everything about everything. Focus on a few of these top techs to study and get comfortable with.

Begin by learning more about the technologies currently around you. Increase confidence by using your phone, email systems, and other technology currently in your life. Use more features and push your limits little by little. That learning will transfer to other products and situations.

Even without an educator login, Utah’s Online Library and similar sites can get you into the school mindset. These contain open educational resources or free products for educators. Build your skills in PowerPoint, Excel, and different databases. LinkedIn Learning also provides tools to advance skills specific to your career field.

Kimmons’s research shows the most common programs in use nationwide, but you’ll want to know what is being used in your area. Explore your school district’s website to see what technologies they currently use.

#### AN ALUM WHO HAS BEEN THERE

Esther Pigg, ’09, recently began a return to using her early childhood education degree professionally after having stayed at home for a few years with her young family. She started substituting in February 2021 in Wasilla, Alaska. Because she had her teaching license—and perhaps due to COVID-19—she was quickly offered long-term substitute positions.

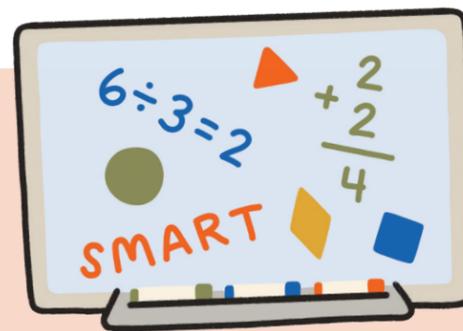
Pigg said, “A nice thing for me was that I had previously taught full-time in the same district, so I knew the curriculum and a lot of the technology the district used. I needed to be refreshed on the technology because I hadn’t used a Promethean or smartboard in years, but I had had experience with them.

“A lot of the communication had changed. Teachers use apps to communicate with families. I had to learn how to use and monitor a lot of different apps and programs that I wasn’t familiar with, such as Lexia, and district testing sites such as AIMS and MAPS. A lot of work in the classroom is done on computers and Promethean boards as well, which was an adjustment as I was used to hands-on learning. Each student has a laptop and knows how to log in and access school and district links. Brain breaks are done using the Promethean board, etc.”

Tips from Pigg: “Look at the district and school websites and see what the curriculum is and try to learn about the different programs. Take professional development classes that teach about technology (such as Google Classroom classes). Don’t be afraid to ask for help.”

#### YOUR COACHES AND SUPPORTERS

Remember, you’re not alone in this. This is a marathon, not a sprint, so get some “running buddies.”



#### HOW CAN A WHITEBOARD BE “SMART”?

Promethean is just one brand of many smartboards. A high-tech version of the old chalkboard or whiteboard, a smartboard connects to one or more devices and provides a big screen for all in the classroom to see. The user can show videos, zoom in on technical images, write with a finger, and allow several students to show their content at once. The user can save the content and send it to each student’s computer to continue the projects.

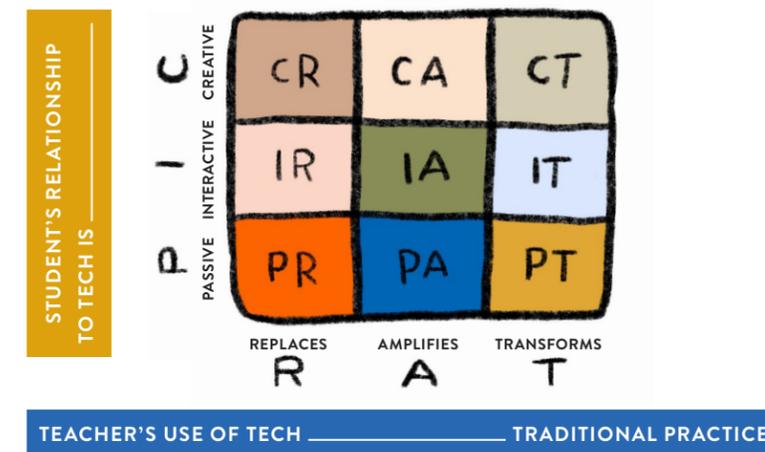
Kimmons’s advice is, “Because things change so rapidly, teachers [especially today] need to be connected with other teachers in ways that support their ongoing learning. This might be in the form of using professional learning communities or networks, sharing resources with other teachers, or just having access to lifelong learning opportunities via open resources.”

“Work with a coach!” said Darren Draper, director of innovative learning in Utah’s Alpine School District, who supervises a team of 38 coaches. As former teachers who have excelled with classroom technology, these coaches work to support and improve educators’ uses of technology in teaching and learning. Draper added, “Earning the Ed Tech Endorsement can be a great way to improve knowledge and skill sets associated with the instructional uses of technology.”

#### TOOLS TO TRANSFORM LEARNING

Choose wisely. Kimmons’s position is, “I think the issue is less about what technologies are out there now and more about how we are thinking about the technologies we have available to us.”

The PICRAT model, developed by Kimmons and McKay School colleagues Charles Graham and Richard West, gives educators an easy way of thinking about maximizing technology. The authors have explained that “PIC (passive, interactive, creative) refers to the student’s relationship to a technology in a particular educational scenario. RAT (replacement, amplification, transformation) describes the impact of the technology on a teacher’s previous practice.”



