



Public Education Foundation

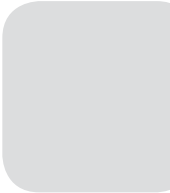
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A Report from the Weldon F. Osborne Foundation and
the Public Education Foundation of Chattanooga



THE LASTING DIFFERENCE

One small foundation's investment in reshaping urban
teaching and how it paid off for Chattanooga.



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How can **one foundation** have a **big positive effect** on education?

With a \$22.5 million endowment, the Chattanooga, Tennessee-based Weldon F. Osborne Foundation is relatively small. But that didn't stop it from making a big change in the lives of teachers and students at urban elementary and middle schools in Chattanooga. This report is the story of what happened when the Osborne Foundation had the courage to ask some difficult questions and take a calculated risk, the humility to partner as an equal with other organizations, and the imagination to envision lasting change at some long-suffering schools.

Although small, the Osborne Foundation has an expressed desire to be very intentional in its grantmaking. "We could donate every penny of our required payout to various organizations without doing any deeper exploration, but we want to be more strategic," says Gene Burnett, Osborne Foundation trustee. **"WE WANT TO INVEST IN THINGS THAT WILL MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE."**

Coupling this desire with the Foundation's interest in education, Burnett and his fellow trustees knew that there must be a way for the Foundation to become involved in school improvement — but where? And how?



Targeting One Part of a Larger Problem

In 2000, an independent public policy institute ranked all 860 of Tennessee's public elementary schools according to student reading achievement on mandatory state assessments. Their report named nine of Hamilton County's 48 public elementary schools to the "top 20 lowest scoring" list for the state. Those nine schools, all in the city of Chattanooga, had more than 90 percent of students on free or reduced lunch programs — a typical indicator for low-income communities. To combat the study's findings, another local, larger foundation, the Benwood Foundation, decided to partner with the Public Education Foundation (PEF) in Chattanooga and the Hamilton County Department of Education (HCDE) to ensure that no Hamilton County elementary school would remain "low performing." This partnership became known as the Benwood Initiative.

The Benwood Initiative embraced Chattanooga's nine low-performing elementary schools with a \$5 million, five-year grant, matched by \$2.5 million from PEF. At the heart of this initiative, the partners targeted two key hot spots: deep-seated reading deficiency issues among students and the need for more teachers to be well-equipped to deal with the challenge of turning these urban schools, classrooms and students around. After learning about the Benwood Initiative, the Osborne Foundation was ready to lend a hand.

"We noticed that teacher turnover in urban schools was a big problem. All these schools either had brand new teachers who were

overwhelmed and didn't stay long, or else 20-year veterans with an eye on retirement. There was no continuity for the schools or their students. We asked the Public Education Foundation and Benwood Foundation what we could do to help, and the idea of a no-cost master's degree program for teachers, with a specific concentration on literacy in the context of urban teaching, was born."

The master's degree program, eventually named the Osborne Fellows program, fit with the Benwood Initiative's goal to improve reading scores in the nine "Benwood Schools." It also melded nicely with the Public Education Foundation's vision for improving teaching in Hamilton County schools.

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"The idea that a small private foundation like Osborne would actually go to another, larger one like Benwood, and ask to play a part in a groundbreaking, ambitious initiative is pretty extraordinary," says Dan Challener, president of PEF. "To me, that's an example of a real desire to do what's best for the community and not necessarily what will give the foundation the most control or the 'safest return' on its grant dollars — although we're all quite pleased with the results."

The Broad Context: The Benwood Initiative

The Osborne Fellows program was a part of the larger Benwood Initiative, begun by the Benwood Foundation, the Public Education Foundation (PEF) and the Hamilton County Department of Education in 2001 to bring nine under-performing urban elementary schools in Chattanooga up to or beyond Tennessee state assessment standards. The Benwood Initiative focused in particular on boosting reading skills for students and strengthening the involvement, skills and professional development of teachers within the nine "Benwood Schools."

The Benwood Initiative began with a \$5 million commitment from Benwood Foundation, matched by \$2.5 million from PEF. One school was closed in 2005, leaving a total of eight schools. In 2007, the Benwood Foundation extended its commitment, with the potential to add another \$7 million to the Initiative and incorporate eight more schools. The intention is to spread the work to all 48 elementary schools in the district.

The Benwood Foundation was established in 1944 and has a longstanding involvement in supporting various aspects of Chattanooga civic life. For more information, visit www.benwood.org



Osborne At-A-Glance

- Participants earn a master's degree in urban education and literacy at no cost
- Two-year program, including summer semesters
- Classes seminar-style on Saturdays, in elementary school buildings
- Smaller study groups twice a month, after school
- Coaches work with study groups within each cohort and visit in classrooms
- Course content focuses on socio/cultural factors for students, classroom management and instructional techniques, assessment, reading emphasis, and action research
- Cohort size of 15 as a goal
- Graduates must remain in service at urban public schools within Hamilton County for four years after finishing the program
- 43 teachers completed the Osborne Fellows program in five years

The Weldon F. Osborne Foundation

Started in 1959, the Osborne Foundation today has assets of \$22.5 million. The Foundation focuses exclusively on the betterment of the Chattanooga community, across a range of issues from the arts, to community building, to education and health. In 2001, the Osborne Foundation decided to invest more significantly in a brand new effort to transform low-performing elementary schools in the school district. This was the Foundation's first foray into a more strategic, multi-year, potentially high-risk type of grantmaking and community partnership. This new venture came to be called the Osborne Fellows program.

The Osborne Foundation's involvement began with one year of support for research and program development. During that time, PEF explored best practices, developed a Request for Proposal and distributed it to a dozen universities, including the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga (UTC). The leadership and faculty of the school of education at UTC jumped at the chance to create a new urban master's degree program, completely re-designing both course content and delivery to create what became the Osborne Fellows program. A panel of local and national advisors reviewed the proposals and ultimately selected UTC. Upon approval of the proposed program, the Osborne Foundation committed a total of \$1.5 million over five years, approximately one-third of its total grantmaking budget. For a small foundation, it was a huge commitment. The funding was matched by an additional \$500,000 from PEF.



Putting it All Together



PEF agreed to take the lead role in the conception and ongoing operation and management of the program: coordinating with all involved parties to develop initial program design; working with principals to recruit and support Fellows from their schools; overseeing the sub-contract with the university and consulting with faculty on curriculum and academic matters; managing the steering committee and the advisory committee process; securing coaches from the district and overseeing the coaching aspect; coordinating semi-annual learning trips to cities with outstanding literacy instruction; planning the annual celebration; serving as liaison with the evaluators; and providing national exposure for the program. To handle the amount of work involved, PEF retained the services of Leslie Graitcer, an expert consultant in education philanthropy, to oversee all aspects of the program. Formerly the executive director of an educational grantmaking foundation, Graitcer served as both coordinator and coach for all of the involved parties, helping PEF to guide the development and implementation of the program and to secure additional funding and exposure as the program grew in scope.

While the Osborne Foundation had no intention of micro-managing the program, it welcomed the invitation to play a collaborative role in partnership with the other program funders and leaders.

This partnership proved to be
unique, groundbreaking
and essential to the success
of the Osborne Fellows program.

Representatives from the Osborne Foundation, the Benwood Foundation, PEF, UTC, HCDE and many of the Benwood schools themselves created an active steering committee. Together, they asked each other the hard questions about whom to recruit and how to structure the experience. They discussed openly and honestly what was working and what needed to change throughout the course of the program. And they tackled the answers together.

“The Osborne Foundation functioned as a true partner and not just a funder,” says Challenger. “Their ongoing presence at the table was a valuable asset. Gene’s input and questions helped keep us true to our original mission, but also gave us more flexibility to adapt and improve the program as we went along. Having each of our organizations so actively involved on the steering committee helped us better evaluate ourselves and our work. The openness of this partnership provided us with the flexibility to adapt and to be accountable to ourselves, and to be responsive to the needs of our students and faculty.”

“This partnership and this steering committee were like nothing I’ve seen before,” says Burnett. “In many communities, there is a gap, or even a rift, between higher education institutions and public schools. UTC and HCDE had worked together before, but there were still some gaps in that relationship. Having everyone at the table bridged those gaps and opened the door to better understanding, increased mutual respect among all partners, and hopefully created a strong likelihood of more collaborations down the road.”

Together, the steering committee also recruited a national advisory team, made up of experts and leaders in urban education and teacher preparation, to provide honest criticism and thought-provoking questions that ultimately would strengthen the program further. Members included education deans from Johns Hopkins University, Temple University, Bank Street College, UCLA and Connecticut State, and the president of the Center for Teaching Quality, among others.





“The advisory team asked us some tough questions and provided many insights...”

“The advisory team asked us some tough questions and provided many insights about the role of coaches, principals and leadership training as part of the Osborne Fellows program,” says Ray Swoffard, deputy superintendent of Hamilton County Schools and steering committee member. “Plus, they gave our teachers great places to visit as part of their field studies.”

