On the cover and below: Kindergarten teacher Cybil Sanzetenea works with students at Lewis Gilpin Elementary, one of six schools in which The School District of Philadelphia has implemented dual-language bilingual education programs with the help of Penn GSE Assistant Professor Nelson Flores. Photos by Ginger Fox Photography.

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Letter from the Dean

Dear Alumni and Friends,

As my Unlocking Opportunity tour concludes, I want to say how delighted I have been to meet so many of you and to speak with you about Penn GSE’s work and my vision for the future of the School. As I traveled the country, graduates from recent years and every decade back to the 1960s recounted to me their fond memories of Penn GSE and the impact it had on their lives. Friends of the School told me why they believe in the power of education. It has been moving and inspiring to hear what Penn GSE and education mean to you.

Ultimately, I believe that the most important resources in education are human resources. There is no substitute for well-prepared and inspiring professionals to teach students, lead schools and institutions, and produce research and policies that support the efforts of educators. That is why I believe so strongly in Penn GSE’s mission of preparing transformative teachers and leaders.

In order to best prepare teachers for twenty-first-century classrooms, at Penn GSE we are working to reenvision our teacher education programs, combining our expertise in urban education with an experimental, cutting-edge perspective. Our faculty are fundamentally rethinking how we prepare teachers for the complexities of the future and the realities of under-resourced schools.

Another new effort to rethink how we prepare professionals is our creation of the Penn Futures Project, a collaboration between GSE, Penn Nursing, and the School of Social Policy and Practice. Penn GSE is committed to creating greater educational opportunities for all students, but we know that ensuring these opportunities will require us to work together—teachers and social workers, school nurses and counselors—to ensure pathways to success for all students. Penn Futures has already launched several initiatives, including one that places graduate students from all three schools in fieldwork assignments at Kensington Health Sciences Academy. This increases the human resources at the only neighborhood public school in Philadelphia devoted to preparing students for health science professions.

In these and all of our programs, Penn GSE’s commitment to innovation and thought leadership will continue to put us at the forefront of producing the teachers and leaders the world needs. The story of this work, and of all transformational change in education, always includes a much larger cast of individuals than a Hollywood movie. In this issue you will see the range of roles that the people of Penn GSE—students, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends—have embraced to advance education. Our cover story features Assistant Professor Nelson Flores’ work in bilingual education, part of the extraordinary legacy of our Educational Linguistics division, now celebrating its fortieth anniversary. Other stories highlight alumni leading in education policy, faculty aiming to improve civic engagement, a doctoral student working to increase educational opportunity, and Penn GSE programs offering professional development.

As always, I want to thank you for your role in the story of education. I hope you will join us during Penn’s Alumni Weekend on May 13, 2017, to celebrate the fortieth anniversary. Other stories highlight alumni leading in education policy, faculty aiming to improve civic engagement, a doctoral student working to increase educational opportunity, and Penn GSE programs offering professional development.

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Pam Grossman
Dean, Penn Graduate School of Education
George and Diane Weiss Professor of Education
The curriculum was rolled out using wearable technology—the same components that can monitor the wearer's skin temperature. By incorporating elements of fashion design and providing an alternative to classes that teach coding through robots, Dr. Kafai hopes to interest a wider range of students—particularly girls—in computer science. Kafai and her team are working with partners in the Exploring Computer Science project, which is supported by the National Science Foundation. Pictured (l.) Eleventh grader Eva Snyder (left) sews a sensor into a knit glove worn by her classmate Brianas Maldonado (right) at String Theory's Performance Arts School in Philadelphia.

Eleven researchers from Penn GSE, including nine standing faculty, made Education Week's 2017 Edu-Scholar Public Influence Rankings. The list, created by Rick Hess, the Director of Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute, recognizes scholars whose work shapes public discussion around education. It included Shawn R. Harper, Marybeth Gasman, Richard M. Ingersoll, Margaret E. Goertz, Robert Burch (l.), Andy Porter (r.), Pam Grossman, Vivian L. Gadsden, and Margaret E. Goertz (r.). Angela Duckworth, a professor of psychology with a secondary appointment at Penn GSE, was also recognized.

In response to concerns about political polar-ization in the wake of the presidential election, Penn GSE Professor Jonathan Zimmerman, initiated two February events bringing together students from Christian college Cairn University and Penn for civil political dialogue across differing perspectives and party affiliations. The conversations were moderated by Penn GSE's Harris Solomon (l.), faculty director of the Penn Project for Civic Engagement (PPEC), and PPEC coordinator Chris Satullo, both experts in civic dialogue. Entitled “Politics in the Age of Trump: Speaking Across Our Differences,” the events drew approximately eighty students from Cairn and Penn for panels and small-group discussions about their personal political views. “I decided to organize the event because I was distressed at the amount of political polarization in the country,” says Dr. Zimmerman. “Our democracy is predicated on the ability of people to speak across their differences.”

Aiming to drive the next generation of online learning, Associate Professor Ryan Baker (r.) has established the Penn Center for Learning Analytics (PCLA) with generous support from the Penn Office of the Provost as well as federal funding. PCLA will research both state-of-the-art online learning environments and traditional classroom instruction, investigating what approaches and methods best enhance students’ long-term outcomes. Dr. Baker, PCLA’s founding director, researches how students use and learn from educational games, intelligent tutors, simulations, and other kinds of educational software. He has received a grant of $842,492 from the National Science Foundation to study students’ learning processes within computer-based middle school science.

Penn GSE alumni Sha’Avin Savage, GED’02, GW ’17, (l.) was named principal of the Henry C. Lea Elementary School in West Philadelphia, a K–8 school with which Penn GSE coordinates a partnership. Groups across Penn—including Penn GSE, the Netter Center for Community Partnerships, Penn Libraries, and Penn Science Across the Ages—work with a Penn GSE-based liaison on site at the Lea School to operate a variety of school-day and after-school programs.

The Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander University of Pennsylvania/University Partnership School (Penn Alexander) was one of only a few hundred schools to be named a 2016 National Blue Ribbon School (l.). A K–8 school where Penn GSE maintains a University-wide partnership, Penn Alexander opened in 2001 through a historic effort by Penn, the School District of Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers to build a model university-assisted public school for West Philadelphia children.

Professor Jonathan A. Supovitz (r.), Associate Professor Janine Remillard (l.), and Dean Pam Grossman have received a $3 million grant from the National Science Foundation for a project to strengthen implementation of the Ongoing Assessment Project (OAP) mathematics intervention in School District of Philadelphia elementary schools. The project will create supports, tools, and resources for school leaders to help deepen OAP’s efforts to improve learning of mathematics. It will be co-developed in a research practice partnership with the District and the Philadelphia Educational Research Consortium.

The Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions, directed by Professor Marybeth Gasman, has been awarded over $745,000 in grants from ECMC Foundation and the Kresge Foundation to host a new program called “MSI Aspiring Leaders,” an effort to prepare the next generation of MSI presidents. An integral part of American higher education, MSIs—specifically, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Asian American, Native American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions—have carved out a unique niche in the nation, serving the needs of low-income, underserved students of color.

As leading voices in the field, Penn GSE faculty regularly weigh in on top issues in education. Here are a few highlights of their recent contributions in the media.

“A New Frontier: U.S. Academia Under President Trump”
Times Higher Education
January 19, 2017
Matthew Harley and Alan Ruby comment on the political, social, and educational impact of a Trump presidency.

“Nationwide, State Budget Cuts Disproportionately Hit Low-Income, Minority College Students”
PNN News Breaker
January 3, 2017
Joni Finney discusses her study of community colleges affordability in the context of national gaps in education attainment.