This matrix shows the relationships of the student, the technology, and the work being done. It focuses on two questions:

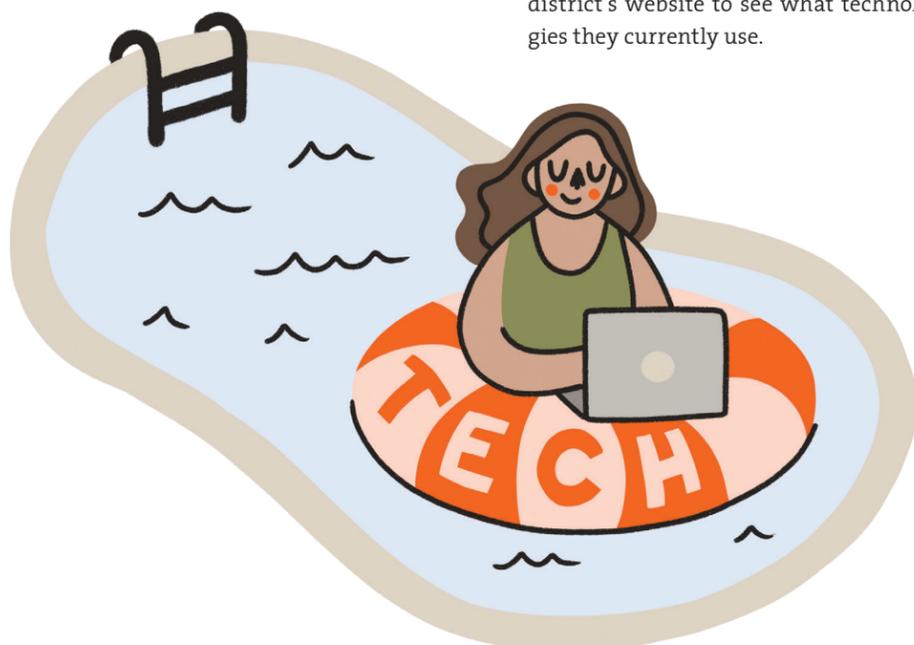
- 1. What is the technology use’s effect on practice and what will it be used to do?**
  - Replace?
  - Amplify?
  - Transform?
- 2. What is the student’s relationship to the technology?**
  - Passive?
  - Interactive?
  - Creative?

Kimmons believes the best technology integration occurs in the top right of the matrix. But most of what we do lingers around the bottom left. If you find you’re just replacing what you were previously doing, ask yourself, “Can I amplify or transform my practices instead?”

If your students are passively watching videos in your class, ask yourself, “Are there ways to make this more interactive?” or “Why can’t I get them to create their own videos?”

You don’t need to master every product out there. Start exploring and build your confidence and your network of helpers. Then select your tools wisely to provide the best learning experience for your students.

*The full series of the Returning to Teaching articles can be found on our website.*



# WILL ARMING SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES KEEP SCHOOLS SAFE?

BY SPENCER WEILER

*Arming school personnel has been an emotional and hotly debated topic over the past decade. Professor Weiler of the McKay School contributes his research and analysis to the discussion.*

On December 14, 2012, a gunman entered Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and proceeded to kill 20 children and six adults. Following this horrific event, an important discussion ensued focused on increasing school safety and, ultimately, identifying actions that could be taken to ensure something like this never occurred again. One of the solutions discussed was the arming of school district employees with firearms. The call to arm school district employees was reiterated following the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018.

The subject of weapons, in general, and weapons in school, specifically, is fraught with deep-rooted opinions. As a researcher, I determined to empirically study this school safety measure with an array of different colleagues in an objective manner. My aim in researching this topic is to collect data that can influence policymakers and practitioners considering adopting a potentially controversial safety measure. Over the last nine years, I have joined with colleagues and published four empirical studies and one book chapter on the subject. Here are a few of the more salient lessons from these research efforts:

**Response Time:** For a vast majority of school districts in the United States, the typical law enforcement response time—or the time it takes to get to a school—is less than five minutes. However, for geographically isolated and rural school districts, response time can exceed 30 minutes. This finding suggests that the potential appropriateness of arming employees varies from school district to school district.

**Training:** Professional police officers receive extensive annual training focused on handling firearms and related skills necessary to address armed intruder situations. And, despite all this training, police make mistakes. Principals, superintendents, and police chiefs have raised concerns with the idea of putting a firearm into the hands of a school district employee who may not have received the same level of ongoing training.

**Costs:** There is a perception that arming school district employees is a cost-neutral school safety measure. However, our research has identified two categories of costs: initial/one-time and ongoing. While actual costs depend on a number of factors, we estimated that, nationally, it would cost between \$974,000 and \$1.2 million for the first year and \$636,000 to \$976,000 each subsequent year.



**Liability:** There are a multitude of risks associated with bringing weapons into schools, as exemplified by the following questions:

- What if a weapon is improperly stored and a student gains access to it?
- What if an employee with a firearm, while responding to a threat, accidentally harms or kills an innocent bystander?
- What if the armed employee has a negative interaction with a student and uses the firearm inappropriately?

These types of hypotheticals are endless and pose potential liability risks for school districts.