In 2005, the National Education Association (NEA) Foundation became involved in the Osborne Fellows program through a fortuitous set of circumstances. The Osborne steering committee was considering expanding the program to middle school teachers in order to address both a desire for more applicants than were being generated from the elementary schools alone and an awareness of the benefits of including teachers in schools to which elementary students would matriculate. At the same time, the NEA Foundation was looking for a way to invest in “closing the achievement gap” in Hamilton County. The NEA Foundation had a particular interest in urban middle schools and they became enthusiastic about the Osborne Fellows concept as part of the design for turning those schools around.

“In some ways, you could say that the stars aligned to allow us to include middle schools in the Osborne program,” says Challenger. “Our shared interest in teacher quality and retention made this a good match.”

“Recruiting teachers from the middle schools wasn’t part of the original program when we funded it,” says Burnett, “but I did wonder about what would happen when kids from one of these improved elementary schools got to middle schools where they might end up with a teacher who wasn’t so well prepared for them. Extending the program to middle school teachers just made sense.”



Profile: Tracy Crosby

In August 2007, Tracy Crosby started her fourth year as a 5th grade teacher at Clifton Hills Elementary in a whirlwind of activity. Five days before school started, she still had to put materials up on the walls in her classroom, unlock the secrets of the Promethean Board (an electronic whiteboard), hook up her classroom computers and sort through a large collection of books. This was perhaps not so different from other teachers, but Tracy had also just finished co-authoring her school's new discipline plan and was planning her research project for the second year of her Osborne Fellows experience as well.

"This year, because of Osborne, I feel more prepared and want to try new things," she says in the calm moments before the first day of school. "I feel I understand myself and my students more. The biggest eye-opener in the Osborne program so far has been learning about families and children who are dealing with generational versus situational poverty. I've begun to interact more with my students' families and learned a great deal."

A trip with her Osborne classmates last year to Denver proved valuable in developing the discipline plan. "We adopted a plan that they used in Denver as the basis of ours," she explains. "I'm eager to see if our discipline plan works. Last year there was too much stress and inconsistency around discipline. This year we'll concentrate more on positive rewards, school-wide."

By mid October, Tracy's year is shaping up to be one of the best she's ever had. She's excited about her research project, which focuses on journaling to help her students with both reading and writing skills. She'll use the state writing assessment tool to measure the impact and compare her students' scores to those in other classes.

Three months later, the journaling project is going very well. Tracy focuses on providing her students with strategies that they can use to create their own prompts for writing. "My students like the ability to pick and choose, and as a result they like writing more," she says. "They are much more interested in writing than the class I had last year. And they seem to apply more of what I teach them."

During the course of the year, the students keep personal notebooks for writing, and often ask, “Ms. Crosby, are we going to learn a new strategy for our journals today?”

It’s clear to see that Tracy’s own enthusiasm comes from her personal lifelong passion for reading, writing and teaching. “I always wanted to teach, although I almost went into journalism instead,” says the Florida native, who has also taught 2nd, 3rd and 8th grade during her nine-year career. “I like teaching different things, and I loved to read growing up.”

This passion and her increased knowledge through the Osborne Fellows program leave Tracy hungry for more. “I wish more of the Osborne curriculum and more of my in-school time could focus on writing,” she sighs. But she knows that she has a full cohort of other Osborne Fellows at Clifton Hills with which to infuse writing into the curriculum. She likes the way the cohort approach within each class of Osborne Fellows and the cadre of Fellows within her school all support each other and work together. “Our cohort has really created some strong bonds. We’ve got some strong personalities and we’re realistic about our teaching and not afraid to speak out. These teachers are some of the most amazing teachers I’ve ever known. We’ve grown together. And this school in particular is a tight-knit group.”



Of course, not everything was rosy all the time. The Osborne coursework seemed unwieldy at times, and finding and paying for babysitters for her young son during her out-of-school class time and study groups was burdensome as well. But there were many classes she enjoyed and her research had become more engaging as the year goes on.

“Our trip to New York last semester was very exciting because it reaffirmed what we’re doing in our school,” she says. Her cohort toured schools in Harlem and the Upper West Side, and saw a new writing curriculum being applied with great success. “It’s something I’d like to try, too,” says Tracy.

As her last semester as an Osborne Fellow begins, Tracy’s classroom hums along like clockwork. She incorporates many techniques to help students improve their reading and writing skills. As her class reads together about the Wright brothers, they write down facts on sticky notes and place them on a classroom chart that helps them understand “what I think I know,” “confirmed,” “new information,” and “wonderings.” They practice “popcorn reading,” in which one student reads a paragraph aloud and then exclaims, “popcorn!” to pass the reading to the next student. They pause intermittently to discuss aspects of the story — the bravery of the Wright brothers, their relationship, their perseverance — to enhance comprehension skills. And they play “hot spot,” in which one student stands to field five questions about the reading from other students.

Finally, it is journal time. Tracy gathers her kids together on a rug and introduces a new strategy: reading something from an earlier writing and highlighting a topic or idea to expand upon. She uses her own journal as an example, and the students begin to grasp the concept easily. They flip to clean pages in their journals and begin to write.

Their enthusiasm for journaling is beginning to pay off. Tracy’s class has scored two points higher (moving from 3 to 5 on a scale of 6) on a mid-year timed writing assessment and increasing by 18% in a separate, motivational assessment.

For Tracy, being an Osborne Fellow seems to re-affirm her deep commitment to teaching in the schools where she’s needed most. “I’ve always taught in urban or semi-urban schools. At first, I just wanted a job and that’s where the openings were. But after awhile, I realized that God places me here because I can handle these kids. I can be firm and fair, but still have a relationship with them and teach them. I’ve had offers to go other places, but I had an epiphany that I’ve been placed here because I can do this well.”

How the Program Worked



Principals in the elementary and middle schools proved to be a huge asset for identifying and recruiting students.

The mission of the Osborne Fellows program is to “develop, support, honor and retain exceptional teachers committed to Chattanooga’s urban schools.” The goal is to create a critical mass of highly skilled, strongly committed teachers who understand and can successfully address the specific challenges of low-income urban students and who will remain in service at the schools where they are needed most. To help address the issue of retention, the Osborne Foundation insisted that teachers participating in this program stay in one of Hamilton County’s urban schools for at least four years after completing the master’s program, or else repay all tuition and expenses.

Identifying and Recruiting

The first challenges came in identifying and recruiting applicants. “We needed to identify teachers who were well-rooted and well-grounded, and already doing a good job,” says Swoffard. “They needed to have the maturity to handle the workload.”

To that end, the Osborne Fellows program targeted teachers who had at least three years’ experience in one of the nine Benwood elementary schools. (Later, that was revised to two years of experience and included the five middle schools.)

Once prospective candidates were identified, they had to be encouraged to apply and shown the value of participating in the program; they also had to understand that they would undergo a rigorous selection process before being invited to participate, and would be required to sign a form stating their commitment to remain within the district’s urban schools for four years after graduation.

“One of the challenges was finding teachers who were comfortable adding the demands of the master’s program on top of their regular workload. We also had to find those who were not afraid of the four-year commitment after graduation,” says Swoffard. “In our second year, we only had five teachers in the cohort. That could have spelled the end of the program, but thanks to the honest discussions and flexibility of the steering committee, and a well-timed grant from the NEA Foundation, we were able to open up the Osborne Fellows program to teachers in the middle schools that are fed by the Benwood schools.”

Principals in the elementary and middle schools proved to be a huge asset for identifying and recruiting students. For those principals who actively promoted the program among their faculty, there has been very positive payoff in terms of quality teaching. For example, at Clifton Hills Elementary, Principal Krystal Scarbrough has had a total of 14 Osborne Fellows — nearly half of her total teaching staff.

“Recruiting that first year was just giving them information and rallying them around the opportunity,” Scarbrough remembers. “Many of mine were veterans. They in turn recruited from within their grades to subsequent Osborne cohorts. As each cohort went through the program, they reported on what they were learning and trained the rest of us at faculty meetings. That sparked an interest for other participants.”

Course Content and Structure

In order to succeed, teachers participating in the Osborne Fellows program had to perceive its course content as valuable and relevant to their day-to-day work as urban teachers. They also had to believe that the structure of the program would work within the context of their everyday lives and commitments to work, family and other areas. This required both the teacher preparation knowledge of UTC’s faculty and the front-line experience and wisdom about the “real” world of Chattanooga’s urban students and teachers that only Hamilton County Schools could provide.

The two entities worked together to create a curriculum that focused on five areas deemed critical to strengthening teaching capacity and improving student achievement in urban schools: socio/cultural factors for students, including issues of poverty, family dynamics and diversity; classroom management and instructional techniques; assessment; literacy; and action research. In every course, the “real”



world was a driving force. For example, in their socio/cultural studies, students were required to visit their students’ families at their homes. The assessment courses focused specifically on the tools required and used by Hamilton County and the State of Tennessee, such as the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS).

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The faculty for the Osborne Fellows program were hand-picked by UTC and redesigned their courses to best suit the program’s mission and goals. Unlike traditional master’s degree programs that tend to focus primarily on theory, the Osborne Fellows program concentrated on putting theory into practice rapidly. Students were able — and expected — to use in their own classroom teaching what they learned in coursework the day or week before.

