

# PENN GSE

Fall 2019

## Driving Innovation: Penn GSE Transforms Education

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION MAGAZINE | UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

THE INNOVATION ISSUE

Embracing the Maker Movement / page 18

Helping Young People Invent Their Futures / page 22



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
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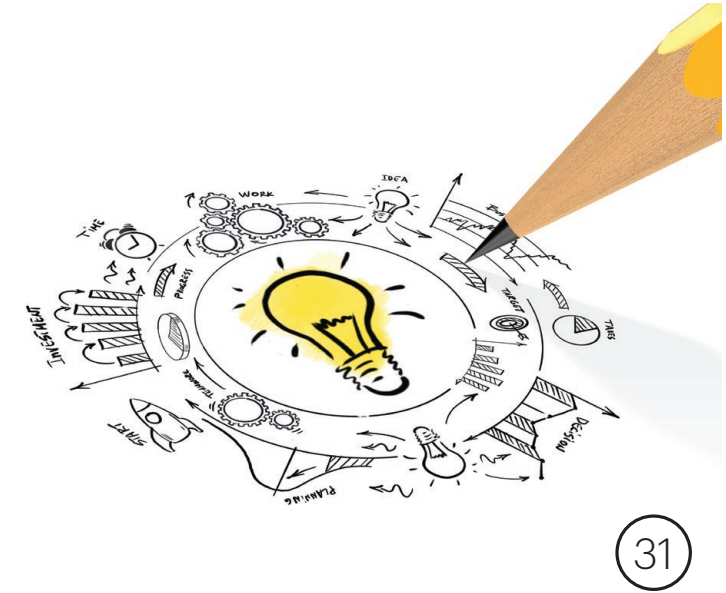
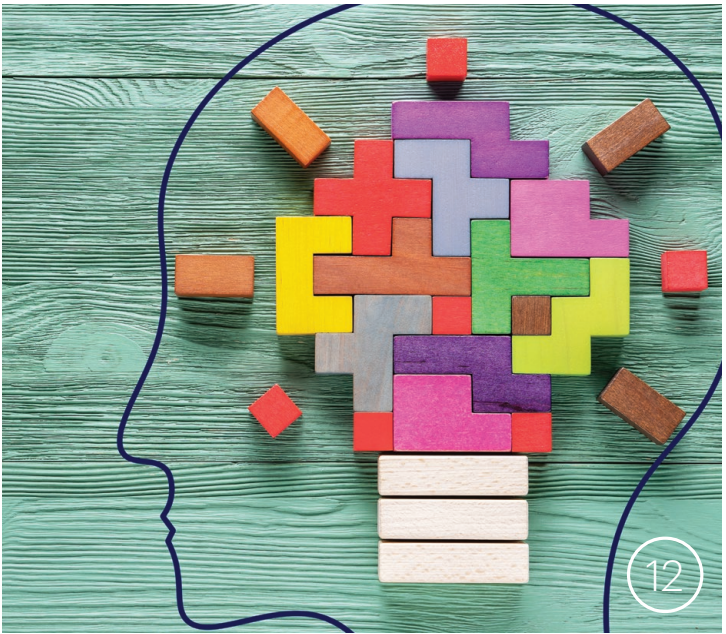
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**On the cover and below:** Participants at the Catalyst @ Penn GSE "Exploring the Future of Work and Learning" event brainstorm how education can transform to meet the needs of a future in which the pace of change is faster than anything humans have experienced. See page 6 to learn more. Photos by Jay Gorodetzer Photography



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# Letter from the Dean

Dear Alumni and Friends,

At Penn GSE we are very proud of our legacy of leading innovation in education for more than two decades. Innovation, the theme of this issue, is part of Penn GSE's DNA and is visible across our programs, our practical work on the ground, and our research.

Our groundbreaking initiatives include an array of executive-format programs to prepare working educators for new and growing fields, as well as the first education business plan competition held by an education school, the first master's degree program in education entrepreneurship, and the first global certificate in education innovation. Our features on pages 6 and 12 highlight how Penn GSE is effecting change through these and other facets of our work, including our new hub for education innovation, Catalyst, and our master's program in learning sciences and technologies.

At its core, innovation means making positive change in the world by constantly identifying new challenges and meeting them with novel solutions. Our alumni, students, faculty, and staff are fueled by their passion for making positive change—and they work together to accomplish their goals. On page 18 you will learn how two Penn GSE students have drawn upon knowledge gained in the Maker Studio course taught by Dr. Yasmin Kafai, Lori and Michael Milken President's Distinguished Professor, to bring active learning to underserved students at the school where they teach. On page 22 you will read how Professor of Practice Michael Nakkula is helping young people find the social and emotional support they need to pursue their dreams and collaborating with scholars around the world, including a number Penn GSE students and alumni, to advance this work.