“Betsy DeVos as the Ed Secretary”
Wharton Business Radio
December 17, 2016
Mike Johannek and Michigan State’s Rebeccah Jacobson discuss Betsy DeVos’s nomination for U.S. Secretary of Education.

“Memo: Improving the Teacher Workforce”
Brookings Institute
December 9, 2016
Pam Grossman offers recommendations for the next administration on improving the teacher workforce.

“How Minority Serving Institutions Are Responding to Trump’s Win—and Making Their Pitch”
The Chronicle of Higher Education
November 16, 2016
Marybeth Gasman considers how a Trump presidency may affect prior White House initiatives supporting minority serving institutions.

“Both Trump Voters and People of Color Deserve to be Heard”
Inside Higher Ed
November 14, 2016
Shaun Harper reflects on the U.S. presidential election and the concerns of Trump voters and people of color.

News briefs are members of the Penn GSE faculty.

Visit www.gse.upenn.edu/news/in-the-media or follow @PennGSE on Twitter to stay up to date on Penn GSE in the media.
Education, Language, and Culture

Penn GSE’s Dr. Nelson Flores Advances Bilingual Education

by Juliana Rosati

As a child attending Philadelphia public schools, Penn GSE Assistant Professor Nelson Flores discovered that in some ways he lived in two worlds. When he unknowingly slipped a Spanish word into his English speech to say he was running from the cuco (boogeyman) or enjoyed watching a novela (soap opera) with his mother, he confronted confused looks or blank stares from his classmates and teachers. Fluent in English, he understood everything his mother said in Spanish at home. But at school, his knowledge of a language other than English had no place.

“I was negotiating such complex linguistic terrain, and yet none of this was incorporated into the curriculum,” he says. “My emerging bilingualism was irrelevant to the school.”

By the end of elementary school, Flores felt unable to speak Spanish due to lack of practice. It wasn’t until high school and college that he found a place for Spanish in his education. “By studying Spanish formally I was able to awaken the bilingualism that had been inside of me since I was a child,” he says.

Today Dr. Flores is working to change how language is taught, as well as how students from Spanish-speaking or bilingual households are perceived. His work has earned him the 2017 Early Career Award given for excellence in advancing the field of bilingual education by the American Educational Research Association’s Bilingual Education Research Special Interest Group.

“A lot of the dominant discourses about children from language-minoritized households—in particular Latino children from bilingual homes—say that the language these students are learning at home is somehow a barrier or is just not applicable to their learning in school,” Flores says.
“Language is also a symbol or an index of identity. We define who we are very much by what we say.”

The advantages, he notes, extend beyond academic achievement. “Language education is empowering when students’ home-language practices are made central to the curriculum,” he says.

Continuing a Linguistic Legacy at Penn GSE

Flores’ current work focuses on the “All Language” programs, which provide sustained instruction in both English and Spanish over a number of years. Students in such programs have been shown to outperform students in English-only programs on standardized assessments of English. This suggests that skills in one language can transfer to another, and that bilingualism supports English proficiency.

By studying a cohort of students as they progress through a dual-language program at a charter school and supporting the School District of Philadelphia in its efforts to implement dual-language programs in six elementary schools, Flores is taking forward a legacy in the renowned Educational Linguistics division at Penn GSE. The division, founded in 1975 to 1987. He founded the Educational Linguistics division to address the issue of teaching languages in ways that present yourself for particular purposes, “says a number of phrases in Spanish.

Flores views a language teacher as someone who teaches their students how to move flexibly across different communities and ways of communicating. “The division’s focus also means studying the relationship between language use and perceptions of academic success. When only one way of speaking is valued in the classroom, Dr. Rymes explains, students may be seen as unsuccessful on the basis of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. ‘If you don’t deeply examine why these two different words are used. They realized maybe it’s because you come from a different background as a District student and teacher has been an asset. “There were programs there still aren’t, many programs nationally or internationally that have that kind of focus.”

According to the division’s current chair, Professor Betsy R. Rymes, that focus means offering degree programs that prepare educators to communicate across cultures.

“In today’s worlds, teachers can’t assume that one day their students are going to live in a place where they start to launch in one way—the way they learned in classroom. Being a successful human will always involve communicating with people from different backgrounds and in different ways,” she says. “Our division views a language teacher as someone who teaches their students to manage the class rather than recognizing and building on the students’ storytelling skills. ‘Stylistic Native Hawaiian children were useful in telling stories in an overlapping style, called “talking story.” Teachers whose language appears in every day and just see this as unalright behavior. They would spend most of their time trying to manage the class rather than recognizing and building on the students’ students’ storytelling skills,” Rymes says.

The aim of recognizing and building on students’ existing language skills has led Flores to conduct a study at a dual-language charter school. Observing a group of students in school settings on a weekly basis from year to year, he and his team, including Penn GSE PhD student Mark Lewis and linguist Allison Still, sought to document the students’ processes of making meaning as they navigate between languages. The study began when the students were in kindergarten, and they are now in third grade. “Bilingual children’s lives often require them to do really sophisticated ways of communicating,” says Flores. One example that Phuong observed in the study was a discussion about frijoles and habichuelas, two words for “bean” in Spanish. Flores says, “When they were only in first grade, some of the students were really thinking about why these two different words are used. They realized maybe it’s because you come from a different background.”

Research has shown otherwise, revealing long-term benefits of bilingualism for both English language learners and native English speakers. Based on such findings, Flores argues that students with knowledge of Spanish should be viewed as bringing valuable resources to the classroom, rather than possessing deficient or irrelevant language skills. Through his research and his work with Philadelphia schools, Flores hopes to advance understanding of language teaching so that more students can draw upon their linguistic and cultural backgrounds as tools for learning.

The first five schools are located in North Philadelphia neighborhoods, and six schools: Lewis Elkin, Cayuga, Alexander K. McClure, Hon. Luis Muñoz-Marín, Bayard Taylor, and Southwark.

Flores lost no time in stepping forward to work with District officials to develop a special reading unit about the children’s picture book Alusita. Written by Arthur Dorros and illustrated by Elisa Kleven, the book tells of a magical journey that a little girl and her alusita (grandmother) take together, flying hand in hand over New York City. The book is written primarily in English, but the grandmother says a number of phrases in Spanish.

The unit, which Flores wrote with two Educational Linguistics alumni—Holly Link, GR’16, and Swarthmore College professor Elaine Allard, GR’10—uses the book to help teachers lead students through Common Core-aligned reading and writing activities. To test its practicality, Flores asked Carolena Lescano, then a bilingual teacher, to pilot it with her second-grade class at a Philadelphia public school.

“It was a high-quality lesson that I really enjoyed teaching,” says Lescano, now a literacy coach in The School District of Philadelphia. “My students loved it, and we had so many good conversations. They knew they’re bilingual, but it’s not as often that we’re using their bilingualism as a fun tool for reading and sharing stories.”

Flores, who formerly taught in the District himself, finds that working with teachers keeps him in touch with the realities of a classroom. Lescano’s feedback, he says, helped him to refine the unit, “I like working with schools because teachers are always looking for practical tools they can use,” he says.

Flores lost no time in stepping forward to work with District schools on a larger scale when he joined Penn GSE in 2012. The result has been a collaboration over the past four years to support the District’s initiative implementing dual-language programs in six schools: Lewis Elkin, Cayuga, Alexander K. McClure, Hon. Luis Muñoz-Marín, Bayard Taylor, and Southwark.