For Osborne participants, the sheer volume of new information and the demands of interpreting and applying it in their own classes could have been overwhelming. Fortunately, the concept of coaches for small groups within each cohort became a critical factor in the program’s success. In the university’s initial design, faculty would also play the role of study group coaches and go into classrooms; when it became clear that this was going to prove impossible, the idea of employing exemplary teachers as coaches was created. The school district hand-picked its best and most experienced urban teachers to serve as coaches for the Fellows, and provided release time and substitute teachers to allow these coaches to visit Fellows



in their classrooms and work with their assigned Osborne study groups. The study groups, usually 4-6 Fellows, met on afternoons on weeks between the Saturday seminars, usually twice a month, to talk about coursework and assignments as well as share their successes, questions and frustrations with one another. UTC welcomed the coaches as adjunct faculty, rather than a threat or a hindrance to their work, and relied heavily on the coaches to help interpret course studies, read class journals, and provide peer support for the Fellows.

To accommodate the work schedules of the Osborne Fellows, courses were delivered in a nontraditional way – as four-hour seminars, once a month on Saturdays at the elementary campuses of participants, with summer semester courses at UTC. As a cohort, the Fellows took two courses at a time over a period of two years, during summer, fall and spring semesters. Twice each year, Osborne Fellows traveled together to other urban school districts across the country, such as Denver, Los Angeles, Chicago or New York City. These destinations were intentionally chosen by the steering committee and national advisory panel to highlight districts and schools that had challenges and practices consistent with what was going on in Hamilton County.

Reflection was also a key component of the Osborne program, and a core tenet of all teacher preparation programs at UTC. Although not a favorite activity of many Osborne Fellows during coursework, the ability to reflect on learning helped lay the groundwork for a lifetime of ongoing learning and leadership that almost every Osborne graduate now values.

In order to complete their master's degree, Osborne Fellows were required to design, conduct and report on action research projects within their classrooms. This part of the master's-level work proved to be the most challenging and intimidating to participants. However, as the Fellows progressed through their research, their confidence in their abilities as researchers increased, and the connections between their research findings and their instructional abilities grew stronger. Research topics were as varied as the Fellows themselves, but some of the most notable projects explored the use of home lending libraries, culturally relevant approaches to teaching American history, single-gender coaching/teaching sessions, and teaching students to create their own prompts for writing assignments. Several Fellows have had articles published in education journals. (See appendices for complete list of research topics and publications.)

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Over the five-year span of the Osborne Fellows program, the steering committee met regularly, constantly examining progress and tweaking content and structure to optimize theory and practice. The Osborne Faculty (university professors and coaches) also met monthly during the program, and held two retreats in order to examine and revise course content so that all courses would be better integrated and coordinated with each other. Several key changes, in addition to the inclusion of middle school teachers mentioned above, came from the steering committee's and faculty's insights.

In 2005, when the district made the decision to close one of the nine Benwood schools and consolidate it with others, the Osborne Fellows steering committee decide to allow participating teachers to transfer from one Benwood school to another as they completed their studies and fulfilled their four-year commitment. This proved to be a wise decision, as another school closing/consolidation occurred at the end of the 2007-8 school year.

At the conclusion of their two-year period of study, the graduates of the Osborne Fellows program were treated to a very public celebration, to which their families and the local media were invited and a national author was invited to speak. At the same event, the new cohort was welcomed with great fanfare.

“The celebration seems like a minor thing, but was an important part of letting these teachers know how proud we were of their accomplishments and how important they are to their students, their schools, and the entire system,” says Challenger.



“It meets all university guidelines, but it also allowed us to try new approaches, such as Saturday classes, coaches, and travel. If we had our druthers, all our courses would work this way.”

In one instance, the committee had a very candid discussion about the right time to include the coursework involving community and family engagement, and changed the flow of courses to make the required visits to students’ families come earlier in the program.

“Many students felt that this was the best course they took. It changed their outlook about poor people and how they live and think,” said Tony Lease, assistant dean at UTC and the university’s lead liaison for the project. “They felt it was an important thing to learn early on, because it shaped their perceptions about every other course.”

Although supported by outside funding, the course content and structure is “100 percent a UTC program,” says Lease. “It meets all university guidelines, but it also allowed us to try new approaches, such as Saturday classes, coaches, and travel. If we had our druthers, all our courses would work this way.”

Retention and graduation rates for the program are high, with 43 of the 50 who started the program having graduated as of May 2008. Two are working to complete credit hours before they graduate. Two others were counseled out of the program, and three left during their first semester when personal issues, a move, or the inability to keep up with the workload made finishing unfeasible.



Profile: Tonya Taylor

As a pre-kindergarten teacher, Tonya Taylor is the stuff of legend. Loving, dedicated and patient, but with a sharp eye and a firm presence, Tonya makes wrangling her classroom of 20 four-year-olds at Calvin Donaldson Environmental Science Academy look almost easy. Add her newfound knowledge as an Osborne Fellow into the mix, and she's definitely a powerful positive influence on her students.

But making the leap to her master's degree hasn't been as easy as Tonya might make it look. With a middle- and high-schooler of her own, a husband with a new job, and a deep-seated commitment to her church, Tonya definitely felt the stress of balancing work, family, church and her master's studies.

"I was an accounting major in college in Nashville, moved here to open up a retail outlet for a clothing company, had my own in-home daycare, and then worked for a few years with a benefits company before I discovered teaching," she says. "I felt totally out of place in the corporate world. When Hamilton County offered an alternative certification program in 2003 in partnership with UTC, I signed up." She began teaching elementary school while enrolled in the 15-month program.

Now with five years of teaching under her belt, Tonya has learned many things about herself and her profession. "I realized that I needed to be a lifelong learner, but was unable to get my master's degree the traditional way because of the expense and the length of most programs. When the Osborne Fellows program came along, I jumped at the opportunity."

Her second year of the Osborne program brought additional challenges. Changes at the school and an increased intensity of her coursework meant a higher degree of personal stress and anxiety. It was Calvin Donaldson's first year as an urban school with a magnet program. That, coupled with Tonya's status as an Osborne Fellow, meant greater responsibility, including taking over the leadership of the parent volunteer committee for the entire school. Her Osborne studies also included an independent research project, in addition to her regular coursework. But Tonya rose to the challenge.

For her research project, Tonya decided to study the effects of family participation in "homework" assignments for her pre-K students. She provided weekly worksheets with helpful guides for parents and then measured her students' progress with each of the three required periodic assessment tools mandated by the state.

"I wanted to find some standard worksheets for pre-k kids, but discovered that they didn't exist. So I created my own," she explains. She created her assignments to help parents understand and get involved with the reading and pre-reading strategies she used in class, such as rhyming, beginning sounds, alphabet recognition and reading comprehension.

Halfway through the year, a visit to Tonya's class shows her unflappable calm despite her busy life. Her students are quiet and focused, her manner and touch are calm, and in a sea of little voices calling, "Ms. Taylor," she is a centering force. While working on the floor with one group of kids or reading quietly to another, she asks many guiding questions to help their learning. She smiles at their successes and encourages them through their struggles. She has incorporated many of her learnings from the Osborne program, including "brain dance" time that keeps her little ones breathing, stretching and working isolated muscle groups to help awaken their cognitive abilities,

Her work with Osborne and at school is going well, but as she says, "I'm in survival mode right now. I'm overwhelmed by school, work, church and family." One Osborne course is proving to be particularly trying, and maintaining her work-life balance requires constant energy and attention.

But she is quick to acknowledge the good things. She's really enjoying another Osborne course. Her research project is going well, with almost all parents participating. The parent volunteer committee had more participation in its first meeting than during the whole of the previous year. The school has hired a part-time paid parent volunteer coordinator to help manage the workload. Her Osborne coaches and study group have provided a critical source of support throughout the year.

By springtime, Tonya says with a smile, "It's all coming together. I'm making it to the finish line."

Her coursework load is lightened, and she is freed from her study group obligations. Her family demands have eased as well. The parent volunteer committee and the paid part-time staffer are working well.

Tonya is especially excited about her research project. This semester, she will write up her findings and submit them to an education journal — and the findings are exhilarating. "On our last assessment, all but two of my kids knew about capital letters and most small letters. I've never seen a group advance that much. Two parents who



hadn't worked with their children at first began to do so diligently in December and January and began to see results. Another family that faithfully completed homework with their child each week saw her move from 'delayed' in one assessment to 'advanced' within the space of a few months. It was amazing. Now all of the parents have a better idea of what their kids can do and how they can help them get there."

Her Osborne training also gave Tonya the skills to help another student who was exceedingly fearful about learning to write. He simply didn't want to make a "mistake" on the paper. But with Tonya's coaching, he broke through that barrier, making both his parents and his teacher very proud.

Buoyed by her success, Tonya has made another big decision; she'll move with her kids next year to become a kindergarten teacher. "I want to do more with what I've learned, and use my experiences. My Osborne knowledge makes this exciting, but I'm also nervous because I'm leaving my comfort zone."

That may be, but it appears as if she'll be building a new "comfort zone," in kindergarten, working closely with the other kindergarten teacher who is also an Osborne Fellow.

"We have a vision of preparing these kids well for the rest of the school," Tonya laughs.

No doubt, she will.

Big Lessons and Aha Moments

As with any new foray into educational improvement, the Osborne Fellows program uncovered several key lessons — some anticipated, some surprising.