Throughout this issue, you will see examples of how members of the Penn GSE community are leading the conversation about how to teach twenty-first-century skills, partnering with educators to provide professional development in cutting-edge topics, developing new businesses and nonprofits, founding new schools, and researching the effectiveness of educational programs and approaches. The range of problems they are addressing is impressive, and their solutions are inspiring.

The same is true of the finalists and winners of the Milken-Penn GSE Education Business Plan Competition, which recently celebrated its tenth year. At the finals round in October, the Milken Family Foundation grand prize was awarded to Social Cipher, a Los Angeles-based video game studio that creates opportunities for young people with autism to understand and apply social skills. eCLOSE, a Philadelphia company that engages teachers and students in professional cancer research, won both the second place American Public University System prize and the audience choice prize presented by NEXT Shulman Rogers.

I am always inspired by our community, and this fall has been particularly special in that regard. Alongside Professor Sigal Ben-Porath, I have been co-teaching the doctoral seminar for first-year, full-time doctoral students across Penn GSE's programs. Returning to the classroom has given me a wonderful opportunity to work more closely with our community of new education researchers. Whether they are studying education policy or educational linguistics, higher education or human development, their talent and potential for shaping the field are remarkable. Working with students from across our programs in one classroom has also given me an exciting preview of the stimulating interdisciplinary environment we will create by bringing the majority of our programs into one facility through our planned building expansion project, highlighted on page 21.

At Penn GSE, we are dedicated to finding sustainable and scalable solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing society. I hope that you, our alumni and friends, will be as inspired as I am as you read of our work and impact.

Pam Grossman  
Dean, Penn Graduate School of Education  
George and Diane Weiss Professor of Education

## Bookshelf Spotlight



Ebony Elizabeth Thomas



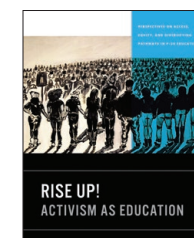
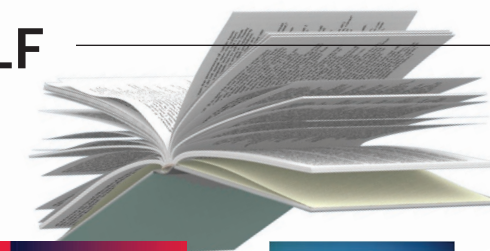
*The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games*  
By Ebony Elizabeth Thomas

Published May 2019 by NYU Press

Drawing upon her experiences as a young adult novelist, fan fiction writer, and scholar of education, Dr. Thomas considers four black female protagonists from some of the most popular stories of the early twenty-first century from popular youth and young adult speculative fiction. The book identifies a diversity crisis in children's and young adult media, as well as new possibilities for the future.

Photo by iStock.com/the-lightwriter

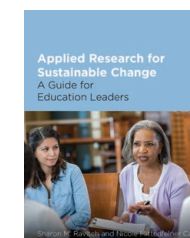
## FACULTY BOOKSHELF



*Rise Up! Activism as Education*

Edited by Amalia Dache, Stephen John Quay, Chris Linder, and Keon M. McGuire

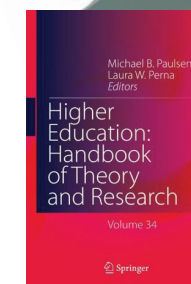
Published September 2019 by Michigan State University Press



*Applied Research for Sustainable Change: A Guide for Education Leaders*

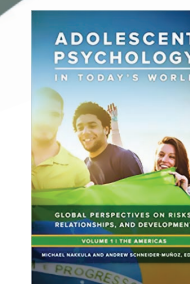
By Sharon M. Ravitch and Nicole Mittenfelner

Published September 2019 by Harvard Education Press



*Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*  
Edited by Michael B. Paulsen and Laura W. Perna

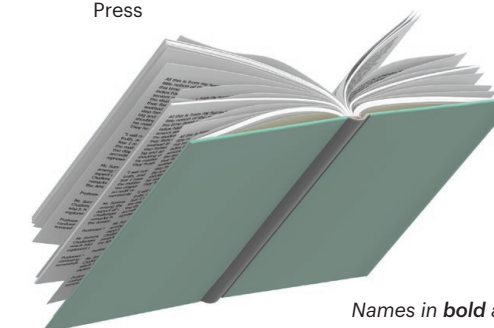
Published April 2019 by Springer



*Adolescent Psychology in Today's World: Global Perspectives on Risk, Relationships, and Development, Volumes 1–3*  
Edited by Michael J. Nakkula and Andrew J. Schneider-Muñoz

Published November 2018 by Praeger

See page 22 to learn more about Dr. Nakkula's work.



