

# The Learning Curve

This page was written and designed by Education First in cooperation with the Bibb County Board of Education, the Peyton Anderson Foundation, and The Telegraph.



Your weekly guide to students, schools, teachers and triumphs in Bibb County's Public Schools

## Male Counselors serve as positive role models in elementary schools

"It's an area where males have not explored," says James Newton, Lane Elementary School Guidance Counselor. He and Barden Elementary Counselor Robert Barrion are two of Bibb County Public School's only male counselors at the elementary level. "Males tend to have a different perspective to provide," says Newton.

According to Barrion, a male counselor can fill many roles for children of that age, all stemming from the opportunity to be a positive, strong male role model in their lives. With so many males in movies and the media being portrayed as more of the action-figure type, and not the professional, he believes "male counselors in schools provide a more accurate picture" of what men in real-life act like. "It's an image projected to the students that they can act professionally."

Also, having so many children coming from single-parent homes, they may not have that father-figure to look up to and emulate (especially important for the boys), and "we can to some degree fill that void."

During the course of his 10 years in the school system, Barrion has worked his way up through the ranks of the school, from parent volunteer to substitute teacher to para-professional to teacher to counselor, and every step of the way he says he "likes the role we're supposed to play."

Newton agrees, saying "it helps children to have a different perspective" on life and their problems. It gives them the chance to confide and begin learning how to trust an older male role model. He has been the Counselor for the past three years, was a 5th grade teacher there the two years prior, and made the switch because he got to work with students from every grade. "You get to reach more children and get a broader perspective on how they develop. The kids were pretty excited about it."

Counselors in the elementary schools cover a wide range of

duties, including personal and social issues, career and academic guidance, teaching lessons in classrooms, and even resolving disputes. Though he's not a teacher anymore, Newton says, he still gets the opportunity to go into the classrooms and teach lessons on character education, test taking skills, and decision making skills. "I try to make myself approachable to them at all times," he says.

Barrion and Newton both use themselves as examples for the students to emulate: professional, caring, and educated, and aware of other people. "Early on, children need to understand that men can be nurturing," says Barrion.

When Barrion first started as Counselor, he was the only one in the county, and he said some people were hesitant about having a male in that position of authority. It didn't deter him, though. He had a supportive staff at the school, and "I loved the opportunity to prove we can deal with the same issues."

Newton says he did not notice any hesitation when he started, but he was worried about how the students would react to having him as a counselor. One of his earliest highlights was when two young girls had a conflict, and they came to him to resolve it. "It let me know they were comfortable with speaking with me," he says with a sigh.

After four years as Counselor, Barrion says it's now "an issue that doesn't really come up." Among the students, it's never an issue; to them, "he's the counselor. They appreciate me for the job and the position, not the gender."

Both made the move from teaching to counseling to help as many students as possible, and neither have looked back, saying they feel they are trying to help as many children as possible. And both would encourage more males to get involved in the elementary schools, since this is such an important developmental stage in a child's life. They see the effects a positive male role model as having long-term benefits for these students.



(above) James Newton, center, with a class of Lane Elementary students.

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(above) Robert Barrion of Barden Elementary enjoys helping students choose the right path in life.

## 2004-2005 Bibb County

# Young Georgia Authors' Competition Winners

### Kindergarten

- 1st place - Will Macfie - Alexander II
- 2nd place - Maggie Kennedy - Vineville Academy
- 3rd place - Quinnlyn Middlebrooks - Heard
- 4th place - Diamond Roundtree - Brookdale
- 4th place - Kenderius Fort - Burdell-Hunt

### 1st Grade

- 1st place - Gabriel Townsend - Vineville Academy
- 2nd place - Kirk Hartzoa - Springdale
- 3rd place - Madison Kelley - Taylor
- 3rd place - Tres D. Hattaway - Alexander II
- 4th place - Emma Hanlon - Porter

### 2nd Grade

- 1st place - Bayleigh Carver - Sonny Carter
- 2nd place - Akilah House - Vineville Academy
- 2nd place - Chloe Murray - Taylor
- 3rd place - Sam Jenkins - Alexander II
- 3rd place - Alexis Watkins - Riley
- 4th place - Shomari Postell - Morgan

### 3rd Grade

- 1st place - Darby Mowell - Vineville Academy
- 2nd place - Taylor Mosley - Lane
- 3rd place - Amy Morgan - Taylor
- 3rd place - Jacy Thomas - Carter
- 4th place - Hayley Reynolds - Springdale

### 4th Grade

- 1st place - Sarah David - Alexander II
- 2nd place - Harrison DeHart - Taylor
- 2nd place - Katie Davis - Springdale
- 2nd place - Harrison Hollis - Heritage
- 2nd place - David T. Ward - Skyview
- 3rd place - Haley Mack - Burdell-Hunt
- 3rd place - Brianna Huston - Brookdale
- 4th place - Delanie Newberry - Heard
- 4th place - Tahjae Childers - Union
- 4th place - Darbi Johnston - Porter

### 5th Grade

- 1st place - Dominique Glover - Burdell-Hunt
- 2nd place - Sterling Blankenship - Rosa Taylor
- 2nd place - Hanin Menchew - Porter
- 3rd place - Anna Matheney - Springdale
- 4th place - Tanner Pruitt - Alexander II
- 4th place - Morgan Patat - Vineville Academy

### 6th Grade

- 1st place - Carolina Sapp - Rutland Middle
- 2nd place - Candace Driskell - Burdell-Hunt
- 2nd place - Betsy Appling - Vineville Academy
- 2nd place - Christina Mayfield - Howard
- 3rd place - Acqueena Harpe - Williams
- 4th place - Wilson Couture - Alexander II

### 7th Grade

- 1st place - Zachary Zion - Howard
- 2nd place - Shanetra Sullivan - Miller
- 3rd place - Hays Hudsons - Rutland Middle

### 8th Grade

- 1st place - Janedlei M. Ortiz-Rodriguez - McEvoy
- 2nd place - Liliith Logan - Rutland Middle
- 3rd place - Cody Miller Avant - Howard
- 4th place - Emily Stahl - Miller

### 9th Grade

- 1st place - Taylor Cline - Westside
- 2nd place - Crystal Moore - Northeast
- 3rd place - Benjamin Bennett - Rutland High
- 4th place - Cory A. Jones - Central

### 10th Grade

- 1st place - Tracy Yang - Westside
- 2nd place - Amberst McNeal - Northeast
- 3rd place - Shalana Rayvon Thompson - Southwest
- 3rd place - Nicole Dykes - Rutland High

### 11th Grade

- 1st place - Jessica Ry'cheal Lester - Northeast
- 2nd place - Matthew Roche - Westside
- 3rd place - Sonya Washington - Central
- 4th place - Jilisa Davis - Southwest

### 12th Grade

- 1st place - Michael Addleton - Rutland High
- 2nd place - Johnnie B. Horne - Southwest
- 3rd place - Tiara Hodges - Westside
- 4th place - Jalon Gordon - Northeast
- 4th place - Stevario Christopher Windham