**Safety:** What is not clear in all this research is if schools are safer places with armed employees. Statistically speaking, the likelihood of an armed intruder entering any one school is incredibly slim (it will happen once every 6,000 years per school), and certain safety measures, such as arming employees, have been shown to negatively impact students' perceptions of a school's overall safety.

We continue to explore this topic from a number of different aspects. Again, our hope is not to share our own views on this controversial topic; instead, we seek to provide policymakers and practitioners with empirical data that can inform their decisions as they seek for ways to increase the overall safety of America's schools.

*Spencer Weiler, '00, was a high school teacher and an administrator before pursuing academia. He holds a PhD from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. He taught at the University of Northern Colorado for more than a decade before joining the McKay School in 2019. His research focuses on subjects from leaders' responses to pandemics and other "outlier" situations to the topic discussed in this piece. He strives to help students become "outstanding administrators who rely on the teachings of Christ and work tirelessly to support the learning of all students."*



# WORLD-RENOWNED AND HEAVEN-BLESSED

THE LIFETIME FLOW OF RICHARD OSGUTHORPE'S HISTORY AT BOTH BYU AND THE MCKAY SCHOOL INFORMED HIS DECISION TO PURSUE ACADEMICS, HIS SCHOLARSHIP, AND HIS APPROACH TO LIFE.

BY STACEY KRATZ

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRADLEY SLADE



The Persian poet Rumi once wrote, “When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy.”<sup>1</sup>

Richard Osguthorpe has found joy in all sorts of pursuits—and on all sorts of rivers. Although he didn’t know it, his voyage through life and his efforts to explore and promote the moral work of education would lead him back to where he started: the McKay School. He became dean in July.

Though he spent most of his career elsewhere, Osguthorpe is an Orem native with deep roots in education and at BYU. His mother, Lolly, is a BYU elementary education graduate who taught for many years in Provo schools, and his father, Russell, served as a distinguished member of the McKay School faculty, retiring in 2013. Osguthorpe has fond memories of his father’s career, though the earliest ones aren’t very academic.

“At one point he had an office underneath the football stadium,” said Osguthorpe, a passionate fan of BYU sports. “We got to go to the office with Dad and kick field goals out on the field on Saturday mornings.”

Eventually, though, Osguthorpe’s heart was captured by teaching. “I decided to be a teacher right before my mission, in George Durrant’s missionary prep class,” Osguthorpe said. “He talked about all the wonderful things about being a teacher. He told us, ‘Be a teacher! Be a coach!’—you know, with exclamation points. I wrote that down, and I still have it.”

After he served a mission in Montreal, Canada, Osguthorpe’s chosen course was confirmed while serving as his father’s research assistant during a sabbatical in Paris.

“We studied the French educational system together,” Osguthorpe said. “I sat in classrooms and took notes for him for fieldwork. We published an article based on our study. That’s when I decided I’d like to be in academia.”

As a senior, Osguthorpe was taking one last required writing class when he wrote a paper on a teacher’s moral impact on students.

“I was trying to teach French [as a student teacher], but I was also interested in the impact I might have on the character of the students. It wasn’t clear to me that I was having any impact,” he said. “What does that impact look like and how do you do it well? It’s not a stretch to say that paper turned into a dissertation, which turned into multiple publications over the course of the last 20 years, which turned into an entire career’s worth of scholarship.”

Osguthorpe was teaching French at Timpview High School when he met his wife, Gwen, at a BYU men’s soccer game. The couple married in early 1999; by fall of that year, they were in Michigan, where Osguthorpe’s interests

led him to study under Gary Fenstermacher and Virginia Richardson, directors of the Manner in Teaching Project.

Osguthorpe received master’s and doctoral degrees at the University of Michigan and then took an assistant professor job at Boise State University. At BSU, he spent nearly 15 years preparing teachers, writing prolifically, and eventually serving as dean of the College of Education. He also gave full rein to his love of river rafting.

“I had a little standing rule in the dean’s office in the summertime, after the river was low enough to run,” Osguthorpe said. “I would say, ‘If it’s above 90 degrees, everything after four o’clock is shifted to another time, because I am leaving. The family is going to meet me at Highway 55, we’ll have the raft on the river by five, we’ll have floated down by seven, and we’ll be down at Ray’s Corner eating ice cream by 7:30.’”

But something new was waiting around the bend of the river of Osguthorpe’s life: a meeting with McKay School dean Mary Anne Prater, who asked, “Any interest in coming to BYU at some point?”

Osguthorpe said, “Maybe down the road. But we love our community, and we want to finish raising our family [in Idaho].”

He told his wife about Dean Prater’s interest. “I said, ‘I told her later, maybe, but not right now.’ And we both had the sudden inspired realization: ‘Oh no!’ It was clear in that moment that, if BYU offered us a position, we were going to come to Provo. We weren’t sure why that prompting came in such a powerful way, but it came, and we followed it, and here we are.”

Osguthorpe appreciates the strength of the McKay School’s “three pillars”—undergraduate teacher education and clinician preparation, graduate education, and research and external funding—built on the foundation of the BYU–Public School Partnership. “I want the McKay School to be a world-renowned and heaven-blessed school of education,” he said. “We have to be excellent in those areas to have the reputation we want and to call ourselves world-renowned. And we’ve got to be good in our partnerships. That is all encapsulated in the mission of this university, ‘to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life.’<sup>2</sup> That’s why I came here. That’s a profound part of me, not just as a member of the Church but as someone who, in a lot of ways, grew up in the McKay School.”

