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# Northwest

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## CLASS ACTS



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Photography by Darren Whitley

***When today's Bearcats graduate with an education degree, they're carrying on a 100-year tradition, but more importantly, they're prepared to enter a profession that can change the world. Grace Combs, Lorna Simon, Dave and Rozann Seela, Amy Schreck and Andy Schneider are probably well aware of their incredible importance to society, but day to day, they're not thinking about that. They're thinking about how to keep kindergarteners from painting the walls or how to explain science to fourth-graders. We celebrate six not-famous, not-wealthy people who, by going to work every day, make a difference in the world without ever making the history books.***

For thousands of educators, their passion for teaching and helping children bloomed at Northwest. And what a great place to start! After all, Northwest's earliest roots began 100 years ago as a Normal School – an institution dedicated to training teachers. In that span, Northwest has changed names, presidents, degrees and even school colors. But one thing remains – Northwest's commitment to preparing educators.

In the first years, an elementary certificate was awarded to nearly 50 students just a few months after the school opened. That certificate granted eligibility to teach for two years in a public school in Missouri. In 1917, Northwest awarded its first bachelor of science in education. Today, students can receive a bachelor's, master's and specialist in education at Northwest. There's even a cooperative educational doctorate program offered.

Just like the six teachers profiled, many of today's education students choose Northwest based on the reputation and results from their teachers who were educated at Northwest. By offering on-campus field experiences at Horace Mann Lab School or off campus in the challenging urban environment of Kansas City, the education program has evolved into a state and national leader in addressing issues facing schools of the 21st century.

Northwest, its education program and the teachers it produces are clearly class acts.



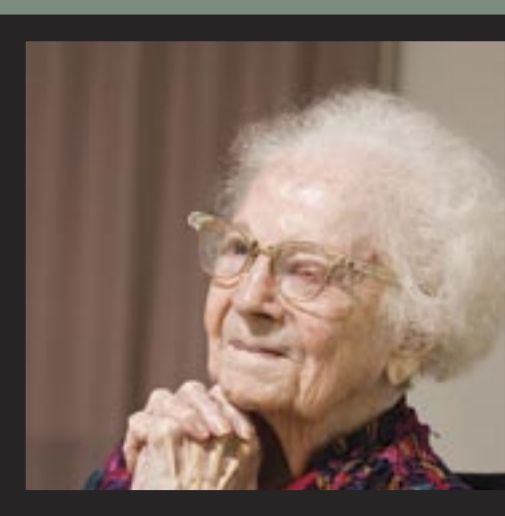
# GRACE MORRIS COMBS '30

Grace, who recently celebrated her 101st birthday, began her career as the sole teacher in several one-room country schools in northwest Missouri. She later taught high school English, grammar and literature at several area schools before retiring from the Craig School District.

**When did you realize you wanted to be a teacher?** When I was quite young, people would ask me what I was going to do, and I'd always say I was going to be a teacher. At the time, the only other professions for women were at the post office or the telephone office. I was the first one in my family to go to college. A family banker loaned me all the money I needed to go to college – \$150.

**What was it like teaching in a one-room schoolhouse?** I walked about a mile to school. That's how students got there, too. Once I was there, I had to do it all. I was even responsible for pulling together the school plays. We had an outdoor toilet, of course, and a coal fire furnace. The schoolhouse was lit by gas lamps, but we only used those on special occasions.

**What do you think about students today?** I hear they just don't cooperate. Today, I wouldn't be able to teach anybody. I just wouldn't have any control over the kids like I did back then. Years ago, kids were extremely respectful.



# ANDY SCHNEIDER '00, '01

This is Andy's first year as a physical education and health teacher at Franklin Elementary School in Liberty. He is also an assistant football coach at Liberty High School. He was previously an instructor and offensive line football coach at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin.

**Are there other educators in your family?** My dad was an elementary school principal in Excelsior Springs for more than 30 years. I knew I wanted to be a teacher because he was such a good role model, and I saw the positive influence he had on kids.

**Did you have any inspirational professors at Northwest?** I learned so much from Gina Scott, Janet Reusser and Sandi Mull. I also spent a lot of time in observation at Horace Mann, which was great experience.

**What is your biggest surprise about elementary students?** The amount of energy they have! At this age, they're so excited about everything that's going on around them.

**What is your biggest surprise about the teaching profession?** I'm constantly amazed at how much of a family atmosphere there is among teachers.

**What's the most challenging part of being a teacher?** Finding each kid's niche is sometimes a challenge, and getting to know where they come from and what they want to do. Being a PE teacher is great, because each kid at this age wants to get up and be active.

**Favorite quote:** "Be quiet!" and "Get your hands off him!"



# DAVE '77 (MASTER'S) AND ROZANN '74 SEELA

Since 1982, Dave has been a physics, chemistry, ecology and principals of technology teacher at Clarinda (Iowa) High School. He is also an adjunct geology instructor at Iowa Western Community College. He and his wife, Rozann, a former vocal music teacher, are co-owners of Seela Science Inc. and The Science Connection.

