



# **SIUE Education graduates reflect on inspiration behind career choice during Teacher Appreciation Week**

by Megan Wieser  
May 7 2018 4:42 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - The nation is celebrating educators during Teacher Appreciation Week May 6-12. Among those applauding the wonderful, inspiring work of teachers are

Spring 2018 graduates of the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Education, Health and Human Behavior (SEHHB), who achieved a bachelor's in early childhood, elementary, secondary or special education.

They each had a teacher growing up, or a cooperating teacher during their studies, who inspired them to be their best, offered a high-quality education and served as a strong mentor or advocate, igniting their passion for making a difference as educators themselves.

“This year, Teacher Appreciation Week coincides with the end of an academic year in which the SIU system has been developing its Great Schools Southern Illinois Initiative,” said SEHHB Interim Dean Paul Rose, PhD. “We recognize that at the heart of great schools are great teachers, and at the heart of successful communities are great schools. We all have ample reason to be grateful to excellent teachers who help their communities thrive.”

“I chose to pursue special education, because I want to be the person who can educate and assist students and their families with special needs,” said Kathryn Skaer, of Millstadt.

Skaer chose to pursue a career in special education after seeing her brother struggle with homework as a young boy upon a diagnosis of ADHD and a learning disability. “I want to show kids how fun learning can be and put them on a path for success,” she explained.

She appreciates her cooperating teacher, Amy Croxford, for being a positive influence during her academic studies. Croxford teaches a 4th and 5th grade special education class at East Elementary in Alton.

“During your day-to-day activities as a teacher, you don't just teach,” Skaer said. “You hear about your students' lives, what they do at home and when they ate their last meal. Amy is great at confronting issues students often have no control over and discussing tough topics with families. She sees the best in each of her students, and makes sure to build their academic work around their strengths and interests.”

“The feeling I get when a student accomplishes something, because I taught it to them is indescribable,” she continued. “It's like achieving your goals and offering someone a priceless gift all at once. To know that because of your teaching, that child can subtract, or read, or make eye contact, makes the difficult days on the job worth it.”

Elementary education graduate Katie Shannon, of Lebanon, credits Ina Bowling as her most influential cooperating teacher. She emphasizes Bowling's incredible gift of teaching from her heart.

“I most appreciated her positive attitude, her devotion to creating a fun learning environment for every child and her willingness to adjust her instruction to meet the needs of all her students,” Shannon said of Bowling, who teaches at Webster Elementary School in Collinsville.

“As an educator, I hope to make a difference in all of my students lives,” Shannon added. “I want to inspire each child to be a lifelong learner. My goals are to highlight the strengths of each student and teach them to believe in themselves.”

Sarah Crause, of Godfrey, fulfilled her dream of becoming an educator upon achieving her bachelor’s in special education from SIUE.

“I spent 16 years in finance/banking, always regretting my decision not to go into education,” Crause explained. “After the death of my parents, a year and a half apart, I realized how short life is and that it’s never too late to fulfill a dream.”

Crause has secured a position teaching 6th and 7th grade special education in Bethalto. Jane Hill, her high school English/French teacher, has been a constant presence in her life.

“She treated her students as individuals, and she encouraged, supported and believed in me,” Crause said. “She continues to be a mentor and friend. I hope to be a caring, nurturing educator, like her, who provides high-quality teaching and instills in student’s confidence to reach for the stars.”

Elementary education graduate Amanda Loker, of Wayne City, remembers fondly her high school math teacher Mrs. Mays, affectionately known as “Momma Mays.”

“She was real and full of life,” Loker recalled of her high school days. “She understood us and genuinely cared about each of her students. I too want to give students hope that life is good. I might be the only smiling face they see in a day, so if I have one purpose in life, it’s to smile.”

Bethalto native Megan Trost, who earned a bachelor’s in special education, will be teaching in a Life Skills classroom at her alma mater Civic Memorial High School.

“It is such a privilege to have the opportunity to teach in the district I grew up in,” Trost said. “I have always had a passion for learning, and I want to instill that in others. Each teacher in my life has influenced me in vastly different ways, which is a testament to how important it is that teachers come from diverse backgrounds in order to reach kids in a way that is most meaningful to them.”

Trost plans to teach her students to advocate for themselves and be inquisitive about the world.

“My greatest hope as an educator is to help break the stigma around disabilities and provide opportunities for all students to first recognize the unique abilities of each individual,” she said. “There is much to offer when we come together and support every individual in a school, regardless of ability, background or otherwise.”

Elementary education graduate Keri Teague, of O’Fallon, Ill., credits her third-grade teacher Mrs. Rowson and cooperating teacher Mrs. Benson with helping her realize the impact she hopes to make on kids’ lives, just like they had on hers.

“As an educator, I hope to spark a love of learning in all of my students,” Teague said. “Mrs. Benson let me contribute my ideas and thoughts to her classroom and helped me succeed as a teacher candidate. I hope some day kids will look back and remember me as a teacher who inspired them and made a difference in their life.”

The SIUE School of Education, Health and Human Behavior prepares students in a wide range of fields including public health, exercise science, nutrition, instructional technology, psychology, speech-language pathology and audiology, educational administration, and teaching. Faculty members engage in leading-edge research, which enhances teaching and enriches the educational experience. The School supports the community through on-campus clinics, outreach to children and families, and a focused commitment to enhancing individual lives across the region.