“WHEN YOU DO THINGS FROM YOUR SOUL, YOU FEEL A RIVER MOVING IN YOU, A JOY.”  
—RUMI

#### NOTES

1. Interpretation of Rumi’s poetry by Coleman Barks, in Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *We Are Three: New Rumi Poems* (Athens, Georgia: Maypop Books, 1987), 44.
2. The Mission of Brigham Young University (4 November 1981).

BY STACEY KRATZ

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRADLEY SLADE



*RICHARD OSGUTHORPE'S RESEARCH FOCUS—TEACHING MORALLY—HELPS PROFESSIONALS NAVIGATE THE CURRENT OF THEIR PRACTICE IN WAYS THAT ACCESS THE DEEPLY MOTIVATING REWARDS THAT COME FROM APPROACHING THEIR WORK WITH MORAL GOODNESS.*

# HIGH IDEALS AND NOBLE PURPOSES



“  
 YOU CAN JUSTIFY TEACHING MORALLY JUST  
 FOR THE SAKE OF TEACHING MORALLY. IT  
 NEEDS NO OTHER JUSTIFICATION. . . . IT PUTS  
 A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITY ON THE TEACHER.  
 BUT I ALSO LIKE TO SAY THAT THAT’S THE ONLY  
 WAY WE GAIN ACCESS TO THE REWARDS.”

—RICHARD OSGUTHORPE

**A** raft launched into a current will travel no matter what. Its occupants can steer it, but a raft on a river will, without question, end up downstream. And just as a river will move a raft, a teacher’s moral character will move a classroom.

Richard Osguthorpe is drawn to rivers: their flow, their challenge, and the opportunity for people to forge bonds on the water. In his research, the newest dean of the McKay School of Education explores a subject with as many eddies, currents, and challenges as his beloved rivers: the moral work of teaching.

“Whatever the lens you view morality and ethics through, there’s no question that that space is a rich one—and unavoidable in a school classroom,” Osguthorpe said. “You are going to engage morally with your students.”

In other words, in the current of a classroom’s day-to-day flow, a teacher’s moral character is always present, like a river guide’s paddle steering a raft. The only real question is the depth of the teacher’s “paddle,” or moral purpose.

It’s easy to miss the profound implications of the moral work of teaching. The quickly made connection is seeing that students might absorb their teacher’s moral character just as a raft’s passengers absorb a spray of river water.

However, Osguthorpe makes a clear distinction between “teaching morality” and “teaching morally.” The first involves character education, ethics instruction, and other curricula specifically aimed to impart value to students. Teaching morally aligns every practice with what is “good, right, virtuous, and caring,” he said. Teachers who infuse their work with moral goodness improve as teachers and also find fulfillment, enhanced common cause, and deeper connections to students.

“You can justify teaching morally just for the sake of teaching morally. It needs no other justification,” he said. “That moral approach to teaching is sometimes done outside the view of students. I could say, ‘My students will never know if I’m mailing it in on my preparation; I’m just going to wing it.’ But I’m not weighing [that] fact . . . in deciding how I should prepare. It

puts a lot of responsibility on the teacher. But I also like to say that that’s the only way we gain access to the rewards.”

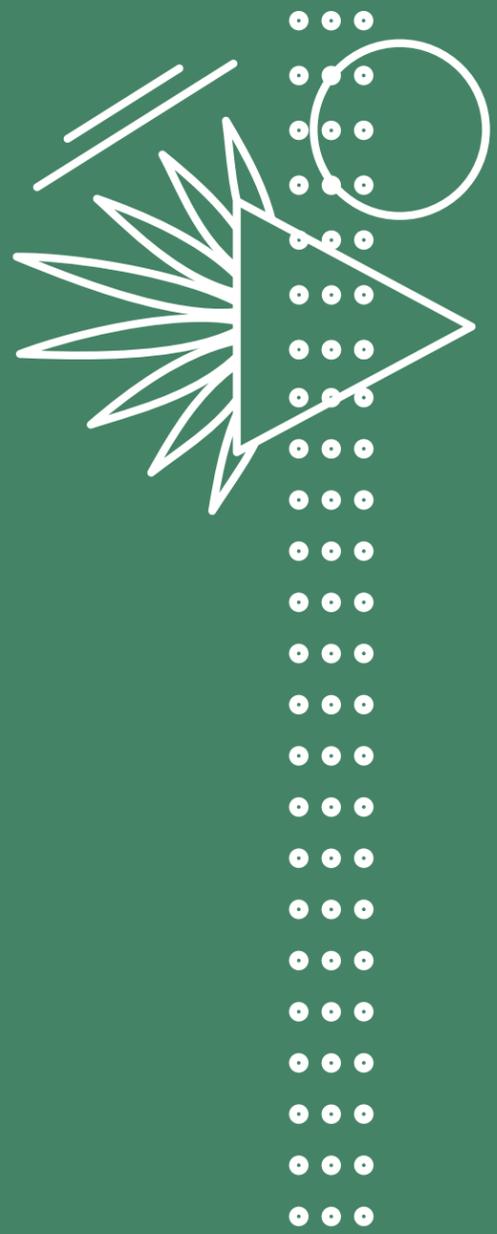
That moral work, Osguthorpe said, is obvious when McKay School students talk about why they want to teach: to help children, say, or to positively shape the future. “The purpose of the undergraduate class I teach is helping them understand the moral work of their future practice so that they can hold onto the high ideals and noble purposes we hold out for the education of the young,” he said. “If we can help them understand [that], they’ll be able to use those ideals as what one might call ‘north stars’ to guide their practice.”