Something New and Different

The Osborne Fellows program lends itself to a completely new kind of graduate level experience, combining learning with practice and incorporating coaching as a key role. Its example could offer other colleges and universities, as well as other programs within UTC, a new model of preparing and developing teachers. This model is one that keeps the needs and realities of actual urban schools, and the goals of the reform agenda of the school district, front and center. While there are now some innovative new programs for preparing new teachers (teacher residency programs, etc.), most graduate programs still leave gaps between the studies of practicing teachers and the school systems in which they teach. The Osborne Fellows program made significant inroads in bridging those gaps in a way that made the Fellows' studies more relevant (and perhaps more valuable) to the schools' reform agendas. Also, unlike most traditional master's degree programs, the Osborne Fellows experience addressed a desire among participants to gain skills and knowledge to enhance their work as instructional—rather than administrative—leaders.



The Importance of the Cohort

While most graduate study is an individual experience, the cohort approach used by the Osborne Fellows program was vital for enriching the experience and supporting the participants as they made their way through this demanding process.

“Being in a cohort was a strongly emotional experience,” said one UTC professor. “The peer talk in my class was always very engaging and powerful. And the Fellows who were the only ones from their schools seemed to have more difficulty than those who had peers onsite.”

“Learning in isolation

**improves the teacher,
but not the school or scores.”**

Swoffard concurs, and adds that the value of the cohort approach is amplified when applied at the school level. Schools that fostered their own cadres of Fellows, either as classmates in the program, as grade-level groups of Fellows who may have graduated at different times, or simply through a shared identity as Osborne Fellows, saw a greater overall impact from the Osborne Fellows program. As Swoffard points out, “Learning in isolation improves the teacher, but not the school or scores.”



From an Osborne faculty perspective, the cohort approach allowed UTC to tie content together better because all of the students were taking the same courses at the same time. This continuity fed into study group discussions as well. One graduate, who is now part of an ongoing leadership discussion group of “Ozzies” (the name the graduates gave themselves), put it this way:

“We worked well together in study groups because we were able to recognize and address each other’s strengths and weaknesses. We were also better able to understand people we may not have understood well at first. It was hard at first to change my thought processes from independent to group work. Most teachers simply aren’t trained to work as a group. That was a wonderful benefit of being an Osborne Fellow.”

As an added benefit for the district, members of each Osborne cohort have maintained their relationships with Fellows at other schools. Although principals within school districts have historically communicated from school to school, this practice is rare among teachers. Thus, the inter-school communication between Osborne Fellows cohorts is helping to increase shared learning and instructional successes throughout the Benwood schools, if not system-wide.

Coaches are Critical

For the Osborne Fellows, coaches provided an indispensable bridge over which to connect theory and practice. In periodic evaluations, Fellows again and again said that the coaches were able to “translate” information provided by UTC professors, as well as provide ongoing encouragement, a shoulder to cry on, and a healthy dose of “real-world” perspective. In fact, many Osborne Fellows reported that they relied more on the coaches for information than they did on UTC faculty, and several said they would not have made it through without their coaches.

For the UTC faculty, the coaches became a corps of skilled, insightful, adjunct professors. Due to the structure of the Osborne program, coaches were responsible for half of the instructor “face time” that would normally occur in a traditional master’s program. UTC faculty members are quick to credit the coaches with serving as interpreters between the faculty and the Fellows, translating messages in both directions, and with playing a key role in helping students implement the strategies taught in class.

Coaches also became the onsite resource for teachers in their own classrooms. While UTC faculty found it difficult to get to each of their students’ classrooms to review their application of theory in their teaching practices and provide feedback, the coaches stepped up to fill this role. Because of the close and comfortable nature of the relationships between most coaches and Fellows, this ultimately proved to be the better approach. The fact that the school district was willing and able to structure release time for the coaches was a significant in-kind contribution.



The Principal Role

As mentioned above, principals’ enthusiasm was key for recruiting Osborne Fellows. But while all principals were at least moderately supportive of their teachers who participated in the Osborne experience, not all of them were prepared for the outcome: teachers saw themselves as change agents and wanted opportunities for more leadership and continual learning. Principals who ended up with the strongest corps of Osborne Fellows in their schools were those who were willing to empower their teachers to become instructional leaders with their peers.

Principal turnover, which was greater in some schools than others, also had an effect on the eagerness of teachers to apply for Osborne Fellowships, their satisfaction in implementing what they learned, and their desire to assume leadership roles after graduation.

Teachers saw themselves as
**change agents and wanted
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and continual learning.**

Many were eager to take on
**informal or formal
leadership**
positions in their schools...

Knowledge Leads to Leadership... and More Learning

One unanticipated consequence of the Osborne Fellows program was the rapid evolution of Fellows into school leaders. In retrospect, it's a phenomenon that probably should have been foreseen, for it makes perfect sense. Most Fellows craved opportunities to share their newfound skills and knowledge and their deeper understanding about the children and families at their urban schools. Many were eager to take on informal or formal leadership positions in their schools, and some principals requested that they assume these leadership roles. A number of Osborne Fellows are now lead teachers (who team up to share responsibility for a model classroom while they coach other teachers half-time), grade-level chairs, mentors or some other type of formal or informal instructional leaders. Many have also taken leadership roles in non-instructional areas, such as creating school-wide discipline plans or school improvement plans. One is now an assistant principal. Osborne teachers see themselves as true change agents, ready to take the lead to improve performance building-wide and to advocate on behalf of their students. Although the initial intention of the Osborne program was to create individual capacity – the school system has ended up with an improvement in capacity at the building level.

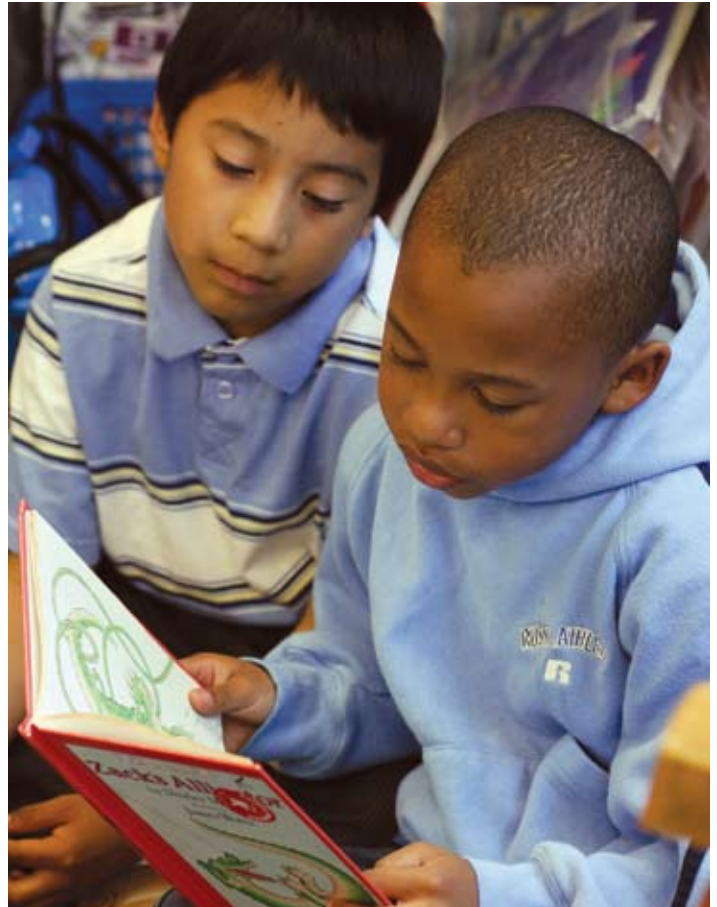


When the immediate role of Osborne Fellows as school leaders became clear halfway through the five-year program, the steering committee agreed to create an additional leadership study group for Ozzies who wished to continue exploring their capacity as leaders, define their leadership styles and hone their skills after they graduated from the program. This lively group was first led by a faculty member from UTC, and now continues under the tutelage of the head Osborne coach, meeting monthly. The group has grown from 5 to 20 Ozzies, and they have demonstrated their expertise through presentations to other UTC classes and in each other's schools. Some have continued to publish and present externally as well.

Securing a Lasting Commitment

According to an ongoing independent evaluation of the Osborne Fellows program*, the jury is still out on whether the Osborne graduates will stay in their schools beyond their four-year commitment. However, the majority of Fellows told the evaluators without hesitation that urban schools are where they're meant to be. As long as their thirst for continued learning and leadership opportunities is satisfied, they don't see themselves teaching anywhere else.

So far only one teacher has left her school to move to another non-Benwood school, with a year still left in her commitment. Several factors, including family changes and professional fatigue, may have an effect on the staying power of some others. A particular point to watch is the 2008 closing of the "old" Chattanooga Museum Magnet Middle School, which is being reconstituted to accommodate a growing population of local middle-class families and will no longer draw from other low-income neighborhoods across the city. Three Osborne Fellows played a key role in improving seventh grade instruction there and two served in school-wide leadership roles as change coaches, but they must now move to different schools. This may be a cause for attrition if the positions they go to are not in one of the other targeted middle schools.