The first five schools are located in North Philadelphia neighborhoods with predominantly Latino communities. Most of these

had “transitional bilingual education” programs, meaning Spanish-speaking students were taught English, but their Spanish skills were not maintained. In response to research on the benefits of bilingualism, changing demographics, and interest expressed by parents, teachers, and administrators, Muñoz-Marín had begun piloting a dual-language program, and the District decided to do the same in the other four schools.

“We were really seeing the need to continue with Spanish literacy, with the goal being both English and Spanish literacy,” says Allison Still, GR’10, deputy chief in the District’s Office of Multilingual Curriculum and Programs. “We had more families that were third or fourth generation, so they were coming from bilingual homes and weren’t qualifying as English language learners.”

The change alters how Spanish-speaking students’ skills are valued in the classroom, according to Flores. “Transitional programs are remedial programs that treat bilingualism as a deficit, while dual-language programs are enrichment programs that treat bilingualism as a resource that should be developed for all students,” he says.

Southwark School, in South Philadelphia, did not have a transition program, but already had a dual-language program in response to high community interest. “There was this huge demand and interest among both Spanish-dominant and English-dominant students,” says Still.

The District decided to shift from transitional to dual-language programs.

Flores has offered professional development for language teachers in the programs, helping them identify and pursue specific literacy goals for both languages. Because Pennsylvania does not offer a bilingual certificate for teachers, the training fills a gap for the District. “Most of our teachers don’t come in with training in bilingual instructional practices,” says Flores, who points to the need for the student’s background as a District student and teacher has been an asset. “He’s immediately able to connect with the school communities.
I think the kind of sustained, focused, yearlong support we’re providing can make a big difference for a teacher.

Looking to the Future of Bilingual Education

The District aims to offer the dual-language programs throughout elementary school. Adding them to one grade level per year with the help of Flores’s team, it has implemented the programs from kindergarten through third grade so far. From Sully’s standpoint overseeing programs for the District, the success of Flores’s team is evident. “When we started, every school and classroom was figuring out how to implement the programs on its own,” she says. “Nelson and his team have really been able to help us establish some consistency across the different schools and classrooms.” Parents have the option of enrolling their children in the programs, and at Southwark this has resulted in a wait list. At the schools in North Philadelphia, Still says, the enrollment is moving closer to the District’s goal of a balance of Spanish-dominant and English-dominant students. The District plans to open up a citywide admission process next year for two of the programs so children living outside the school neighborhoods can participate. “I think a lot of people are really interested in bilingual education and understand how important it is, but they may not realize these programs are available in public schools,” she says.

Flores hopes families will take a broad view of the programs’ benefits. In addition to increased academic achievement and the empowerment that comes from building on their existing language skills, he explains, students from Spanish-speaking families gain the opportunity to continue communicating in Spanish with their parents, and their parents gain ease in communicating with the school. Students whose primary language is English gain a second language, and all students may learn about diversity.

“I hope seeing bilingualism treated as normal in the classroom helps children understand that diversity is not something to be afraid of,” Flores says. “Learning to navigate diversity and see it as just a part of life is something that all students would benefit from.”

Looking ahead, Flores hopes his work can establish an even broader perspective for bilingual education—one that addresses obstacles, such as racism and poverty, that many students in bilingual programs face outside of school. To this end, Flores is exploiting how to use research from another field, urban planning, in his work. While such an interdisciplinary approach may not be typical for a scholar of bilingualism, Flores knows that Penn GSE’s Educational Linguistics division—born of Dell Hymes’s combination of linguistic anthropology and education—is the right place to attempt it.

“The faculty here have always understood that the issues we face require a multifaceted toolkit,” he says. “When I tell my colleagues I’m thinking of bringing in another disciplinary perspective, they don’t say, ‘No, we’re only education scholars, we’re only anthropologists.’ They say, ‘Sure, why wouldn’t you do that?’”

Celebrating 40 Years of Educational Linguistics

Now celebrating its fortieth anniversary, the Educational Linguistics division at Penn GSE has a national and international reputation of excellence. In addition to Rymes, Hornberger, and Flores, the division’s core faculty include Associate Professor Yoko Butler, Lecturer Junko Hondo, Senior Fellow Diane Larsen-Freeman, Assistant Professor Yumi Matsumoto, Senior Lecturer Robert Moses, Senior Lecturer Anne Pomerantz, and Senior Lecturer Santoi Wagner. The division’s degree programs are among the longest standing at the School:

Educational Linguistics (Ph.D.)
This program focuses on language learning and teaching, and the role of language in learning and teaching. It is situated in educational policy and practice and connected to linguistics, anthropology, psychology, sociology, history, and other fields.

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (M.S.Ed.)
This classroom-oriented teacher preparation program stresses the role and function of English language teaching in relation to the political and social climate of today’s world.

Intercultural Communication (M.S.Ed.)
Providing a solid foundation in linguistic and discursive approaches, this program explores communication across linguistic, social, racial, ethnic, national, gender, and other groupings.

Visit www.gse.upenn.edu/edt to learn more about the division’s faculty and programs.
As the country begins a new era under a new administration, the challenges and opportunities facing education continue to be many—and how they are addressed could have a profound impact on K–12 and higher education for years to come. Penn GSE alumni are playing a transformative role in shaping the national education landscape. Graduates in government, research, and leadership roles have plenty of innovative ideas on how to tackle some of the nation’s most pressing educational challenges, whether by offering affordable college options, ensuring data-driven decisions, expanding educational access, or valuing the liberal arts. Here, four leaders share their insights.

Keeping Costs Down through Community Colleges

For many, the cost of higher education is a major hurdle to attending and finishing a degree. The new administration has said it will work with Congress on reforms that encourage colleges and universities to reduce costs in exchange for federal tax breaks and dollars. According to Peter Jordan, GRD’08, community colleges are an important—and often overlooked—player in holding down price tags.

As president of the Tarrant County College South Campus in Fort Worth, Texas, Jordan says that he’s “constantly trying to get students and their parents to think of how they can save money by getting a two-year community college degree and going on to a university, where many of our students transfer and get nice scholarships.”

At Tarrant County College, a community college system with six campuses, the per-credit cost is $59 for locals. Taxes, both local and state, contribute to supporting the school. Jordan also credits strong management and thoughtful investment decisions by the college’s board and administration with helping to maintain a lean bottom line.

Since Jordan took the helm at Tarrant in 2012, the college has opened two buildings without accruing debt. The 80,000-square-foot Center for Excellence for Energy Technology allows for growth in the college’s degree and certificate programs in heating, air-conditioning, and refrigeration as well as the development of new programs in renewable energy. Early College High School, housed in a 28,000-square-foot space, offers motivated high schoolers access to a college curriculum plus the opportunity to earn their associate’s degree and high school diploma simultaneously. Credits can transfer to the University of Texas or other state higher education institutions in Texas, potentially allowing students to begin college as juniors. “It’s about making sure not only that you’re not ending up with enormous college debt,” Jordan says, “but also that you’re getting a tremendous academic foundation.”

He thanks Penn GSE and its rigorous dissertation requirement for giving him “the confidence to pursue a college presidency.” To complete his Ed.D. in Penn GSE’s Executive Doctorate in Higher Education Management program, he produced a dissertation researching successful African American male students at an urban community college.

Today Jordan takes great pride in touting Tarrant’s relevance from “cradle to cane.” Besides the traditional associate’s degree and early college program, the campus serves K-12 students through after-school and summer programs and offers senior citizens a variety of learning opportunities, from fine arts to social media.