That guidance is not limited to teachers, Osguthorpe said. “You can engage morally while working with someone with a speech disorder. You can do it respectfully, kindly, and compassionately. We can look through moral lenses at the professionals we’re preparing and determine the dispositions of a teacher, a clinician, a practitioner, a counselor, a leader, or an administrator that are needed to engage meaningfully in those practices.”

In all his efforts, Osguthorpe said, he is “riveted on” the idea that “no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42).

“We often talk about the power, but it’s all about the influence,” he said. “That’s all we’re trying to do. We are trying to exert influence. And that influence should be maintained *only* ‘by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, . . . without hypocrisy, and without guile.’

These are the spiritual elements of whatever the practice may be. When we do it in ways that align with those principles, we engage in the best kind of practice. But it also gives us access to those moral rewards. And those rewards last for the eternities.”



# Teaching Precedes *the* Miracle

**I**n December in Vanuatu, it's usually about 85 degrees, with maybe a few clouds in the sky or a little rain. Families might visit the beach the same day that they decorate a Christmas tree. And Vicki Cornish, '03, enjoyed her final days of break before returning to her third- and fourth-grade class at Port Vila International School.

"We had been home for six weeks together, and I had loved it," Cornish said. "But we also feel that this life is a time to work hard. You're supposed to get worn out trying to do what you can in this life."

Cornish is an experienced teacher, a world traveler, and a stay-at-home parent who has recently returned to the classroom. She is also a lifelong seeker of miracles, finding them throughout a globe-trotting life that began in Utah County and that has led her again and again to this island nation of about 310,000 people—as a missionary, as a tourist, and, these days, as a resident with her husband and three of their children.

*Vicki Cornish created a career—and a life—through leaps of faith.*

BY STACEY KRATZ PHOTOS COURTESY OF VICKI CORNISH

Her life is also one marked by continual teaching, although teaching wasn't originally Cornish's plan. As a native of Utah County and a daughter of travel-loving parents, Cornish started college at Brigham Young University–Hawaii "really terrified." She ended up having a "marvelous" experience, but she still hadn't found a major. That's when her mother encouraged her to spend a year teaching in Russia.

"I thought, 'Who goes to Russia voluntarily?' Plus, it was teaching kindergarteners, and that was another problem," she said. "I thought I'd have kids someday and love my own, but I didn't feel comfortable teaching. My experience in Russia changed it all."

In Russia, Cornish was freezing and could barely speak the language—but she was filled with joy and purpose.

"There was a moment that is still so clear to me now. I was walking down the hall with two students holding my hands, two being pulled by my ankles, and two running ahead," she recalled. "The Spirit said, 'This is where you're supposed to be, and this is what you're supposed to do.' It just felt so wonderful."

Cornish later taught in China, worked for a year in Utah, and then decided to serve a mission. She was called to the Fiji Suva Mission with paperwork for Vanuatu—which she'd never heard of. She fell in love with the nation's beauty, its resilient people, and its earthy language, Bislama. Serving in Vanuatu also confirmed her passion for education.

"Illiteracy is a huge problem here," Cornish said. "They're bright people here who mostly speak many languages but don't have educational opportunities."

Back home, Cornish threw herself into her own education, enrolling in the McKay School and receiving a bachelor's in elementary education from BYU. After earning a master's in math education from Southern Utah University, she

then taught in Utah's Nebo School District for nine years, using summers to indulge her love of travel.

"My brother lived in Samoa, so I spent a summer with him teaching," she said. "I went to Ghana for three summers at an orphanage. I wasn't married, so I thought, 'I'll just keep teaching, and in the summers I can travel.' And then I met this really awesome guy, and we ended up getting married."

Cornish's husband, Matt, proposed to her in Ghana a few months after they had met. He is a pediatrician with three older children—Emily, Tyler, and Amy—from a previous marriage. To that flock, he and Vicki have added Kate, Daniel, and Oliver. Vicki devoted herself to building her new family and found that her teaching experience was highly useful for a stay-at-home parent. She and her husband share an interest in travel and a passion for service. In fact, after proposing to her in Ghana, Matt left on a consulting tour of the country's health clinics.

"In traveling, you get to know and love people from other places," Cornish said. "Once you love someone, you are better able to listen



*"The scary and overwhelming times end up being the really growing times."*  
—VICKI CORNISH





to them. . . . It opens this floodgate, and you realize there's a whole world out there, and it's amazing and beautiful."

The couple visited Vanuatu for their first anniversary, and Matt Cornish started learning Bislama. After Cyclone Pam hit the islands in 2015, Matt returned as a medical relief worker with four missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ along to translate. When Matt returned, Vicki Cornish said, "His Bislama was amazing. The gift of tongues was alive and well."

