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**Conyers Talks ‘Five Big Ideas’  
on Alvin Jones Radio Program**

With the newly published *Five Big Ideas for Effective Teaching: Connecting Mind, Brain, and Education Research to Classroom Practice* receiving high praise from educators, coauthor Marcus Conyers recently made a guest appearance on the Dr. Alvin Jones radio show to discuss the teaching and learning principles featured in the book.

“One of the most exciting areas in scientific development today is that we’re learning more about the human brain than ever before,” said Conyers, who collaborated with Donna Wilson in writing *Five Big Ideas*. “In fact, some researchers say we’ve learned more about the brain in the last 10 years than in the previous 200.”

To illustrate the profound implications of this research, Conyers asked listeners to visualize students arriving in classrooms all across America. “Their brains are powered by 100 billion neurons capable of making more connections than there are stars in the universe. Once you begin to understand that, you can see that what teachers do in the classroom to cultivate their knowledge and skills makes a real difference. And then we can be much more optimistic about the potential of all the kids that arrive in school.”

Wilson and Conyers are codevelopers of graduate degree programs with majors in Brain-Based Teaching offered through the Abraham S. Fischler School of Education at Nova Southeastern University. Conyers pointed out that *Five Big Ideas* harnessed the

collective wisdom of teachers who earned their degrees from these programs by including their stories of how they are putting these principles into practice in their classrooms.

The first concept explored in the new book is neuroplasticity. “What’s so exciting is that we now know that learning changes the physical structure of the brain,” Conyers told Jones. “Whereas before it was thought that the brain was pretty much hard-wired, we now know that every time you learn something new or have new thoughts, you literally are creating new connections in the brain.”

The reality of brain plasticity makes possible the next big idea, which is that every student has vast learning potential. Conyers observed that the teachers who acknowledge potential in students and themselves are more likely to have higher expectations. “And what we know from research is that when teachers have higher expectations, children achieve more.”

This concept connects with the third big idea—the modifiability of intelligence. “We used to think that intelligence was relatively fixed at birth,” Conyers explained. “But we now know that intelligence is modifiable. So, we’re not stuck with a certain level of intelligence. We can actually cultivate and grow it through doing some of the strategies and activities that we have in the book.”

Conyers identified the fourth big idea as the Body-Brain System, which recognizes the importance of nutrition and exercise in learning. Finally, the fifth idea focuses on concept of metacognition and the teaching of cognitive skills. Metacognition can be defined as “thinking about thinking” with the goal of improving learning.

Teaching students when and how to use cognitive and metacognitive strategies helps them become “the bosses of their brains.” As Conyers explained to Jones, “Studies

show that when students are taught that learning changes the brain and they can literally make new connections, their motivation increases, as does their desire to persist when learning becomes difficult. All of these things come together to create a very powerful learning experience.”

Listen to the complete interview, conducted on April 25, by clicking on this link:

<http://www.dralvinjones.com/content/01%20Marcus%20Conyers.wma>.