“When you make your institution or campus part of the community,” he says, “you change the life of the community.”
Using Data to Guide Policies

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed in 2015, is poised to fully roll out in 2017 to replace the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. It has the potential to significantly change K-12 education—and whether ultimately that’s for better or worse depends largely on the deft use of research and assessment to guide decisions, argues Irma Perez-Johnson, GR’08.

“There will be lots to track and study,” says Perez-Johnson, a vice president at American Institutes for Research (AIR) specializing in research and evaluation. AIR, a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization based in Washington, DC, conducts behavioral and social science research domestically and internationally in the areas of education, health, and workforce productivity. It is one of the largest organizations of its kind in the world.

“The focus of control and decision-making is moving away from the federal level, or at least the federal level will have a more limited role,” Perez-Johnson says ofESSA’s States and local districts will have broader discretion on a host of policies.

Will they stick with current Common Core State Standards? Or try “challenging state academic standards,” which can include subjects beyond math, language arts, and science? What will individual states emphasize for students to learn and master? Which strategies will states—or even individual principals and teachers—use to intervene in low-performing schools and make improvements?

Examining what happens next will be key to ensuring data-driven decisions in the years ahead, according to Perez-Johnson. “We have not uncovered any silver bullets that will help us immediately transform education,” she allows, “but we have found some things that help us make progress. It would be a pity if we failed to build on the knowledge base that has been established.”

Looking ahead, Perez-Johnson also says that U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos’s expected emphasis on vouchers to expand school choice to private schools should receive close scrutiny. Evidence on the effectiveness of different types of schools—public, charter, or private—is limited and mixed, with wide variability, she says. “Widespread use of vouchers would represent a bold change in education policy,” she states. “It would be very important to study the effects of such an approach.”

For more than twenty years, Perez-Johnson has built a career using data to figure out what works and what doesn’t. At Mathematica, a nonpartisan, international research organization where Perez-Johnson was a senior researcher and board member, she focused on the evaluation of labor and educational initiatives. She looked at why gaps in student achievement persist and examined the effectiveness of Race to the Top and School Improvement Grants, as well as data-driven instruction.

Perez-Johnson says that earning her Ph.D. in education policy at Penn GSE bolstered her understanding of new research methodologies. “It was wonderful to be embedded within the Graduate School of Education, where individuals who thought about education from different angles,” she says. “The experience left her as committed as ever to policy making guided by proof. “Ultimately, that’s the best way to invest resources,” she says.

Perez-Johnson argues Irma Perez-Johnson GR’08

Making the Case for the Humanities

T o Margaret “Peggy” Plympton, GRD’11, a liberal arts education—regardless of one’s career path—represents a timeless foundation for success. But in a higher education environment of limited resources and increasing focus on workforce preparation, the study of traditional liberal arts subjects such as the humanities, social sciences, and abstract math and science can prove a tough sell.

And therein lies the challenge for educators, says Plympton, deputy chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities. “How do we make the case that these are investments worth making?” she asks.

One clear answer comes through the daily work of Plympton and others at NEH, an independent federal agency that funds programs in language, literature, history, philosophy, archaeology, ethics, and other humanities subjects around the country. The agency’s website claims a central role for these disciplines in the life of the nation: “Because democracy demands wisdom, NEH serves and strengthens our republic by promoting excellence in the humanities and conveying the lessons of history to all Americans.”

Appointed to her post in January 2015, Plympton oversees operations, with a budget of $150 million and 160 employees. In her role, she says, she looks to build partnerships that advance the humanities while getting the most bang for the taxpayer buck. Some of NEH’s hundreds of grants have sought to support cultural institutions, strengthen teaching and learning of the humanities in both schools and colleges, and encourage original scholarship.

Plympton has embraced the value of the humanities and the larger sphere of the liberal arts since her undergraduate days as a Latin major at Wellesley College in Massachusetts. “It’s a role for higher education writ large to be able to help people understand, ‘Why does it matter?’ Why is it worth it for students, but also why is it worth it for all of us?” she says. “The value of a liberal arts education lies in critical thinking skills, effective communica
tions, an understanding of the historical context of our world today, the ability to understand and appreciate the worldviews of others, and the capacity to live well.”

Her own career, largely spent in higher education finance and administration, has taught her firsthand the benefits of these habits of mind: “Just learning accounting might get you your first job, but it’s absolutely not going to equip you for a career,” she says.

Plympton applauds schools with professional programs that still demand an independent approach to education. She citing her previous employer, Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, which encourages future engineers to develop a broad, multidisciplinary perspective. After all, they will need to understand client needs and communicate ideas to those in other fields, she says.

At Penn GSE, Plympton honed her skills in the Executive Doctorate in Higher Education Management program, earning her Ed.D. while picking the minds of a cadre of fellow travelers—her cohort of twenty-five classmates progressing through the program together. “My cohort members were instant supporters and sources of information,” she says, “I really think that’s the most important part. We still keep in touch.”

After a stint as an executive search consultant, Plympton got the dream opportunity at NEH. Education, she says, is the thread that runs through her career and drives her work. “I care deeply about how our nation prepares college graduates,” she says. “Helping colleges and universities provide education that matters is what gets me up in the morning.”

Educational Opportunity through Technology

T he mission of the U.S. Department of Education includes “ensur
ing equal access”—a goal that has too often proven elusive. David Soo, GR’11, views technology as a key tool for sup
porting equal opportunity.

Soo, a senior policy adviser at the Office of Educational Technology within the Secretary’s Office at the U.S. Department of Education, is the Educational Quality through Innovation Partnerships (EQIP) program, launched in 2016 at eight pilot sites, it encourages colleges and universities to create innovative partnerships. EQIP links nontraditional training providers to academic institutions, thereby allowing students—particularly those from low-income backgrounds—to access federal financial aid for the first time.

Soo traces his career trajectory into higher education innovation straight back to his experience at Penn GSE. While working on his Ph.D. in higher education, Soo interned at the Department of Education with the help of Professor Matthew Hartley. Soo, whose early career was in student life, soon caught the policy bug through his practical experience in Washington. He says his doctorate also gave him a broad and deep understanding of higher education governance and structure, which he believes is critical to creating programs that have real impacts.

“We need to continue to work with academic institutions to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have the chance to pursue a complete education,” Soo says.

David Soo GR’11

Margaret Plympton GRD’11

[ FEATURES ]

THE PENN GSE MAGAZINE | SPRING 2017

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Across the country and around the world, education offers the promise of knowledge, skills, growth, and something more—a vital path forward for individuals and societies. As Penn GSE continues to expand education’s reach and boost its effectiveness, striving to realize the vision Dean Grossman has set forth, support for the people and programs that make this work possible will continue to be vital. Here are four stories of alumni and friends whose engagement is helping Penn GSE bring opportunity to a broad range of learners and communities.

Advancing Thought Leadership in Education
From his vantage point managing investments in industrial sectors for a private equity firm, Penn GSE Board of Overseers member Rajeev Amara, W’97, foresees technological changes that will alter education for a private equity firm, Penn GSE Board of Overseers member Rajeev Amara, W’97, and Jeffrey S. McKibben, W’93; Michael G. Kirsch, GED’71, GR’87, and her late husband, Steven S. Goldberg, GR’6S, when they first met. Today their mutual sense of purpose is becoming a legacy at Penn GSE through two gifts the couple planned before Goldberg’s death.

