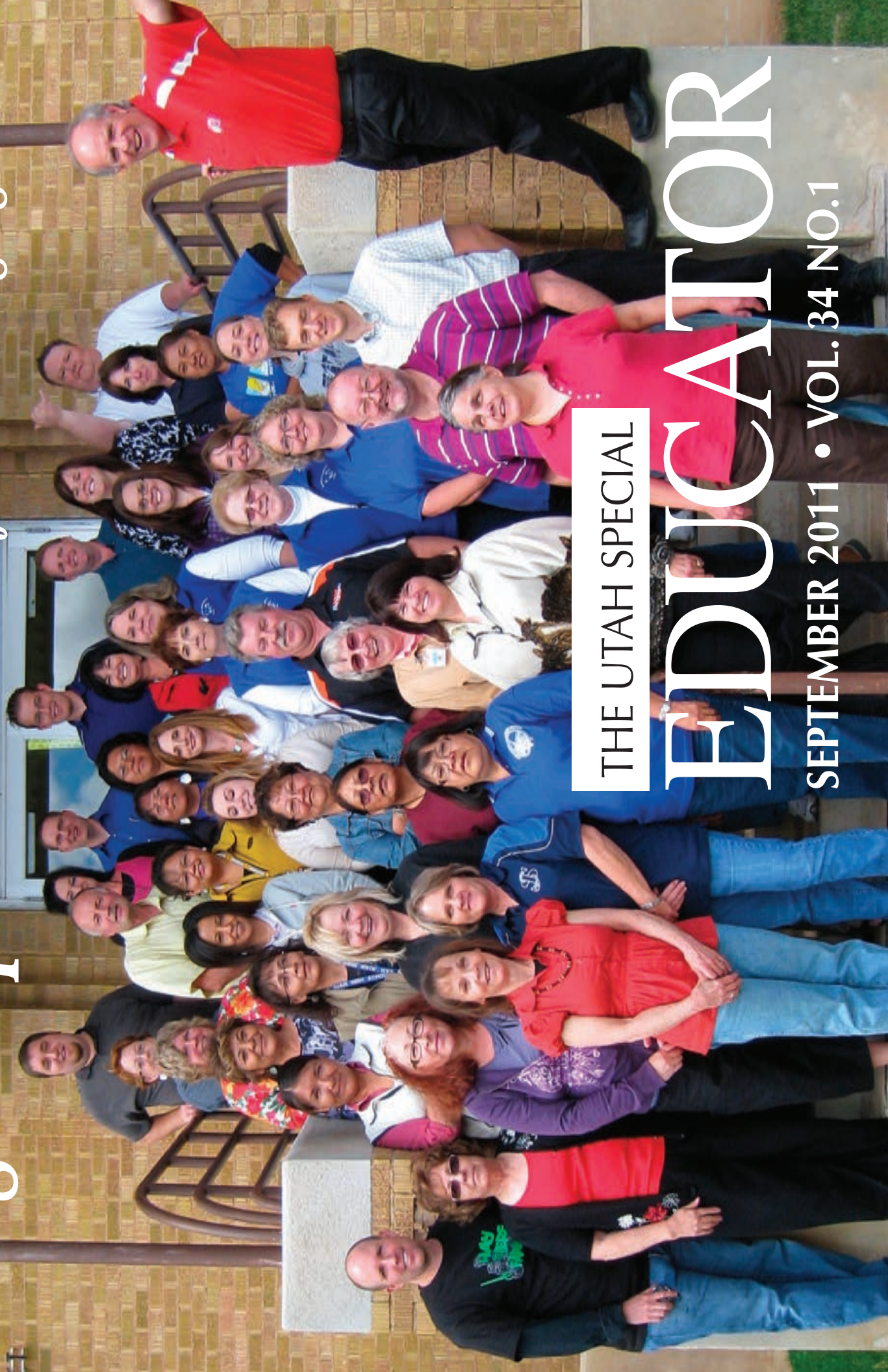


Bright Spots: Solutions for Challenging Times



THE UTAH SPECIAL

EDUCATOR

SEPTEMBER 2011 • VOL. 34 NO.1

The IRIS Center:



Professional Development at our Fingertips

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Quality professional development for teachers is an ongoing quest. Both special and general educators often find themselves in the position of knowing what they need to teach, but wondering how they're going to teach a particular concept or skill. Understanding the need for classroom instructional and behavioral support, Vanderbilt University was funded by the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in 2001 to create a resource for preservice special and general education teachers, school administrators, school nurses, and guidance counselors.

Today, the IRIS Center has expanded into a support system, not only for college and university faculties, but for public and private pre-schools, elementary schools and high schools. The IRIS Center topics are also excellent resources for parents looking to support their children while at home. The IRIS Center is housed in three locations: IRIS-Central at Vanderbilt University, Peabody College, IRIS-East in the greater Washington, D.C. region, and IRIS-West at Claremont Graduate University in California. Content experts representing various colleges and universities provide research-based support in areas of assessment, behavior, and academic topics.

The beauty of the IRIS Center is that it is a free, research-based clearinghouse of academic, administrative, and instructional tutorials, webinars, resources, and support services. The IRIS Center is easy to navigate with topics offering modules, case studies, activities, information briefs, and podcasts offered within each specific area. For example, under the topic of Behavior and Classroom Management, there are six modules, four case studies, seven activities, and ten information briefs.

The Behavior and Classroom Management modules address areas such as developing a comprehensive behavior management system, helping students become independent learners, and addressing disruptive and noncompliant behaviors. The Reading, Literacy and Language Arts modules cover reading assessment, comprehension strategies, improving writing performance and more.

The case study units include scenarios and strategies covering a wide range of topics and grade levels. Supporting case study topics, the activity section presents issues surrounding these areas and offers suggestions on managing potential classroom situations.

The Information Briefs section provides references, websites, articles, strategies, and assessments for all topics helping teachers and administrators locate quick and easy access to organizations, authors, and a variety of support personnel. Through the Information Briefs section, research-based information is offered in one convenient location without having to research topics at the library or search on-line.

To access the IRIS Center's website, go to: <http://www.iriscenter.com>. The IRIS Center offers a brochure describing the IRIS Center, its goals, services, and contact information. There is an icon titled, "Fast Facts," that details the number of visitors to the IRIS website, what resources were accessed, requested and downloaded. Dates of IRIS training seminars and feedback on previous seminars are also included.

The IRIS Center is used by dozens of schools across the state of Utah. Sandy Shepard of Wasatch Peak Academy and Jan Whimpey from Syracuse Arts Academy have presented various trainings on how to navigate IRIS to charter schools with overwhelming success. Comments such as, "I wish I had known about the IRIS Center, years ago" or "I use the IRIS Center as a resource so often that I don't know how I managed to teach effectively before now" are common responses.

Personally, I wish I had access to the IRIS Center when I was in the classroom. I now turn to The IRIS Center on a regular basis when I prepare to present school-wide trainings throughout Utah. ■