*The Osborne Steering Committee decided to monitor the results and effects of the Osborne Fellows program by contracting with evaluation experts Dr. Dick Corbett and Dr. Bruce Wilson. Corbett and Wilson work across the nation and have completed evaluations for the Kellogg Foundation, the Prichard Committee in Kentucky, and for several of the New American Schools reform models, among others. In Chattanooga, they also are doing the qualitative evaluation of the Benwood Initiative and of the middle and high school reform efforts. They were chosen, in part, for this synergy with the hope that they could better understand the Osborne work in the context of the other reform work in Benwood and middle schools. Through the course of the program, Corbett and Wilson made regular visits to the Osborne Fellows' classrooms and schools and to UTC, and provided twice-yearly evaluation updates and full reports at the three- and five-year marks.

About PEF

The Public Education Foundation (PEF) was established in 1988 to challenge, support and improve Hamilton County public schools. It is focused on providing training and resources for teachers and administrators to help all students reach their full potential, boosting the lowest-performing students to a proficient level and challenging high-performing students to reach advanced levels.

PEF has touched every school in Hamilton County through its leadership initiative for principals, assistant principals and teacher leaders. In close partnership with Hamilton County schools, PEF has helped create initiatives that have brought deep changes and improved outcomes to every high school and every middle school in the district. Through the Benwood Initiative, PEF has helped turn around 8 low-performing elementary schools, and has now expanded that initiative to another group of 8 schools representing a diverse cross-section of the county. The Osborne Fellows Program was designed as a supplemental strategy for the Benwood and middle school initiatives.

Common elements of PEF's successful partnerships include:

- An emphasis on improving teacher quality, both through research and by fostering teacher leaders who provide daily, school-based professional development
- Training in proven "best practices" for effective teaching
- Collaborative planning and sharing of ideas among teachers at each school and with leaders at other schools
- A strong focus on data-driven decision making
- Individual school plans that are developed by school leadership teams for the unique needs of their own schools

In addition to the Weldon F. Osborne Foundation, many other partners have joined PEF and Hamilton County schools in this work. They include the Benwood Foundation, Lyndhurst Foundation, the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, College Access Center, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Chattanooga State Technical Community College, Carnegie Corporation, National Education Association Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Annenberg Foundation, the AT&T Foundation and others.

For more information, visit www.pefchattanooga.org

About the Other Partners

Hamilton County Department of Education (HCDE)

HCDE has been a city/county merged school district since 1997. The district now has over 40,000 students, 81 schools, and 6,500 teachers and employees. It has garnered national attention for its high school reform work called Schools for a New Society, an effort which includes the creation of multiple career academies and a “single path diploma” that gives all students the option to go on to college. From 2004 to 2007, the number of high school diplomas increased 24% (although the number of high school students grew only 3%) and the college-going rate rose to 73%, with a 16% increase in the number of graduates going on to college. HCDE also is receiving accolades for the gains made in its urban elementary schools under the Benwood Initiative (see page 5). The current superintendent is Dr. Jim Scales.

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC)

UTC is one of five campuses in the state university system, added in 1969 when the former University of Chattanooga, a private institution, merged with the University of Tennessee. Today, UTC has nearly 10,000 students in its undergraduate and graduate programs and has the most highly diverse student body among the state campuses. The largest of the graduate/undergraduate programs at UTC is the College of Education, Health and Professional Studies. UTC is the largest supplier of new teachers for the Hamilton County Department of Education.

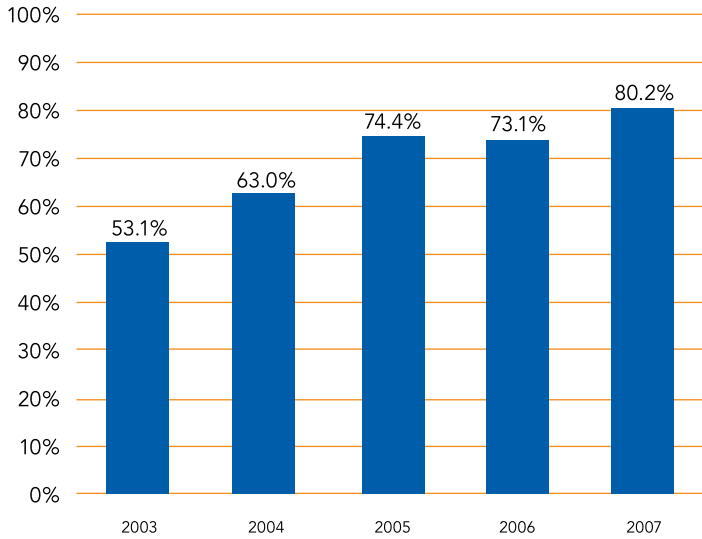
Because the Osborne Fellows program is part of the broader Benwood and middle school initiatives, it is difficult to isolate the direct effect of the Osborne Fellows or prove a quantitative positive correlation with regard to student achievement. However, there are several interesting points from within the data that may be attributable, at least in part, to the Osborne program.

Key Results: Improved Teaching and Learning



Overall, the Benwood Initiative has been highly successful at raising reading scores in the schools it targeted. From 2003 to 2007, third graders scoring “proficient” or “advanced” on state reading assessments grew from 53% to 80.2%. There is also an interesting correlation between some of the schools with more Fellows and those with fewer, as discovered by the program’s evaluators: the four schools with the largest cohorts of Fellows had a gain of 22 percent more students at the proficient or advanced levels in literacy whereas the four schools with fewest Fellows showed a gain of just over nine percent.

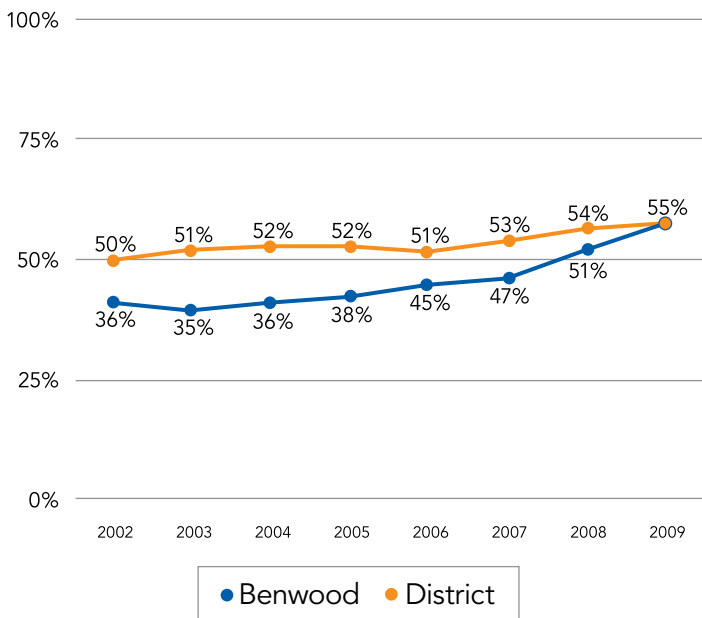
Percentage of Benwood 3rd Graders Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Reading
TCAP achievement results



“Osborne Fellows have shared values and a collective focus on student learning,”

Benwood Mirrors the District

Percentage of Teachers with Master’s Degree or Higher
2008 & 2009 Projections include Osborne Fellows Cohorts 3 & 4



“The Osborne Fellows in my building are able to help with our embedded professional development,” says Valerie Brown, principal of Calvin Donaldson Environmental Science Academy, an elementary magnet school where eight Osborne Fellows are currently on the teaching staff of 21. “They have a common sense of best practice and serve as mentors for new teachers. Although we can’t directly measure the relationship between the Osborne experience and student performance, the achievement of students in Osborne Fellows’ classrooms seems to be higher.”

The Osborne Fellows’ commitment to and enthusiasm for improving instruction is often self-perpetuating at the building level. “Osborne Fellows have shared values and a collective focus on student learning,” says Scarbrough. “They collaborate on content, strategies, data and scheduling. The teachers know and implement similar strategies, therefore these rich teaching strategies are common from grade to grade. Students become accustomed to them and teachers don’t have to start from scratch and can instead go deeper and farther with learning. The Osborne Fellows are a critical part of our school reform efforts.”



Just the concept of being named an “Osborne Fellow” is a point of pride for teachers. Challenger tells the story of an excellent teacher who gave her all at an underperforming urban school, yet was embarrassed to tell her friends where she worked, for fear they would deem her a poor teacher. With a title like “Osborne Fellow,” that perception is being turned around, making committed teachers into local heroes.

“The bottom line is that we now have more than forty highly trained teachers who will keep the learning going in many schools for many years,” says Challenger. “That in itself is a big success.”

Just the concept of being named an
“Osborne Fellow”
is a point of pride for teachers.

The Osborne Fellows’ influence is readily apparent in several buildings. At Donaldson, for example, two Fellows share a model classroom, spending half of their time teaching their students, and the other half coaching or co-teaching in other classrooms. Another Fellow serves as the math lead teacher, spending one planning period with each grade level every week. Two other Fellows are literacy leaders for grades K-3 and 4-5, meeting with each grade once a week to share and reinforce instructional strategies for reading.