“Our love and shared a commitment to doing what we could to forward social justice in our community,” says Christman. She was founder and principal of Research for Action, an independent, not-for-profit educational research organization focused on issues of equity, and previously taught at the West Philadelphia Community Free School. Goldberg, whose scholarship focused on special education law, taught school administrators and law students and advocated for mediation as a way of resolving conflicts between parents and educators. The couple served as associate faculty at Penn for many years, Goldberg at Penn Law and both he and Christman at GSE. “We inspired and supported one another in giving our best to our chosen work,” says Christman.

Their generosity establishes a new biannual lecture series in education law and recognizes graduating doctoral students at Penn GSE for their work in urban education through the Steven S. Goldberg and Jolley Bruce Christman Lecture in Education Law Fund and the Jolley Bruce Christman and Steven S. Goldberg Annual Award for Best Dissertation in Urban Education Fund.

The first award will be given in May 2017, and the first lecture is scheduled for this fall.

Christman hopes that this support inspires others to contribute to the aims she and her husband shared. “Our goal in establishing these funds was to encourage and recognize astute and unflinching analysis of social justice issues in education, coupled with hopeful and pragmatic recommendations for moving equity forward,” she says. “I have every confidence that Penn GSE will be a wonderful steward of our gifts.”

Helping Fellow Educators Improve Children’s Lives
As a school principal for forty-two years, Michael G. Kirsch, C’68, GED’71, GR’87, never tired of learning and promoting new approaches to teaching and leadership. His commitment to professional development for educators began at Penn GSE, where as a student he supported the efforts of Dr. Matthew Pillard and the Philadelphia Suburban School Council, now known as the Center for School Study Councils.

“I worked with almost a hundred school districts to assist in planning professional development programs for administrators and superintendents,” says Kirsch. “Later, as a principal, I was always thrilled to learn new ways of working with students.”

Kirsch recalls the changes in education and the world that made professional development a necessity during his forty years as a principal in the Chappapago Central School District in New York and two years leading an elementary school in Haverford Township, Pennsylvania. “There were no computers when I started my career,” he says. “Over the years, ways of teaching reading and math changed a lot, as did the issues society was facing.”

During these same four decades, Kirsch became a loyal donor to the Penn GSE Annual Fund, contributing nearly every year since 1977. A member of the Penn GSE Benchmark Society, which recognizes consistent giving, Kirsch cites the same motivation for his support of the Annual Fund that he does for his career. “I always told teachers, we’re not here for us, we’re here for the students,” he says. “I think Penn GSE is a very worthwhile institution that has made a difference for a lot of children through wonderful teachers and administrators. My continued involvement with the School is about supporting teachers and administrators in making the lives of children better.”

Supporting Professors as the Bedrock of the School
Ensuring a strong teacher workforce for the future means supporting the faculty who will prepare those teachers for their careers, according to Allison Bieber McKibben, C’93, and Penn GSE Board of Overseers member Jeffrey S. McKibben, W’93.

“We feel strongly that a dedicated, talented, and diverse group of faculty is the bedrock of what makes Penn GSE so special to its students,” says Jeff, who, with Allison, is contributing to endowed faculty support at Penn GSE. One of the top priorities of the School under Dean Pam Grossman, faculty support allows Penn GSE to retain and recruit the finest scholars around the globe. “It is critical to preserve and enhance the ability of the School to retain the talent we have and attract new talent for growth,” says Jeff.

Love of Penn and the desire to give back drew the McKibbens to support GSE. During the twenty-four years since their graduation from Penn, the two got engaged on campus at their fifth reunion and over time increased their involvement with the University, seeking an area of outsized potential, “The School has a number of competitive advantages relative to its peers—urban geography, programming breadth, and doctoral opportunities—to name a few.”

The promise and power of teacher preparation appears particularly to the couple, who credit education with changing their own lives and express gratitude for those who made it possible. “Penn GSE is a fulcrum that enables the rise of teacher talent in the urban environment of Philadelphia, across the United States, and internationally,” says Jeff. “Ultimately, the impact is realized by the multitudes of students who are taught by Penn GSE graduates today, tomorrow, and in the future.”
What helps a child become an adult who votes? What can educators do to produce active citizens who voice their opinions to elected officials, volunteer for charities and community organizations, or even run for office? During the past three years, Penn GSE’s Professor Sigal Ben-Porath and Assistant Professor Rand Quinn have been studying civic engagement among students at two West Philadelphia high schools, working to understand how differences in school environments can affect students’ opportunities to develop as citizens. We sat down with Drs. Ben-Porath and Quinn to learn how their study, supported by the Gregory and EJ Milken Foundation, aims to inform teachers, researchers, and policymakers.

**What prompted your study?**

**Ben-Porath:** There has been a larger effort in education to try to understand some of the additional factors beyond academic achievement that should be considered when we assess school success and the ways that students are prepared for life after high school. One of these factors is civic engagement, meaning the capacity that students develop to be productive and contributing members of their communities and their society. It includes their sense of themselves as having something to contribute, as well as their trust in public institutions.

**Quinn:** There’s reason to believe that the civic engagement of young people has implications for their engagement in adulthood. In addition, there is a civic empowerment gap that many have written about. Young citizens from communities of color, low-income households, or immigrant backgrounds tend to be far less civically engaged and have far fewer civic opportunities than their counterparts who are white, middle- and upper-class, or native-born. Sigal and I wanted to study civic opportunities in two different school communities to try to understand the relationship between school context and civic engagement.

**What kinds of civic opportunities were you looking at, and why is school an important place for students to encounter them?**

**Ben-Porath:** School is the one institution that is really open to everyone and is the most longstanding in young people’s lives. Many studies show that it’s not primarily the content you learn—in a social studies or government class, for example—that influences your civic behavior. More important are the ways in which schools are engaging with students’ perspectives and preferences, as well as teaching them about boundaries and expectations through disciplinary practices. To what extent is the school recognizing the voices of students—for instance, by incorporating discussion time into class, or responding when students organize to start a club? How do rules allow students to learn about interacting with peers and authority?

**How did you conduct your research, and what were you looking for?**

**Quinn:** Sigal and I worked with a team of Penn GSE doctoral students to study two West Philadelphia high schools. Though the schools are only about two miles from each other, they are very different. One is a neighborhood school that enrolls students who live nearby. The other is a charter school that exhibits elements of a “no-excuses” model, meaning there is a regimented form of behavior management. Some of its students have chosen to enroll from outside of the neighborhood. Our doctoral students observed spaces throughout the school—classrooms during core content classes, certainly, but also the hallways between periods, the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch, and areas used for after-school activities. We also interviewed and surveyed the high school students. We wanted to document various behaviors and assess the extent to which
“Teenagers are going to try to find out what kind of boundaries they can push and what kind of power they can exert.”

Reading, writing, and communication are at the core of a student’s ability to learn any subject. Yet too often, schools are not equipped to teach these skills in ways that research has proven effective. For over twenty-six years, the Penn Literacy Network (PLN) at Penn GSE has worked to change this through practical professional development to help pre-K–12 educators improve their methods of teaching literacy. The program has worked with more than 36,000 educators since its founding.

“We’re changing a generation,” says PLN Executive Director Bonnie Botel-Shephard, GED’76, GRD’81. “When I think of the number of children we ultimately serve through the educators we touch, it’s overwhelming.”