The couple started discussing a move to Vanuatu. Finally, after their youngest older child had graduated from high school and after the sale of most of their possessions and their home, in mid-2019 the Cornishes and their three youngest children made the move.

Matt Cornish had contacts at Vanuatu's medical training hospital and planned to start a private concierge practice to enable him

to volunteer to help train new doctors. They enrolled the children in Port Vila International School and found a rental house nearby. But the practice was slow to start, due to bureaucratic snafus, and the family's savings were dwindling in a country in which milk costs \$6 a gallon and most groceries must be flown in.

When Kate Cornish's teacher left midyear, after the country's borders had been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Vicki Cornish was asked to take over. It was a rough start on short notice that involved balancing home and school needs, learning a new curriculum, and managing a large class of diverse learners. But Cornish also sees it as another miracle: her children now attend tuition free, and the extra income means they aren't reliant on their savings.

Other miracles happened around the same time and in the same unexpected ways. Cyclone Harold hit Vanuatu hard in April 2020, but the crisis eliminated Matt Cornish's bureaucratic challenges, as the country needed his help with relief work. When Australian friends offered the home they owned to the Cornishes rent free, their current landlord, a French citizen who does not live in Vanuatu, matched that offer.

"We feel like it's heaven helping us have these opportunities that allow me to teach and Matt to keep doing the work he's doing," Vicki Cornish said. "I just know God loves His children. It makes sense to me that if one of His children has this skill or talent to offer, He would say, 'Here, do this.' It's been hard and scary, and I've been in tears multiple times, thinking, 'I don't think I can teach

these kids in a way they deserve and be a mom and be a wife and be a person.' And then you get up the next day and you pray, go, and do it again, and you look back and see how far you've come. The scary and overwhelming times end up being the really growing times. They end up being such a tender part of the whole experience."

Vicki Cornish isn't sure how long she will teach beyond 2022; she'd love to go back to working with a literacy program for older students and adult women that she started soon after arriving in Vanuatu in 2019.

"These women want the power of language, the power of knowledge," she said. "Not even to do some specific job, just to be able to speak for themselves."

One rainy Thursday, Vicki Cornish had a literacy appointment with a girl who had had very little schooling. Due to the muddy, difficult conditions, Cornish thought about staying home. But she couldn't get the girl's eagerness to learn out of her mind, so she made the trip and found herself part of one more miracle.

The girl said to Cornish, "You came! I woke up this morning and said, 'It's Thursday, so we'll have our class!' But my mother said, 'No, we won't do the class because it's raining.' Then I knelt down and prayed that you would come. And then you came, because when I grow up, I need to know things so I know what to do for myself."

Cornish said, "And I just kept thinking, 'What if I hadn't come?'"



*"It makes sense to me that if one of His children has this skill or talent to offer, He would say, 'Here, do this.'"*

—VICKI CORNISH





## Alumni Happenings

McKay Today helps connect you to your former classmates and teachers.



### Alumna Receives Her District's Top Honor

After 36 years of teaching, alumna **CYNTHIA STEWART PEARSON** recently received Utah's Granite Education Foundation Excel Award. This award honors excellence in teaching and is a testament to the dedicated service that Pearson has provided her students and district throughout her career.

Pearson graduated from the McKay School in 1984 with a bachelor's degree in elementary education. In 2011 she earned a master's degree in education from Southern Utah University.

For Pearson, teaching is a "wonderful adventure." She crafts her teaching to reflect her own personality and to nurture the personalities of her students. Pearson fosters interest by creating assignments that help students understand concepts in memorable ways. While teaching a sixth-grade unit on the French Revolution, Pearson transformed her classroom into 18th-century France for a day. Students role-played French peasants and clergymen while Pearson took on the role of Marie Antoinette. Pearson told her students that she "dreamed of being a princess, but being a classroom teacher was almost as good because it made [her] a queen!"

After 36 years in the classroom, Pearson has learned that she needs a good work-life balance. She cherishes spending holidays and summers with her family. This award-winning educator's most important advice for new teachers? "Live a balanced life and give time to your family, your career, and yourself."



### From Student to Teacher in a Pandemic

For **CAROLYN PETERSEN**, finding a job was tough after graduating from the McKay School in elementary education in December 2019. However, her professor Teresa Leavitt wasn't about to give up. "She was like, 'I'm going to get this girl a job if it kills me,'" Petersen said.

After applying for jobs from California to Boston, Petersen's education paid off: she is now a third-grade teacher at Challenge Charter School in Glendale, Arizona. Despite her stressful postgraduation experiences, Petersen said, "I like it here. It turned out okay."

