

“I loved teaching, but I wasn’t satisfied just being in the classroom. VMI builds leaders, and I had it in me that I wanted to lead.”



Abbott Keesee

Career Track

Dr. Abbott W. Keesee '00, VMI English B.A., has seventeen years' experience in the field of education and is currently serving as principal of Lylburn Downing Middle School in Lexington. Prior to that, he served as an assistant principal at Nelson County High School, coordinator of student services at Rockbridge County High School, and English teacher in grades 8, 9, 10, and 12 at RCHS and Covington High School. Keesee holds a Master's in educational leadership and a Ph.D. in strategic leadership with a K-12 concentration, both from James Madison University.

“VMI prepares you well for a career in education. Aside from the reading and writing skills, it teaches you perseverance and persistence. If VMI alumni are successful, it’s not because there’s some magic emanating from this place. It’s **because they’ve learned how to work hard, and how to take care of the people in their charge.**”

Interested in becoming a Writing Center Consultant?

The VMI Writing Center has opportunities every year for cadets to become **peer consultants**, an experience of considerable value when applying for jobs in teaching and training, as well as graduate degrees.

ERH 250, Teaching Writing, serves as a foundation in the principles of rhetoric and composition that will prepare cadets for (but does not guarantee) employment as peer consultants. The course provides an introduction to contemporary philosophies, theories, and pedagogies of teaching writing, as well as current scholarship on tutoring and writing centers. Special attention is devoted to analyzing the role(s) of the teacher/tutor, responding to texts-in-progress, and continuing to strengthen cadets’ abilities as readers and writers.

So you want to teach?

Preparing for a career in education with the VMI English major



The VMI English B.A. gives you the foundation for several career tracks in education.

- Diverse jobs in **teaching English outside the United States** are open to graduates with an English B.A. Organizations that hire English teachers and tutors include private schools, government-sponsored organizations, nonprofits, and corporations.
- In the United States, government-sponsored and nonprofit organizations that **focus on community literacy initiatives** often need English B.A.s.
- Some **elementary and high school teaching opportunities**, especially those that pair with coaching, are open to English B.A.s.
- Other elementary and high school teaching positions require licensure or certification that you can pursue once you've earned your B.A.

- An English B.A. prepares you for pursuing a **Master of Arts or Master of Science degree** in English or Education. With an M.A. or M.S., you are qualified for many teaching and administration positions at the elementary, high school, and community college level, as well as some adjunct positions at colleges and universities.
- An English B.A. also prepares you for pursuing what's called a terminal degree: an M.F.A. (Master of Fine Arts) or Ph.D. (doctor of philosophy). Many people earn an M.A. before entering these programs, though some programs accept B.A.s, too. These **terminal degrees prepare you to pursue tenure-track teaching and research positions at colleges and universities.**
- Another terminal degree is the Ed.D. (doctor of education), a professional degree for pursuing administration positions in education.



“What drew me to literature in the first place is the fact that it prepares you for life. Literature encourages us to consider perspectives other than our own and to analyze and assess situations for which there is no blueprint.”

Henry Wise

Career Track

Maj. Henry Wise '05, VMI English B.A., is a graduate of the University of Mississippi M.F.A. in Creative Writing program. He began his teaching career in 2005 at the Republic of China Military Academy in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, where he selected, taught, and prepared cadets to attend American military schools. He returned to VMI in 2017, where he is now an assistant professor in the ERHS Department, teaching writing and American literature. His own work appeared in Shenandoah, Radar Poetry, and Nixes Mate Review, among other literary journals.

“My English major experience taught me how to think on my feet and make important decisions with the right knowledge. Perhaps of more significance is that teaching at VMI has reminded me how important my professors were as mentors and how I want to be the same for cadets I teach.”

Interested in an advanced degree?

All ERHS faculty are happy to discuss this with you, but be sure to consult MAJ Wise, the department's official contact for all things related to graduate school. He can tell you about taking the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), finding the right degree program, putting together applications, and more.