Interactive Learning Experiences for Educators

Schools and districts partner with PLN to provide onsite credit and noncredit professional development and coaching for faculty and administrators. This work is grounded in the research-based approach of the renowned late Penn GSE professor Morton Botel, Ed’46, GED’48, GR’53, who created “Four Lenses of Learning” and “Five Reading: Writing, and Talking Processes” that underpin PLN’s course offerings. The goal is to help teams of educators use literacy practices in multiple subject areas, including English, math, social studies, science, and the arts, so that students become more productive and reflective learners. During the courses, PLN works collaboratively with educators. “We ask them to bring their own materials to the course sessions so that they can construct their own version of what literacy looks like in the classroom,” says Dr. Botel-Shephard, who is Morton Botel’s daughter. PLN’s coaching likewise helps teachers incorporate new approaches into their everyday work. “Our coaches work closely with teachers to observe and support their instruction and provide feedback,” says PLN Associate Director Lara Paparo, GED’06. “To have someone in the classroom to work with them is a powerful thing.”

A Growing Network

PLN has expanded its reach carefully over time, seeking to work with schools on a long-term basis. Having launched originally in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, today PLN also works in Delaware, New York, Vermont, Florida, California, Ireland, Scotland, China, and India. Alumni of GSE and Penn have played a valuable role in increasing PLN’s capacity both regionally and nationally. Penn GSE alumna Tara Novell, GED’97, a public school teacher in Tampa, Florida, has worked as a PLN facilitator and helped PLN connect with educational venues in her area. “My collaboration with PLN allows me to remain connected to GSE and the Penn community,” Novell says. “I have found it incredibly rewarding. Though I have participated in numerous professional development opportunities, I have yet to experience one as rich and relevant as PLN.”

Skills for Families in Need

Taking its work beyond schools to realize one of Botel-Shephard’s dreams, PLN recently established the Family Success Coaching Initiative to address how poverty and homelessness affect children’s opportunities to learn. Through a pilot program, “Good Eating/Good Reading,” PLN brought its literacy workshops and coaching to homeless women and their children at the People’s Emergency Center in West Philadelphia. There, PLN taught literacy skills and healthy eating habits simultaneously through books about nutrition.

“We provided activities for parents and children to do together to jump-start children’s learning,” says Botel-Shephard. “Parents are building their literacy skills as well and certainly their confidence.” The goal is to instill habits and skills that will help families move out of poverty. Botel-Shephard hopes to expand the program across the city and the nation. “We want to provide a sustainable model for homeless shelters and other family-focused organizations,” she says.

Though PLN reaches thousands of people each year, Botel-Shephard says she thinks about the program’s impact in terms of individuals. “What is one child in one teacher’s classroom experiencing?” she asks. “One mom who has been homeless—what does she gain? That’s what I focus on.”

Visit www.gse.upenn.edu/pln for more information about PLN’s programs. To learn more about becoming a local PLN facilitator, contact gspennnlit@pobox.upenn.edu or 215-988-1984.
For someone growing up in a town near El Salvador’s capital city, the study of American higher education was not the most practicable career path. For Andrés Castro Samayoa—a Ph.D. candidate in Penn GSE’s Higher Education program who will join the faculty of Boston College’s Lynch School of Education in September—the choice has always been a matter of following his heart.

As a Harvard freshman he discovered, firsthand, the critical infrastructure that universities set up to support students and ensure that they succeed. “I had a tumultuous transition from El Salvador to the U.S.; it was a lot to process.” Castro Samayoa says of his freshman year. He joined a welcoming and inclusive community at the Harvard College Women’s Center, where he worked throughout his undergraduate years. He found that administrators, too, were invested in his success, and as a Student Life Fellow, he worked with the Dean’s Office to support diversity on campus. “It’s not just about giving access to students like myself who really would not have been able to go to college without assistance; it’s also about making sure that once they’re there, they feel like they belong to a community and can thrive,” he says.

Castro Samayoa had planned to study biochemistry, but found an academic home when he took a Science, Gender, and Sexuality course taught by a Guatemalan professor with whom he felt a kinship. He went on to earn a master’s degree from Cambridge University as a prestigious Gates Cambridge Scholar. Today his research at Penn GSE continues the exploration he began in the Harvard course, investigating how diversity and equity are supported in educational settings.

At Penn GSE, Castro Samayoa says he has found a place where “people were not only interested in developing and cultivating me as a researcher, but also as someone who is committed to doing work that matters.”

His mentor, Marybeth Gasman, professor of Higher Education at Penn GSE, calls Castro Samayoa “intellectually breathtaking and beautifully humble,” saying that the faculty on his dissertation committee gave him the uncommon advice to save some of the ambitious work that he has planned until he becomes a professor.

Gasman also praises the deep sense of integrity that Castro Samayoa brings to his work. “Andrés has a large capacity for work and research and always gives everything he does his very best effort,” she says. “He’s not concerned about being popular; he’s concerned about being on the right side of justice.”

Preparing to Create Change

CASTRO SAMAYOA’S dissertation at Penn GSE is a social history that focuses on how race and gender are considered on national postsecondary education surveys, which are important instruments for determining federal initiatives and funding, including the eligibility for funds that support Minority Serving Institutions. He has interviewed government officials, professors, leaders, researchers, and others to study the changes that have unfolded from the 1970s to the present.

One example is a U.S. Office of Management and Budget directive to add a “Hispanic or Someone of Latin American Descent” category to the survey in the 1970s. The change, Castro Samayoa says, reflected the efforts of grassroots organizations in the 1970s that promoted the term “Hispanic” as a politically advantageous term, but the result has been a more limited ability to understand racial diversity within the group identifying themselves as Hispanic.

Rather than ask if the current method of data collection is better or worse, Castro Samayoa is focused on understanding the political undertones of the choices that are made and explaining how various stakeholders determine what kind of data is valued.

He hopes to use his work to encourage others to consider categories of race and ethnicity, gender identity, and sexuality as products of an era rather than objective truths. He points to nonbinary and transgender communities as another example. “Most of our ways of collecting information at the federal, state, and institutional levels continue to have a binary way of understanding people’s experiences,” he adds. “I think that we have a missed opportunity there to make members of our community legible, make them visible.”

By identifying who historically has not had a space on the survey or a “seat at the table” and asking why, Castro Samayoa hopes he will help effect concrete change.

According to Gasman, who compares Castro Samayoa’s writing to that of a historian, he is already well on his way to having an “impact. “His dissertation is masterful in scope, depth, and intellectual rigor,” she says. “I predict he will influence the field in compelling ways.”

Honing the Tools for Success

DURING HIS FIVE YEARS AT Penn GSE, where he was a recipient of the Carmen T. Middleberg Scholarship, Castro Samayoa enjoyed a flexible program that allowed him to learn multiple research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, and pursue questions from an interdisciplinary perspective.

In addition to rigorous courses in educational theory at GSE, he took content analysis at the Annenberg School for Communication, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) at PennDesign, and oral history at Penn Arts & Sciences. The latter, he says, provided important tools for his dissertation.

“The program allowed me to branch out in terms of the tools that I was putting in my toolkit to go and do work,” he says. “My mind just doesn’t work in a way that is confined to one particular disciplinary tenet.”

His coursework and research also informed his teaching. He served as a teaching assistant and primary instructor of History of American Higher Education as well as a survey course in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies program at Penn Arts & Sciences. “In my undergraduate course, I ask students to tell me what gender means to them, and we hammer out answers to the
Alumni and friends gathered in Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, DC, during 2016–2017 for Dean Grossman’s Unlocking Opportunity Tour. Dr. Grossman shared her vision for Penn GSE, describing how the School’s legacy in four areas—equity and access, practical knowledge, powerful partnerships, and innovation for impact—will grow during Penn GSE’s second century. “Education is the key to unlocking opportunity,” she said.