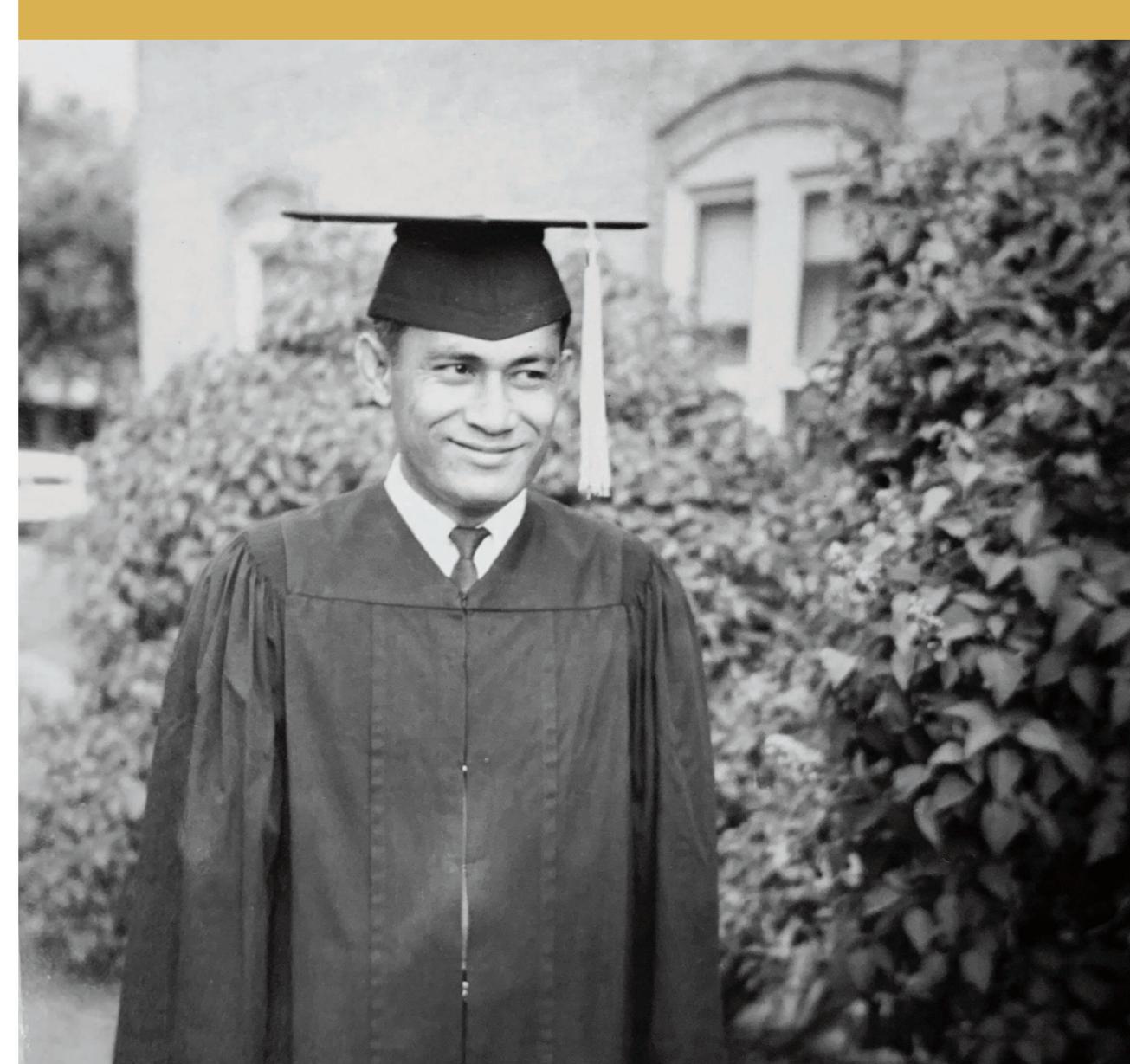
In 2020–2021, Petersen taught both remote and in-person students. Over time, many of the online students rejoined the classroom, which was an "adventure," as Petersen phrased it. Sometimes students changed the dynamic by switching to in-person

attendance; other times when Petersen needed to spend extra time with her online students, she then looked up to find a chaotic classroom needing her attention.

Multiple groups supported Petersen's unique first year of teaching. The organization Two Screens for Teachers gave her a second computer monitor so she could see her online students and her lesson materials at the same time.

Fellow teachers and school administrators also helped. The third-grade teachers in Petersen's school plan many of their lessons together, keep an eye on the class of any teacher who needs a break, and share extra materials.

Although pandemic teaching has been difficult for her as a first-year teacher, she exclaimed, "I feel like I can tackle any obstacle from here on out!"



### Bringing Science to Life Across the South Pacific

**PAGO PAGO AFUALO'S** educational journey started with a literal voyage—a steamboat trip from American Samoa to Hawaii. And his journey has continued for decades and has crisscrossed the South Pacific.

Afualo was part of the very first class at Brigham Young University–Hawaii. After earning an associate's degree, Afualo transferred to Brigham Young University in 1957 to study education. Afualo graduated in 1961 from the BYU College of Education, which would become the David O. McKay School of Education.

Afualo first taught science at a Church-owned college in Western Samoa. Three years later he moved to Hawaii, teaching science at several schools—including Kahuku High School—for most of his career. He later taught three more years in American Samoa.

Afualo has a passion for the experimental aspect of science. Even at age 92, he can remember the student experiment groups he formed and the day one student burned her hand with sulfuric acid. "We would do experiments day

and day out," Afualo said. In later years, former students fondly recalled Afualo standing in front of his class and joking, "Hmmm, I wonder what would happen if we mixed this chemical with this chemical?"