District-wide, the Osborne program has played a significant role in closing the gap between the percentage of teachers with master’s degrees in Benwood schools versus the district as a whole. In 2007, 47% of teachers in Benwood schools had a master’s degree or higher, closing in on the 53% with advanced degrees district-wide. Perhaps more importantly, the Benwood schools increased their percentage of teachers with master’s degrees or higher from 35% in 2003 to 47% in 2007 — an increase of 34% in just four years.





Profile: Crysti Wilson

As Crysti Wilson started her second year of studies as an Osborne Fellow, she also started teaching at a different middle school. For some teachers, that would be too much change at once, but as a seventh-grade social studies teacher, Crysti is ready to tackle whatever life, students or career throw her way.

A native of Franklin, Tennessee, Crysti always knew she wanted to be a teacher. "I never wanted to be anything else," she says. "I had some good teachers growing up and they really made an impact on me."

After moving to north Georgia with her husband, Crysti began teaching there in 2001 but found herself unhappy with the principal's top-down leadership style and being required to teach out of her subject area. When she moved across the state line to Chattanooga's Howard Middle School in 2003, it was an eye-opening experience.

"College didn't prepare me for teaching in an inner-city environment," she says. "The kids would try to run off new teachers, but I earned more respect from them when I showed up again the second year."

She also earned a full leadership role in the school. Despite constant curriculum and program changes, Crysti served as social studies department chair, a literacy coach and a team leader. Although she enjoyed the challenge, "there was no place to get new ideas," she says. So she moved in 2007 to Chattanooga Middle.

At the beginning of the school year, Crysti was excited about seemingly small things, like having one textbook for each child, and only 23 rowdy seventh-graders per class instead of 30. She's also excited to be working with a team of other Osborne Fellows, graduates of the program who all have leadership roles within the school and a concentration on the 7th grade block.

"At my old school, I was the only one going through the Osborne program. Here, I haven't felt isolated at all. The whole 7th grade team has the same planning time, which will be much more effective and efficient."

As school began, Crysti looked forward to the way the team would work together, sharing thematic units and Osborne instructional techniques across the curriculum.

“Osborne has really prepared me for the school-wide literacy push,” she said the day before classes started. “I’ve learned how to be a reading teacher in social studies, how to embed literacy in my subject. I can teach kids how to connect reading to the real world, and how to visualize, analyze and adapt what they read to other things. Social studies is very much based in reading. The strategies I’m learning in Osborne will help tremendously.”

For her research project, Crysti studied the inquiry-based learning approach that her 7th grade teaching team used throughout the year. She provided questions that students had to answer in small teams. She compared the differences in how this approach worked with female students and male ones, and she looked for increased student interest, performance and achievement, using pre- and post-tests for units and state-mandated assessment tools to gauge her students’ progress.

Two months into the school year, it’s clear that Crysti has an easy (but firm) way with not-so-easy kids. Although not exactly tall, Crysti can make her presence known and command respect from boys nearly twice her size.

She’s developed a daily routine that they find familiar, starting with a five-minute “warm up” question that looks like something they might see on end-of-year state assessment tests. She leads them through large group discussions and small group exercises focused on the inquiry-based approach. In some classes, she seats boys and girls on opposite sides of the room as part of her research into how a single-gender approach to group work will affect the inquiry-based learning.

In addition to her classroom teaching, Crysti also coaches a weekly writing workshop for girls, leads a weekly advisory session, and teaches literacy three days a week. The advisory session is designed for small group intervention and goal setting work. It’s a more informal conversation, and Crysti easily guides her students through discussions about their goals for the next five to 10 years, calling on the students to help one another determine what they need to do to achieve their dreams. In all of her roles, she calls upon the strategies she’s learning as an Osborne Fellow and continues to work closely with the entire 7th grade team.

Crysti credits this tightly-knit team approach and the team’s overall focus on inquiry-based units with making her research project a success at the end of the school year. “I discovered that the inquiry-based approach, using essential questions to guide reading, doesn’t work with all students. My hope was that my non-proficient readers would become proficient by the end of this year. Instead, I found that my proficient students moved to advanced levels. The less proficient students didn’t quite grasp the concept of finding answers, so I’ve been working with a special education teacher to repeat the questions in different ways and coach those students through the process of finding the answers.”

Her Osborne studies were essential to her teaching this year, says Crysti, not only in literacy, but in classroom management strategies. “What I learned during Osborne was very helpful in getting my students to work together and building relationships with them.”

“I also learned to work with parents more effectively. In the past I was intimidated, or sometimes feared for my students. Now, I see parents as my greatest resource. Kids know when you have a relationship with their moms and dads.”

One unexpected twist in Crysti’s year was the school board’s decision to close Chattanooga Middle. The impending closure left all of the teachers questioning their next career move – especially Crysti and her Osborne colleagues, who don’t want to settle for just any teaching job.

“Osborne gave me these great skills and strategies that make me an especially good teacher for urban kids,” she says. “I want to stay in this environment.”



Ideas for Improvement and Expansion



Although the Osborne Fellows program has been an unqualified success in just about every way, there is always room for continued improvement. Through the course of the program, the steering committee constantly asked itself, “What can or should we be doing differently?” Now that the program has concluded its five years, there are several points that the steering committee has identified as ways to sharpen and improve the program even further should the opportunity arise for another go-round.

Tie the UTC curriculum even more closely to reform activities going on within the schools.

“It would be nice to be able to help teachers tie specifically into what they’re already doing or to identify gaps where the Osborne curriculum and reform activities are not aligned,” says Lease. One way to achieve this might be to encourage principals to be more involved with the Fellows in creating their action research projects, and to officially tie projects to school improvement plans. If this were to happen, teachers would be more likely to think of their research as key to their school.

Increase the involvement of UTC professors onsite at the schools.

While the university says that demands on faculty made it nearly impossible for them to spend time in the Fellows’ schools, both the Fellows and the faculty lamented this disconnect. Although universities are traditionally not designed to send faculty into the field (except for undergraduate student teaching programs), UTC did a commendable job at restructuring its course delivery for the Osborne program. Perhaps in the future more thought can be given to structuring incentives and being explicit in its expectations, in order to bridge this gap between faculty and Fellows.

Provide a specific research advisor or guide for research projects.

While all Osborne Fellows were required to design, complete and present an action research project, many of them found the process to be somewhat confusing and nerve-wracking. An advisor relationship may have alleviated some of that unnecessary stress. Another suggestion is to start with smaller, mini-projects during the first year to help Fellows become more comfortable with research work.

Make the Osborne Fellows program a condition of employment.

“After seeing what the Osborne Fellows are adding to our school system, I’d love to start with the hiring process and proscribe participation in the Osborne program for all of our qualified new teachers,” says Swoffard. This assumes ongoing and expanded funding, of course.

Understand the pool of potential candidates.

Although nearly 50 Fellows in five years is enough to create a critical mass in Chattanooga, the ups and downs in cohort enrollment numbers from year to year (from as low as five to as many as 16), suggests that a similar program do ongoing market research to determine the qualifications, interest and size of its prospective student pool. Another approach might be to enroll new cohorts every two years, rather than annually. In the case of the Osborne program, this perhaps would have given more of the district’s new teachers an opportunity to “find their footing” before taking on the challenges of a rigorous master’s degree curriculum.



Add a leadership course or courses.

The shift of Osborne Fellows into leadership roles on their campuses came more quickly than anyone imagined. Therefore, it stands to reason that leadership study be a key component of the program going forward. Teachers will be better prepared for leadership roles if they understand their work in the context of the bigger, school- or district-wide picture.

Take advantage of Osborne graduates for mentoring and leadership roles with subsequent cohorts.

While coaches and fellow classmates were the most trusted program resources for many Osborne participants, most also benefited from the experiences of other graduated Fellows in their buildings. These informal relationships could play a much stronger role if “officially” incorporated into the Osborne program.

“And we discovered the power of a successful partnership...”

Find ongoing sources of funding.

The Osborne Fellows program was funded almost completely by foundation grants and in-kind support. That alone weakens its chances for sustainability. However, if the costs can be shared among the school system, the teacher participants and outside funders, its likelihood of remaining in play increases greatly. One proposal to do just this has been written for future consideration by new funders.

Let more “outsiders” within the district and university know about the program as it happens.

The Osborne steering committee partners did a great job of recognizing and celebrating with participants, their families and local press at the end of each year, but there was less planning for communicating the ongoing successes and learnings with other audiences that may have been interested, such as other UTC faculty and departments and other teachers within the Hamilton County school system.

The Osborne Fellows Legacy



In addition to the legacy of a strong, committed corps of urban teaching experts for participating schools and the students who attend them, the Osborne Fellows program will have a lasting legacy for all of the individuals and institutions that took part in the program.

Legacy for the Fellows

Like any master's degree program, the Osborne Fellows program gave participants a higher level of self-confidence, affecting their job satisfaction and the willingness to seek advancement, and helping them to recognize themselves as potential leaders. Several graduates have moved into the UTC doctoral program, an instructional leadership program (as opposed to administrative studies) that has borrowed some elements from the Osborne program. Others have been accepted into PEF's Leadership Fellows program. And for the rest, the Ozzie leadership study group continues to meet, providing Fellows with ongoing engagement and opportunity for learning and reflection.

One Fellow summed up the experience this way: "We are excellent teachers, who happen to choose an urban setting. We now have a huge foundation of knowledge upon which to build, with cultural knowledge as a value added."

