

1234

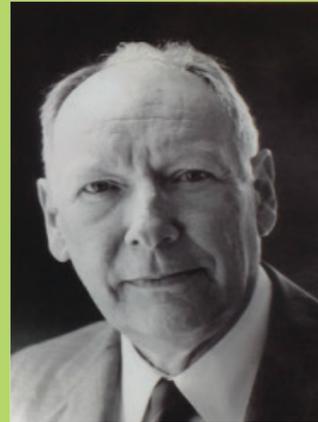
Dr. J. D. Mashburn: A philanthropist's support of SIM

In 1991, Dr. and Mrs. J. D. Mashburn made a \$1 million gift to their alma mater, the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) to establish the Mashburn Center for Learning. The focus of the Center was on exemplary practices for teaching struggling learners and, later, to endow a chair in the area of special education.

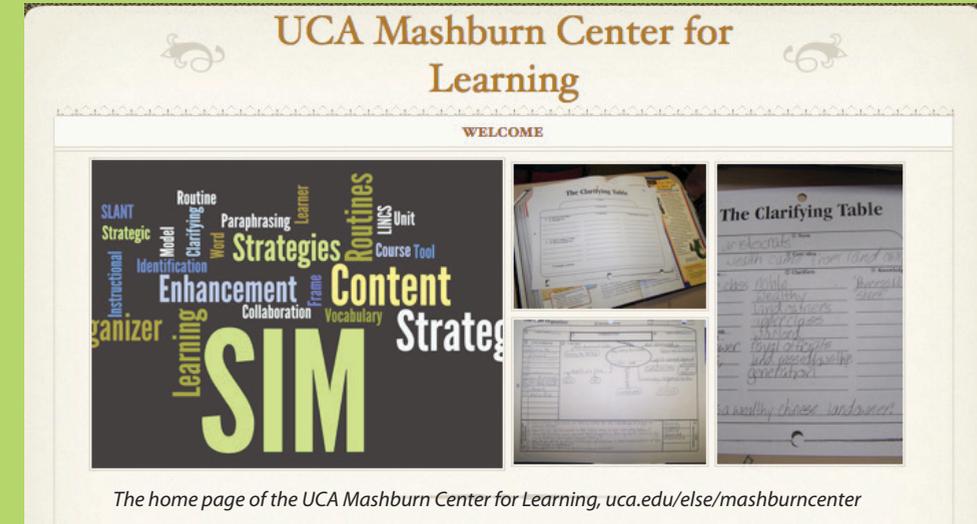
The Mashburns established the center because of their own experience as parents. They had never heard of learning disabilities until the two youngest of their four children, despite obvious intelligence, struggled with reading from an early age. The family ultimately learned that the children had learning disabilities, but according to Dr. Mashburn, the children's struggles with reading nearly devastated their lives as teachers mistook the children's disabilities for a lack of trying.

Thanks to the Mashburns' generous gift, hundreds of teachers in Arkansas schools have been armed to use evidence-based practices with students with learning disabilities. The stated mission of the Center is to create resources and opportunities that empower Arkansas teachers to promote a sense of purpose, hope, academic achievement, and resilience for all learners as they experience barriers in learning.

As a part of this mission, the Mashburn Center brought authorities on learning disabilities to UCA, and partnered with KUCRL and KUCRL researchers Don Deshler, Keith Lenz and others, working to build SIM capacity throughout the state of Arkansas in order to prepare classroom teachers to use scientifically based instructional practices to improve outcomes for students prone to fail or fall behind. To date, more than 400 preservice and inservice educators have successfully participated in SIM Mashburn Institutes. Consistent with the vision of Dr. and Mrs. J. D. Mashburn, the academic achievement of thousands of students who struggle with learning in Arkansas schools has been dramatically improved as a result of the skills teachers have acquired through the Mashburn Center for Learning.



Dr. J. D. Mashburn



The home page of the UCA Mashburn Center for Learning, uca.edu/else/mashburncenter

Keith Lenz, Special Education Department Chair at the University of Central Arkansas and KUCRL researcher recalls, "For many years, Don (Deshler) and I went to UCA each summer to prepare Arkansas teachers to use SIM interventions in their schools. After many years of returning to UCA to participate in this initiative, it became clear that the work of the Mashburn Center had the potential for changing the quality of education across Arkansas. The Center has truly grown, has gained champions across the state, and is now a well respected player in national efforts to increase the use of research-based interventions. The evolution has been remarkable, and the Arkansas leadership should be proud of what it has accomplished and excited about the future."

Lenz continues, "One of my the most gratifying moments in recent years happened a few years ago while I was dining at a restaurant during the annual SIM International Conference. A teacher from Texas who had become a SIM Professional Developer came up to me and wanted to thank me for teaching at UCA's Mashburn summer institute years ago launching his use of SIM. He said, 'Dr. Lenz, I know that a large part of why I got my job in Texas was because of my exposure to the UCA's Mashburn Institute, and SIM has been a big piece in my success as a teacher and a professional developer. I wanted to let you know that the work of the Mashburn Institute and its attention to SIM is having an impact on the lives of students beyond Arkansas. Thank you so much; it has changed my life.'"

Dr. Mashburn passed away in 2015, but the Mashburn Center continues to make a difference in Arkansas. As of 2017, there are 42 SIM Professional Developers in Arkansas, in addition to three educators in process of becoming SIM Professional Developers. There are two SIM Professional Development Leaders (PDLs) in Arkansas, and two professional developers in process of becoming PDLs. The Center holds approximately 60 SIM professional development events annually in school districts through regional Cooperatives, with state ADE content specialists, with undergraduate and graduate participants, delivering SIM to well over 1000 teachers since 2010.