Now retired, Afualo still enjoys designing experiments. He lives in Hawaii and likes cultivating fruit trees, riding his scooter around town, and watching general conference talks. His educational journey took him across the sea many times, but he never lost track of his love for teaching.



# I CHOSE TO MAJOR IN EDUCATION BECAUSE...



Teaching is so rewarding. I have always loved teaching someone something new and then seeing that lightbulb go off when they have finally understood. Teaching a classroom full of students who are just learning many new concepts is exciting, and I love it! I also enjoy the relationships between staff, my BYU colleagues, and my students. Those relationships are just as rewarding as teaching. Overall, I chose education because I find teaching both exciting and fulfilling.



—KATIE HIMES, '22

I want to be in the helping business. I can't think of any better way to help people than by giving them an enriching educational foundation from which kids can gain a love for learning and become lifelong learners.



—PRESTON ADAMS, '22



I want to make learning a positive experience in a comfortable environment in which my students feel safe making mistakes and also become good humans.

—HANNAH CLARIDGE, '22

It has just always felt right! A few months ago, my mom found a drawing that I had made in preschool on which I had written, "When I grow up, I will be a teacher," so it has always been something I've wanted to do. In high school I tutored a few friends, and I discovered that my favorite feeling in the world was helping someone understand something that they didn't before. When that lightbulb goes off and their eyes light up, it just brings me so much joy! That is why I chose to major in education.

—ROSARIA MORREALE BOREN, '22



There is nothing more gratifying than seeing children learn, grow, and succeed. Being able to be a part of that process is so amazing!

—NATALIE CARLSON, '22

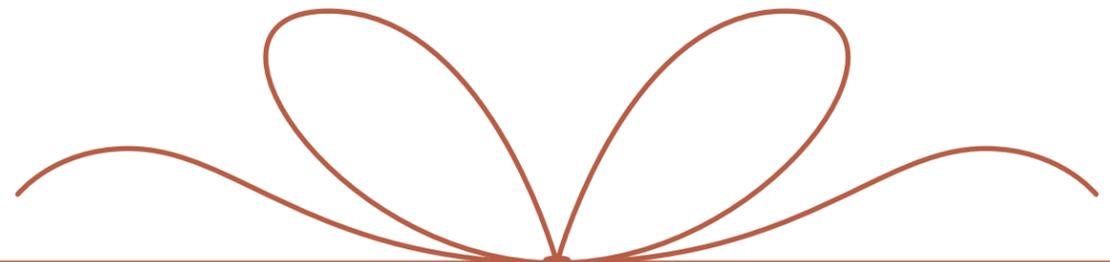


I want to help be a force to change the idea that one cannot be both an academic and an elementary school teacher. You can be empowered, driven, and intelligent while also having a passion for being a kind, nurturing, and selfless educator.

—KEARAN NELSON, '22



## A GIFT TO THE MCKAY SCHOOL



The David O. McKay School of Education has recently been blessed with a donation from long-time Brigham Young University supporter and donor Ira A. Fulton. Fulton recently gifted six endowed chairs to BYU, one of which is the Mary Lou Fulton Chair in the McKay School. The new chair is named after Fulton's wife, Mary Lou, who passed away in 2015.

The Fultons originally donated four chairs to BYU in 2005, and now six more chairs have been named after members of the Fulton family. An endowed chair has been given to all 10 academic colleges at BYU. When the original chairs were established, Mary Lou shared, "BYU is a special place. Ira and I feel that every time we set foot on campus, we're just

happy to be in a situation that allows us to play a role in helping students and faculty succeed."

In the past, the Fulton chairs have been gifted in support of faculty and student projects. However, the donation for the McKay School is intended to be used for student aid, which includes scholarships, internships, and other experiential and inspired learning opportunities. The funds will be administered by a committee within the college.

"My hope is that these endowments will help students reach their goals and live their dreams," said Ira. "I became involved with the Y because of the caliber of the faculty and administrators; I stay involved because of the students."

Are you searching for somewhere meaningful to give?  
[education.byu.edu/alumni/giving](https://education.byu.edu/alumni/giving)



“In traveling, you get to know and love people from other places. Once you love someone, you are better able to listen to them. . . . It opens this floodgate, and you realize there’s a whole world out there, and it’s amazing and beautiful.”

—VICKI CORNISH, '03

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[ TEAR HERE ]



# Top Researchers *and* Top Teachers

**BYU McKay School** faculty produce world-class research while maintaining a strong commitment to teaching and mentoring undergraduate students.

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY IS A **TOP PRODUCER** OF FUTURE DOCTORAL STUDENTS. HERE ARE THE RANKINGS IN THE MCKAY SCHOOL'S FIELDS:

**#2** Education research

**#4** Teaching fields

**#8** Education administration

**#10** Teacher education

*Higher Ed Datastories: "Baccalaureate Origins of Doctoral Recipients," 9 December 2020*

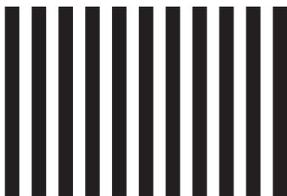
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## ALUMNI UPDATE

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Are you currently employed in education?  Yes  No City/State/Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Your position (check all that apply): \_\_\_\_\_ Length of time: \_\_\_\_\_

- Administrator  Counselor  Media specialist  
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