Said another: "Osborne started the fire! I was ready to learn new things, being a young teacher with tenure. I wanted new perspectives and Osborne gave me that. It put me on a five-year plan to finish all my schooling. I plan to enroll in a leadership program next year. I have learned that I am hungry for learning. I want to know what I can do to better my instruction and also influence other teachers."

Legacy for the School District

For the Hamilton County Department of Education, the Osborne Fellows program proved to be a great tool for building capacity and reducing turnover in its most challenged schools. Both of these are overarching goals for the district, and progress now is much further down the road than it would have been otherwise. Swoffard anticipates a long-term benefit, especially if cadres of Osborne Fellows within individual schools stay together.

"We'll be more successful where there is a critical mass—not just one or two," Swoffard says. "A cadre in one building changes the culture there. They provide a stronger focus on instruction. The Osborne program changed teachers from thinking about 'my room' to mutually thinking about 'our school and our program.'"

The Osborne program changed teachers
from thinking about 'my room'
to mutually thinking about
'our school and our program.'"

Legacy for the Public Education Foundation

PEF has always had a strong interest in teaching quality, incorporating leadership, professional development and research. The Osborne Fellows program provided a new way of augmenting the Foundation's existing teaching quality work with the "legs" of a real-life master's degree program that was closely tied to the reforms taking place in Hamilton County schools. Thanks to the Osborne experience, PEF is now examining other aspects of teaching quality in order to identify and help create additional on-the-ground programs to address identified needs. Its new-found expertise in identifying an issue, creating a possible solution and implementing that solution has positioned PEF as an even more valuable player in the overall public school reform agenda in Hamilton County. As a part of its work going forward, PEF will seek to build upon its enhanced relationship with UTC. And finally, PEF will begin to use the Osborne program's national advisory committee and other networks to disseminate the successes and lessons learned from the Osborne Fellows program to other like-minded organizations across the nation.

Legacy for the University

In the wake of its very positive experience in putting theory into immediate practice, the faculty at UTC is now working to provide a more urban focus and hands-on practice for its undergraduate students. "We try to make sure that every undergrad has an urban experience," explains Valerie Rutledge, department head of UTC's Teacher Preparation Academy. "We want to give students the chance to get a true taste of the 'real world' and increase their confidence and ability to deal with it."

"We try to make sure that every undergrad has an urban experience,"

UTC faculty report that the program gave them a structured opportunity to talk and learn about one another's courses, opening new lines of communication and sharing. It also gave individual professors the chance to tie their own research to areas in which the Osborne Fellows were interested, diving deeper into what was going on within the "real-world" schools.

"I'm better informed with regard to preparing urban teachers because I had to read what the Osborne Fellows were reading. It's made me a better undergraduate teacher, better at prepping them for urban schools," said one professor.

"We have increased our push for master's level and undergrad students to go out and try things and reflect on them," says another. "It will continue to be a bigger component of my teaching."



Legacy for the Osborne Foundation

And what about the Osborne Foundation? What did it get from its five-year commitment and involvement in the Osborne Fellows program?

"We learned the benefits of engaging in a multi-year, multi-faceted program. And we discovered the power of a successful partnership," says Burnett. "None of us at the Osborne Foundation is an educator, and that was initially a little bit intimidating. But as funders, we were able to bring all of these very talented educators together for the first time and help make something remarkable happen."

The Osborne Foundation chose not to continue funding the Osborne Fellows program after its initial five-year commitment, citing a need to free its grantmaking funds for use in other areas and a belief that it had saturated the market of potential candidates within the 13 schools the Osborne program served. The Osborne Foundation has the satisfaction of knowing that it has fulfilled its responsibility as a strategic grantmaker by supporting and participating in a program that will have a positive effect on urban education in Chattanooga, as well as the lives of nearly 50 individual teachers and thousands of students, for years to come.

Appendices

I: Osborne Fellows Program Leadership

II: Osborne Fellows Master's Vision Statement, Program Courses, Credit Hours and Other Learning Experiences

III: Osborne Fellows, Assignments and Schools

IV: Action Research Articles by Osborne Fellows

V: Publications and Presentations by Osborne Fellows and Others

VI: References to the Osborne Fellows Program in National Publications, TV/Video, Webcasts and Podcasts

I: Osborne Fellows Program Leadership

Osborne Steering Committee

Gene Burnett, Trustee, Weldon F. Osborne Foundation

Leslie Graitcer, Program Coordinator, Public Education Foundation

Dr. Dan Challener, President, Public Education Foundation

Ray Swoffard, Deputy Superintendent for Campus Support, Hamilton County Department of Education

Susan Swanson, Director of Urban Education, Hamilton County Department of Education

Joyce Hardaway/Marvin Lott, Human Resources, Hamilton County Department of Education

Dr. Mary Tanner, Dean, UTC College of Education, Health and Professional Studies

Dr. Tony Lease, Assistant Dean, UTC College of Education

Drs. Bonnie Warren-Kring/Larry Garrison, Osborne Director, UTC

Stephanie Spencer/Faye Pharr, Benwood Director, PEF

Ismahen Kangles, Middle School Reform Director, PEF

Gerry Dowler/Rhonda Catanzaro, Hamilton County Education Association

Corinne Allen, President, Benwood Foundation

Patsy Hazelwood, Regional Director, AT&T Corporation

Dr. Bryan Stewart, Osborne Coach and HCDE principal

Sheryl Randolph, Sharon Dodds, Emily Baker, Krystal Scarbrough, Neelie Parker, Bob Green, rotating principals from Benwood and NEA Foundation Schools

Osborne Higher Education Advisory Committee

Dr. Richard Arends, Central Connecticut State University (retired)

Dr. Barnett Berry, Center for Teaching Quality

Dr. Ken Howey, University of Cincinnati

Dr. Ric Hovda, University of Memphis, now at San Diego State University

Dr. Rochelle Ingram, Johns Hopkins University

Dr. Kent McGuire, Temple University

Dr. Jody Priselac, Center X, University of California at Los Angeles

Dr. Jon Snyder, Bank Street College

Osborne Program Evaluators

Dr. Dick Corbett

Dr. Bruce Wilson

II: Osborne Fellows Master's Vision Statement, Program Courses, Credit Hours and Other Learning Experiences

Vision Statement

A graduate from the Osborne Fellows Master's Program will be skilled and disposed in these four main domains:

- Literacy
 - Expert in using diverse and inclusive strategies in teaching and assessing comprehensive literacy
- Urban students, parents and community
 - Belief in the innate learning abilities of every student regardless of background and previous experiences
 - Skillful in building relationships with and involving urban parents in schooling
 - Comfortable in the neighborhoods served by urban schools and familiar with the community resources available to parents
 - Aware of how learning styles and cognitive styles impact learning
 - Comfortable with cultural differences and able to apply multicultural knowledge to the learner and learning
 - Able to generalize about diverse learners while recognizing and addressing the needs of the individual learner
 - Skillful in using technology to meet the needs of diverse learners
 - Able to layer lessons and draw on multiple strategies to manage classrooms and meet the emotional/cognitive needs of learners
- Collegiality, collaboration and commitment
 - Willing and skillful in working with peers on strategies for effective classroom instruction
 - An effective change agent who serves on leadership teams for school improvement efforts
 - Passion for the urban school and desire to remain teaching there
- Decisions based on sound evidence
 - Acutely and objectively observant
 - Able to use multiple summative, formative, and diagnostic assessment strategies and tools
 - Practiced in using action research as a tool for continuous learning and classroom improvement
 - A reflective practitioner who uses warranted conclusions about effective teaching and learning in her continued professional development

Courses and Experiences

Late Spring/Summer of Year One:

Induction Celebration

Orientation

EDUC 513 – Perspectives on Multiculturalism and Diversity
3 hours

EDUC 503 – The Urban Parent and Community Resources
3 hours

Fall of Year One:

EDUC 500 – Introduction to Educational Inquiry

(action research proposal)

3 hours

EDUC 561/563 – Literacy Instruction for Emergent Learners/

Literacy Instruction for Middle/High School Learners
3 hours

Learning Trip

Spring of Year One:

EDUC 562 – Continued Literacy Instruction for Elementary/
Middle School Learners

3 hours

EDSP 504 – Classroom Management Techniques

3 hours

Learning Trip

Summer of Year Two:

EDUC 515 – Assessment and Learning

3 hours

EDUC 575 – Educational Technology

3 hours

Fall of Year Two:

EDUC 508 – Collaboration and Consultation

3 hours

EDSP 517 – Strategies for Inclusion

3 hours

Learning Trip

Spring of Year Two:

EDUC 564 – Reading Practicum

3 hours

EDUC 598 – Culminating Experience: Action Research completion

3 hours

Learning Trip

Final Celebration and Graduation

III: Osborne Fellows, Assignments and Schools

(School and assignment shown are for 2007-8 school year)