**Favorite quote:** Dave – “A mind expanded by a new idea never regains its former dimension.”

**Have you received any awards for teaching?** Dave – I was the Wal-Mart 2004 Southwest Iowa Teacher of the Year and the Wal-Mart 2004 Iowa Teacher of the Year. Wal-Mart awarded me \$11,000 to use any way I wanted, so I created a scholarship for students from Clarinda High School.

**How has the teaching profession changed since you entered the field?**

Dave – Education has become more of a political football than it once was. There are also a lot of extra requirements and expectations in and out of the classroom, which means a lot more paperwork and less kid work.

**What are some items you used when you first started teaching that are not used today?** Dave – Chalkboards, film projectors, mimeograph machines, slide

projectors, slide rules, typewriters.

**What's the best part of being a teacher?** Dave

– The kids. These kids have dreams, hopes and ambitions,

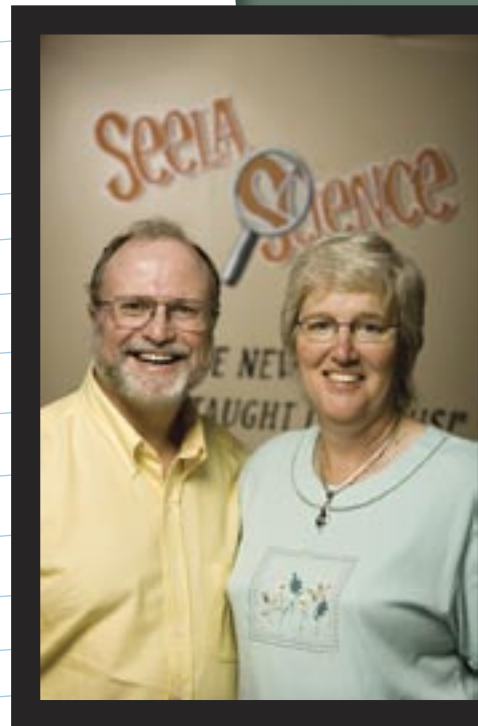
and it's exciting to tap into it and be a part of it. You kind of see yourself in those kids. When they succeed, you see a little bit of yourself. When they're crying, you feel it yourself. When they're happy, you're happy. When they're hurting, you do too.

**How did The Science Connection and Seela Science get started?**

Rozann – We started in a spare room at home about 10 years ago. Dave was writing for the U. S. Space Foundation on a National Science Foundation grant. At the same time, I was hired to travel the country conducting workshops to train elementary teachers in hands-on science. With Dave and I both being teachers, we could see ways that science could be taught so much better. Therefore, we started our own business with the goal in mind of helping the teachers and kids understand science and therefore understand where science fits in our everyday world.

**What makes The Science Connection and Seela Science successful?**

Rozann – We help elementary teachers relax and realize science is understandable and can easily be taught to elementary students if it's put simply enough and applied to what's going on around them.



# AMY McCLEMONS SCHRECK '88

Amy is a first-grade teacher at Eugene Field Elementary School in Maryville. Previously, she taught at Nodaway-Holt and North Nodaway elementary schools in northwest Missouri and St. Gabriel's and Ravenwood Elementary in Kansas City. She was also the preschool coordinator at St. Gregory's in Maryville.

**Why did you become a teacher?** I love kids – all ages. I enjoy the excitement that they bring.

**How has the profession changed throughout career?** Because of programs like No Child Left Behind, the demand on teachers is much greater than when I first started teaching.

**What's the biggest change you've seen in students?** I think the children are coming to kindergarten more prepared

because of the influence of early childhood education. Unfortunately, they're exposed to a lot more than they used to, therefore, they're faced with issues that are of more an adult nature. That's one reason why I teach more character education now. It's something all children need to be healthy, young adults.

**What life lessons do you teach?** I try to teach honesty, responsibility, respect and perseverance. I teach children to treat people the way they want to be treated. I think kids truly know the difference between right and wrong.

**Favorite quote:** "To whom much is given, much is expected." Not everyone can work with kids. I believe each person is given a gift, and they need to capitalize on it and do their best.



# LORNA STEVENS SIMON '68

Lorna is a kindergarten through 12th grade art teacher at Falls City (Neb.) Sacred Heart, where she's taught since 1984. She has also taught at Briarcliff Elementary School in the North Kansas City School District, Eugene Field Elementary School in Maryville and at Falls City (Neb.) Public School.

**When did you realize you wanted to be a teacher?** It became clear to me my freshman year at Northwest. My grandfather was a principal in Czechoslovakia, and my mother wanted to go to college, but World War II came along and she wasn't able to go. I was proud to be able to become a teacher.

**What are the advantages of teaching in a private school?** A private school is smaller, more intimate. You know everyone so well, and it's fun to follow the students in their sports and other activities from when they were kindergartners all the

way through to their high school graduation.

**What's the most challenging part of being a teacher?** The biggest challenge, since I teach K-12 art, is coming up with different levels of art projects and trying to get a good result from every student. The students like to come to art, and I want to make it enjoyable for them.

**What life lessons do you teach?** I try to teach my students to see beauty in the world around them. I want them to be aware of nature, to be a happy person and to enjoy life and the things around them.

**What's the worst part of teaching?** Paperwork.

**If you had to choose a profession other than teaching, what would it be?** I would like to have been a tour guide in Europe. ■