 Dean Grossman Visits Six Cities to Share Her Vision

grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. In addition to working at the Center, Gasman says, Castro Samayoa was also instrumental in its creation. He helped her write a budget, brainstorm locations, organize staffing, and finalize the Center’s mission and goals.

Making the Professional Personal

 Castro Samayoa’s personal connection to his work and his colleagues sets him apart in academia, says the Center’s associate director for programs, Paola “Lola” Esmieu, GED’13. “He’s a fifth-year doctoral student, in the middle of the job search,” she says. None of this has distracted him from his responsibilities at the Center, Esmieu notes. “He’s never not there for us.”

A Better World

 Castro Samayoa is not alone in his belief that education can provide a path to forging a more just world, and he has put theory into practice at the Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). As the assistant director for assessment and senior research associate, Castro Samayoa works closely with Gasman, the Center’s founding director, to advance research and policies that help to strengthen colleges and universities receiving Title IV federal student aid as MSIs.

He notes that an institution’s ability to receive the MSI designation—and the funding that goes along with it—is primarily based on the enrollment of students identifying as African American, Native American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American. It is just one example of how survey data that ignores diverse gender or racial identities could have real consequences.

At the Center, Castro Samayoa shares the lead research role with Gasman on a project that examines the role of MSIs in minority teacher education, which is supported by a $750,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. He also co-leads a program called Pathways to the Professoriate, aimed at increasing the number of Latino professors working in the humanities at U.S. colleges and universities.

By identifying who historically has not had a space on the survey or a ‘seat at the table’ and asking why, Castro Samayoa hopes he will help effect concrete change.”

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“By identifying who historically has not had a space on the survey or a ‘seat at the table’ and asking why, Castro Samayoa hopes he will help effect concrete change.”
Alumni Notes

1950s

Harriet Cranmer Long, ED’52, retired from fifteen years of volunteering in a public school. She delivers Meals on Wheels, serves on her church’s care committee, and spends time with family.

1960s
Phyllis Young Murray, GED’51, authored poems that were highlighted at the opening of the Clara Frances Gallery in Manhattan alongside the inaugural exhibition of Hale-King Ruby-Speaking Colors.

Michael Bentley, GED’72, and coauthor Stephen Fleury presented their paper “Developing Dewey’s Sociocultural Vi- sion: Toward Educating Citizens in the Twenty-First Century” at a conference at the University of Cambridge.

Paul Dickler, W’70, GRD’76, is associ- ate director of the Wachman Center at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia. PA. He has brought U.S. teachers to South Korea and Japan through grant funding.

Steve Korner, GR’77, retired in 2013 as a Pearson Foundation Global Outreach and Community Service Notes winner. He led an initiative to change the special education system through grant funding.

1970s
Michael Bentley, GED’72, and coauthor Stephen Fleury presented their paper “Developing Dewey’s Sociocultural Vi- sion: Toward Educating Citizens in the Twenty-First Century” at a conference at the University of Cambridge.

Ellen J. Brooks, GR’81, received a mini grant from the New York State Eng- lish Council for her project “Teaching Nonfiction Writing: An Arts Approach.”

Anne-Marie Cunniffe-Hesser, GED’89, works in educational consulting at Greenwich Education Group in Con- necticut. She previously worked as a television producer and in museum education.

James Meredith Day, GR’87, professor at the Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium, recently published an article including “Religion and Adult Develop- ment: Are There Postformal Stages in Religious Cognition?” (Behavioral Develop- ment Bulletin, January 9, 2017).

David Dormont, C’84, GED’84, was elected to the executive committee of Montgomery County Development Corporation in Pennsylvania. For twenty years he has focused his legal practice on complex commercial and bankruptcy-related litigation.

Kathleen Egan, GR’86, earned a certificate to California after a lifetime on the East Coast. She spends time with family, volunteering, and taking classes in history, Talmud, current events, art, and music.

Rachel Glassman Ragland, CW’74, GED’79, was promoted to profes- sor of education after twenty years at Lake Forest College. She is chair of the Education Department and head of the teacher preparation program.

Ryda Dwaros Rose, CW’50, GED’71, recalls the wonderful years from 1967 to 1999 when she taught in Penn GSE’s teacher education and human sexual- ity programs and developed a health professions program.

Albert Giovenella, GR’87, an adjunct professor at the Perlen School of Medicine at Penn, is develop- ing a teaching model to connect soci- etists with college and graduate students for health care webinars.

J. Robert Kelley, C’85, GR’87, was promoted to assistant head of school at St. John’s School in Guam after serving as director of college guidance for sixteen years.

Leslie Nicholas, GED’85, visited Cuba as a guest of teaching Partners to study the country’s educational system. He studied Brazil’s educational system in 2013 as a Pearson Foundation Global Learning Fellow.

Kathryne J. Narkevic McGittigan O’Craoigh, CW’82, GED’75, GRD’87, is remained and enjoying retirement. She spends time playing with her grandchildren, traveling, and making pottery and quilts.

Charlene Pollo, C’83, GED’84, a professor at Michigan State University, was appointed coeditor of TESOL Quarterly with her colleague Peter De Costa.

Jeanne H. Smith, GED’82, wrote “Teaching Reading Beyond Dyslexia,” a post that was shared on the blog of the International Literacy Association.

Ana Celia Zentella, GR’81, is professor emerita at the University of California, San Diego. She received the 2016 Public Outreach and Community Service Award from the Society for Linguistic Anthropology.

1980s
Susan Marcus, CW’71, GED’73, retired to California after a lifetime on the East Coast. She spends time with family, volunteering, and taking classes in history, Talmud, current events, art, and music.

Marc Epstein, C’84, GED’89, teaches World History, AP U.S. History, and International Politics at The Pennington School in Pennington, NJ, where he has worked since 1990 after twenty-one years at another school.

Carladensie Armbrister Edwards, C’79, GED’93, relocated to Seattle, WA, and joined Providence Health and Services as chief administrative officer for population health. She also served programs at Prov- ence St. Joseph’s Health System.

Patricia Freeland, GED’91, taught English as a second language and teacher train- ing, received a master’s degree in marine affairs and currently works for Educational Testing Service tests.

Dennis DePerro, GRD’06, is chair of the Penn Dental School Professional Studies at Le Moyne College in Syracuse and has been named twenty-first president of St. Bon- aventure University effective June 1, 2017.

Kim Glassman, GED’01, has joined the Equal Measure in Philadelphia, PA, as director to provide evaluation and phil- anthropic services to major private and community foundations, national and regional nonprofits, and government organizations.

1990s
Steve Korner, GR’77, retired in 2013 as a Pearson Foundation Global Outreach and Community Service Notes winner. He led an initiative to change the special education system through grant funding.

Theodore Burns, GED’01, was appointed to the executive committee of the University of California, effective June 1, 2017.

Melissa Cahnmann-Taylor, GR’01, wrote Imperfect Tense (Whitewall Press, 2016), poetry celebrating bilingualism. She has completed fifteen years at the University of Georgia and two National Endowment for the Arts Big Read grants.


Sydney Hunt Coffin, GED’00, teaches at Edison High School in North Philadel- phia and serves on the Teacher Advisory Committee of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Jennifer Kuter, GED’02, has spent her career working at residential treatment facilities. She now works with intel- lectually disabled clients as associate program director at PATH, Inc. (People Acting To Help).