Cohort One

Roxanne Beene Anthony	Calvin Donaldson Elementary	Literacy Leader
Lindy Blazek	Hardy Elementary	K-3 special education
Kristy Bramlet Cordell	East Brainerd Elementary	1st grade
Patricia Clark	East Side Elementary	Kindergarten
Theresa Custer	Clifton Hills Elementary	Math Lead Teacher
Mitzi McEachern	Calvin Donaldson Elementary	1st grade
Misty Hawkins Mitchell	Clifton Hills Elementary	1st grade
Kathy Robertson	Hardy Elementary	Pre-K
Sharon Swafford	Orchard Knob Elementary	Literacy Leader
Susan Vaughn	Clifton Hills Elementary	4th grade
Julie Wann	Clifton Hills Elementary	Literacy Lead Teacher
Lorelei Ward	Hardy Elementary	Pre-K
Andrea Weaver	Clifton Hills Elementary	1st grade
Maria Flanagan	Retired	

Cohort Two

Kristi Glover	Calvin Donaldson Elementary	Literacy Lead Teacher
LaToya Norman	Calvin Donaldson Elementary	2nd grade
Daniel Silva	Hillcrest Elementary	Literacy Leader
Jennifer Spates	Harrison Elementary	Assistant Principal
Stephanie Waddell	Hillcrest Elementary	Music

Cohort Three

Melanie Biederman	Chattanooga Middle	Librarian
Judy Bullington	Clifton Hills Elementary	3rd grade
Callie Casey	Hardy Elementary	Special education
Dustin Dotzler	Hardy Elementary	Music
Jennifer Hartley	Hardy Elementary	5th grade
Teresa Kelly	Orchard Knob Middle	7th grade math
Dana Lail	Chattanooga Middle	7th grade science/PE
Sara DeGenaro McClure	Calvin Donaldson Elementary	K
Felicia Montgomery	Woodmore Elementary	Literacy Lead Teacher
Lindsay Starnes	Calvin Donaldson Elementary	Math Lead Teacher
Rachel Stephens	Orchard Knob Middle	7th grade language arts
Sarah Hurd Syler	East Side Elementary	1st grade
Kristy Vantleven	Chattanooga Middle	7th grade language arts
Taylor Watson	Chattanooga Middle	Literacy/Change Coach

Cohort Four

Megan Blazek Glass	East Lake Elementary	K-3 special education
Kennisha Cann	Clifton Hills Elementary	1st grade
Tracy Crosby	Clifton Hills Elementary	5th grade
Jocelyn Delk	Clifton Hills Elementary	2nd grade
Casey Dunn	Clifton Hills Elementary	K
Karen Jones	Dalewood Middle	6-8 special education
Shannon Reynolds	Hillcrest Elementary	1st grade
Tonya Taylor	Calvin Donaldson Elementary	Pre-K
Holly West	Calvin Donaldson Elementary	3rd grade
Crysti Wilson	Chattanooga Middle	7th grade social studies

IV: Action Research Articles by Osborne Fellows

Cohort One

"When Less is More: A Study of the Duration of Thematic Units in an Urban Pre-Kindergarten," by Kathy Robertson and Lorelei Ward

"Reading Motivation and Home Lending Libraries," by Theresa Custer, Sharon Swafford, Susan Vaughn, and Julie Wann

"Effective Components of Early Childhood Literacy," by Kristy Bramlett, Misty Hawkins, and Andrea Weaver

"The Effects of Small Group Instruction on Math Skills of Kindergarten Students whose Primary Language is Spanish," by Patricia Clark

"Sight or Sound: An Experiment in Learning to Read - The Efficacy of Using Instructional Strategies Designed for Special Education Students with Regular Education Students Who Are Non-Readers at the First Grade Level," by Linda Blazek

"Can Responsibility Be Taught? – Deliberate Instruction on 'Responsibility' as Part of a Character Education Program," by Roxanne Beene and Mitzi McEachern

Cohort Two

"Do Teacher Preparation Programs that Include Coursework in Sociolinguistics and Training in the Contrastive Method Produce Teachers that Have Higher Standardized Test Scores in Reading among African American Students?" by Jennifer Spates

"A Qualitative Study of a Culturally Relevant Approach for Teaching American History," by Jennifer Spates

"Does Student Choice Affect Motivation?" by Kristi Glover

"What Happens When You Run Out of Candy? - Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Motivation," by Daniel Silva

Cohort Three

"'Are we Really Going to...?' Exploring Authentic Learning with Single-Sex Male 7th Grade Science and Language Arts Classes," by Melanie Biederman, Dana Lail, Kristy Vantleven

"Music Learning Centers: Their Value to Music Education," by Dustin Dotzler

"Implementing a Reader's and Writer's Workshop Pedagogy within an Intermediate Classroom," by Lindsay Starnes

"Reaching the Reluctant Reader by Sustained Silent Reading and Student Choice: The Effects on Student Interest and Ability," by Jennifer Hartley

"Closing the Gender Gap," by Felicia Montgomery

"Using Awareness of Phrases to Increase Oral Reading Fluency," by Judy Bullington

"Creating an Effective Single-Sex Advisory/Advisee Program for 'At-Risk' Middle School Girls," by Rachel Stephens

"SSR Effects on Motivation and Reading," by Callie Casey

Cohort Four

"'Are We There Yet?' – Using Inquiry-Based Learning to Drive Students into Social Studies," by Crysti Wilson

"Creating Your Own Prompt: Does It Really Make a Difference?" by Tracy Crosby

"Comprehend to Write: An Action Research Study on Integrating Writing and Comprehension Strategies Instruction," by Casey Dunn

"Does 'Morning Meeting' Really Matter? The Effects that 'Morning Meeting' Has Socially and Academically in the Classroom," by Kennisha Cann

"Making Connections through Thematic Instruction," by Holly West

"Gone Fishing: Teaching Students How to Use Comprehension Strategies When Writing," by Shannon Reynolds

"Using Sign Language as a Literacy Strategy with Special Education Students," by Megan Blazek Glass

"Homework in the Pre-K Classroom: A Strategy for Parent Engagement," by Tonya Taylor

"Time-Delay Training versus Phonics: A Comparison of Two Methods of Teaching Sight Words to Students with Moderate Mental Retardation," by Karen Jones

V: Publications and Presentations by Osborne Fellows and Others

"You Should Read This Book!" by Jennifer Hartley, published in Educational Leadership by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, March 2008.

"Service Learning, Boys and Fish Tanks," by Kristy Vantleven, published in Middle Ground, April 2008

"'Are We Really Going to ...?' Exploring Authentic Learning with Single-Sex Male 7th Grade Science and Language Arts Classes," by Kristy Vantleven, published in Middle Ground, April 2008

"Culturally Responsive Teaching – Preacher-Style," by Jennifer Spates, published in Multicultural Review online journal, March 2006

"A Musical Prompt: Postcards from the Concert," by Dustin Dotzler, published at the International Reading Associations Lesson Plan Site (<http://www.ReadWriteThink.org>)

"Explore, Explain, Exhibit! A Model for Urban Reform through Museum Connections," by Melanie Biederman, submitted to Educational Leadership, by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

"What Happens to Those We Leave Behind? – The 'Dirty Thirty': A Teacher's Experience with 14+ Year Old Seventh Graders and an Alternative Program," by Taylor Watson, submitted to Educational Leadership by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

"Closing the Gender Gap," by Felicia Montgomery, submitted to Educational Leadership by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

"Inquiry-Based Learning or Object-Based Learning?" by Dana Lail, Melanie Biederman, and Kristy Vantleven, presentation at the National Middle Schools Convention, 2007

"Lesson Adaptation for Struggling Readers Guide," presented by Daniel Silva et al, at Tennessee Reading Association conference, Tennessee Disability Conference, and Reading First Showcase, in 2007-8

"Osborne Program: 'Magic Dust' for the Benwood Initiative," presentation by Leslie Graitcer, Osborne Director for the Public Education Foundation and Krystal Scarbrough, Principal of Clifton Hills Elementary School, at the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, July 2005

VI: References to the Osborne Fellows Program in National Publications, TV/Video, Webcasts and Podcasts

"Closing the Achievement Gap" by Kati Haycock and Candace Crawford, in Educational Leadership, April 2008, Volume 65, number 7, by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

It's Being Done: Academic Success in Unexpected Schools, by Karin Chenoweth, Harvard Education Press, 2007 (chapter 16).

"School to give same-sex classes 2nd chance," by Christina Cooke, article in Chattanooga Times Free Press, May 4, 2007 (about Kristy Vantleven's 7th grade classroom)

"Chattanooga schools s-t-r-e-t-c-h to reach success" by Joan Richardson, in The Learning System, April 2006, Volume 1, number 7, by the National Staff Development Council.

"Challenging Myths: The Benwood Initiative and Education Reform in Hamilton County," by Robert Kronley and Claire Handley, 2006.

"Chattanooga transforming its poorest schools" in Catalyst Chicago, December 2005

PBS News Hour: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/jan-june06/chattanooga_06-20.html

Podcast by John Merrow: <http://johnmerrow.blogspot.com/2006/07/chattanoogas-enthusiastic-eight-john.html>

Webcast from National Comprehensive Center on Teaching Quality, on "Raising Student Achievement through the Equitable Distribution of Teachers," <http://www.tqsource.org/webcasts/equitablegraitcer.php>

“We are excellent teachers,
who happen to choose
an urban setting.”



Author: Betsey Russell
Photographs: David Humber
Design: Neathawk Dubuque & Packett
2008