Huei-Chuan Lin, GED’09, is an English instructor at the Taipei Confucius Institute, an outgrowth of her previous role as primary teacher in private and public schools in Taiwan.
Kelly Wissman, GED’05, cowrote Teach- ing Global Literature in Elementary Classrooms: A Critical Literacy and Teacher Inquiry Approach (Routledge, 2016). She received the 2016 Presi- dents’ Award for Excellence in Teaching from the University at Albany and was selected as a coeditor of Language Arts Journal.

Jacqueline Zavitz, GED’07, joined the professional services firm Hedrick and Struggles as head of the education presence in Philadelphia. PA. She assists higher education institutions with lead- ership transitions.

Regina Zurbaro, GED’03, CGS’04, works as a house principal at Sanita Monica High School in California. She spent nine years as a science teacher before completing her Ed.D. at the University of Southern California in 2011.

2010s

Sarah Amos, GED’13, is in her third year at Success Academy Charter Schools in New York City as associate director of talent. She got married last year.

Stephen G. Barber, GED’16, accepted a position as special projects manager in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at Johns Hopkins University.

Sharee Bookman, GED’16, is instruc- tional facilitator at the Camden Corps Plus Program supported by Rutgers University. Camden, which helps youth obtain high school diplomas and pre- pare for employment.

Thomas Bullock, GRD’20, with the support of his ExecDoc Cohort 7, colleagues, launched LEADERS, Inc. (Leading Educational Advancement by Developing Entrepreneurial Read-iness and Skills). This nonprofit supports under-resourced college students.

Yifen Troy Cai, GED’16, was admitted to the Ph.D. program in anthropology at Brown University. His research focuses on LGBT rights, public health, gender and sexuality, and men’s sex work in contemporary China.

Rachel Factor, GED’14, manages a proj- ect for Refugee Services of Texas aimed at offering technological support and training to refugees. The project is a randomized controlled trial in four cities.

Diana Finessmith, GED’16, is a counselor at Kensington Health Sciences Academy (KHSA) in Philadelphia, PA, contributing to efforts related to KHSA’s designation as a community school by the Office of the Mayor and a field practice site of the Penn Futures Project.

Joe Forsyth, GED’12, joined Penn Wood Middle School in Darby, PA, as an Eng-lish and reading teacher. He received a grant from the William Penn Foundation to enhance his classroom library.

Christine Galib, GED’13, is wellness director and entrepreneurship instruc- tor at the Village School in Houston, TX. She founded consulting firm Plan My Plate and runs Bridges to Wealth with Jill Bazelon, GED’04, GRD’09, and Dr. Keith Wiegelt of The Wharton School.

Kait Ginder, GED’10,11, works at Freire Charter High School in Philadel- phia, PA, as director of college counsel- ing, twelfth grade academic advisor, and team leader, test coordinator, and National Honor Society advisor.

Miles Goodloe, GED’12, teaches Self- Determination. His minor was in Education (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), a guide to help undergraduates live their college experience with purpose and passion.

Kelly (Joy) Gregg, GED’14, a reading specialist in Cambridge, MA, is finish- ing a master’s degree in international relations. She plans to move to Chicago with her husband and connect with Penn alumni there.

Jacqueline Hain, C’12, GED’13, teaches sixth grade math at Universal Vare- Charter School in Philadelphia, PA. She received the President’s Academic Excellence Award, presented by Kenny Gamble, chair of the Universal Compa- nies Board of Directors.

Drink The Penn GSE Magazine Online
Visit www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/magazine to find our issue archive featuring the magazine in flipbook and PDF form.
Zahava Stadler, GED'15, LPS'15, continues to work as manager of policy and research at EdBuild. She enjoys being part of an organization that helps disadvantaged students receive the resources they need.

Xiaofei Tang, GED'10, is in the Ph.D. program in second-language acquisition at Carnegie Mellon University. Her interests include second-language pragmatics, teaching Chinese as a foreign language, and task-based and technology-enhanced language teaching.

Amber Touch, GED'13, earned the CompTIA Network+ and Security+ professional IT certifications and is currently studying for the Cisco CCNA certification with the goal of obtaining a job in information security.

Nicole (Ruixin) Wang, GED'11, is in a dual-titled Ph.D. program at Penn State, where she received a Research Initiation Grant for a data visualization project. She is cochair of the Penn Alumni State College/Athona Interview Program and hopes to develop a regional alumni club.

Mia Weiss, GED'12, and Danny Wittels, GED'12, married in September in Philadelphia, PA, with several members of their Penn GSE family in attendance. The couple met at Penn GSE and have lived and worked in Philadelphia ever since.

Rachel (Beazley) Wirt, GED'15, teaches kindergarten in The School District of Philadelphia. She and her husband, James Wirt, SP2'15, are moving to Kosovo this summer to work in education and community development with the Peace Corps.

Wei Yu, GED'14, enjoys applying what she learned at Penn GSE to her current position in business as vice president of operations at G&F Products in Philadelphia, PA.

CREATE YOUR LEGACY AT PENN GSE

“...The importance of education could not be more clear to me. As the daughter of educators and as a parent, I know education is the foundation of civil society. It is how we produce citizens who are prepared to lead and to succeed in the jobs of the future. Penn GSE is a best-in-class institution whose graduates will truly take education forward. That is why I established a bequest to support the School.”

—Lisa Green Hall, W'87, Member, Penn GSE Board of Overseers

Many alumni and friends like Lisa have harnessed the power of their wills to create a Penn GSE legacy with a bequest. A bequest in your will is a powerful way to make an impact on the future of Penn GSE and education by providing the financial resources needed to support student financial aid, professorships, faculty research, and programs.

To learn more about bequests and other ways to join the Castetter Circle of legacy donors to Penn GSE, please contact:

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TIPS FROM THE Educator’s Playbook: MAKING THE MOST OF DIGITAL TOOLS IN YOUR TEACHING

Educators have more access to computers, software, and apps than ever before. A crucial step in maximizing these tools is to use them not just within a learning environment, but to design a learning environment.

To accomplish this, educators must think about how technology can support broad goals for learning, according to Penn GSE’s Barbara “Bobbie” Kurshan, executive director of academic innovation and senior fellow. Dr. Kurshan helps educators become technology-fluent through GSE’s Virtual Online Teaching Certificate Program (VOLT), the first online certificate for online teaching, and through her leadership of the Education Design Studio, Inc. (EDSi), which supports edtech entrepreneurs.

A challenge for any teacher is that lists of the best digital teaching products are quickly outdated. Rather than provide such a list, Kurshan has developed a set of key questions to ask yourself when considering a new digital tool for your classroom:

1. Does it boost your engagement with students?

When leading a class of thirty students, it can be challenging to stay engaged with each individual, let alone follow the dynamics of six different groups when students are assigned collaborative projects. Think about how technology can keep you better informed about your students’ learning. For example, sharing documents with Google Docs—a simple and free app available to anyone with an Internet connection—can connect you to all your students’ work in real time.

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Voices in Education
Featuring George A. Weiss, W’65, HON’14
Saturday, May 13, 2017
3:30–4:30 p.m.
Join Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman and Penn Trustee Emeritus George A. Weiss, W’65, HON’14, founder and chairman of Say Yes to Education, for a conversation about education. Founded thirty years ago, Say Yes to Education is a nonprofit that works with communities and high school students to increase access to colleges and other post-secondary opportunities through scholarship.

Celebration of Educators & Education Alumni Awards
Saturday, May 13, 2017
4:30–6:30 p.m.
Penn GSE invites you to honor the 2017 Education Alumni Award honorees at a reception featuring an address by Dean Pam Grossman. Join fellow alumni, friends, faculty, and staff for this annual tradition that celebrates and recognizes the incredible impact of our community and educators around the globe.

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