Names in **bold** are members of the Penn GSE faculty.

## FACULTY AWARDS & HONORS

**Manuel S. Gonzáles Canché (1)** has been named to the editorial board of *The Review of Educational Research*. **Alesha Gayle (2)** received the Early Career Educator of Color Leadership Award from the National Council of Teachers of English. **Matthew Hartley (3)** has received a national award in Kazakhstan “for contributions to the development of research (science) for the Republic of Kazakhstan,” for which he was nominated by Nazarbayev University. **Michael C. Johaneck (4)** was invited by the Catholic University of Cordoba in Argentina to give a keynote address in September at “Education, Democracy, and Social Change,” an event that represents the third Latin American Congress of Educational Research and thirtieth Meeting of the State of Educational Research. **Laura W. Perna (5)** has been appointed to the Commission on the Value of Postsecondary Education, a new national research group convened by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in partnership with the Institute for Higher Education Policy. **Amy Stornaiuolo (6)** and her coauthors have received the 2019 Emerald Literati Award from Emerald Publishing for the paper “Building Spaces for Literacy in School: Mapping the Emergence of a Literary Makerspace.” **Susan Yoon (7)** has been inducted as a 2019 Fellow of the International Society of the Learning Sciences, an honor that recognizes highly accomplished scholars who have made major contributions to the field of the learning sciences. **Jonathan Zimmerman (8)** received the 2019 Open Inquiry Leadership Award from the Heterodox Academy for championing open inquiry, viewpoint diversity, and constructive disagreement.



Faculty headshots on pages 3 to 5 courtesy of Goldenberg Photography, Candace diCarlo, and Mark Tassoni



# News Briefs



Photo by Ryan Collier

### Four Penn GSE Students Receive Prestigious Fellowships

Four Penn GSE doctoral students each received a National Academy of Education (NAEd)/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship, which supports individuals whose dissertations show potential for bringing fresh and constructive perspectives to education. The recipients are Adam Kirk Edgerton, a doctoral candidate in education policy; Wintre Foxworth Johnson, a doctoral candidate in reading/writing/literacy; Samiha Rahman, a doctoral candidate in education, culture, and society; and Aldo Anzures Tapia, a doctoral candidate in educational linguistics.

In addition, Penn GSE Assistant Professor **Sharon Wolf (1)** received an NAEd/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship, among the most competitive awards for early-career education researchers, to further her research of early childhood education in sub-Saharan Africa. Dr. Wolf has also received an award from the Penn Global Engagement fund for her project “Assessing Executive Functioning in Ghanaian School Children.” The study will look at how executive function competencies such as working memory, goal setting, and organization develop and are linked to school success in Ghana.

### Penn GSE Welcomes New Faculty

Penn GSE welcomed the following new faculty in the summer and fall of 2019:

**A. Brooks Bowden (2)** is assistant professor in education policy. She also serves as director of training for the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Bowden specializes in program evaluation and economic analysis, focusing on applications and the methodology of the ingredients method to conduct cost-effectiveness analyses.

**Amalia Z. Dache (3)** is assistant professor in higher education. Previously she was assistant professor at the University of Missouri, where she was awarded the university’s 2018 Faculty Achievement in Diversity Award. Dr. Dache’s research addresses postcolonial geographic contexts of higher education, Afro-Latina/o/x studies, community and student resistance, and the college-access experiences of African diasporic students and communities.

**Sarah Schneider Kavanagh (4)** was appointed assistant professor in teaching, learning, and leadership. Previously research assistant professor at Penn GSE, she studies practice-based pedagogical approaches to preparing teachers to engage in inquiry-based instruction. Dr. Kavanagh is leading two large research teams in multiyear investigations of innovative designs for teacher learning.

### School Leadership Program Welcomes New Director

After eleven years at Penn GSE—and a career as one of the most respected voices on education leadership—Dr. **Earl Ball (5)** has retired as the director of the School Leadership Program. Dr. **Steve Piltch (6)**, the longtime head of The Shipley School, a pre-K–12 independent day school in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, has joined Penn GSE as program director.

Ball came to Penn GSE in 2007 to help develop the program, which launched the following year. Students and alumni have credited Ball with helping them find their voices as school leaders and serving as a source of wisdom long after graduation. Previously Ball served as Head of the William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia for thirty-one years and was involved with independent schools both locally and nationally.

Piltch previously served as a mentor in the School Leadership Program. His twenty-seven-year tenure leading Shipley was marked by substantial increases in enrollment, diversity, physical space, and endowment. Piltch also has overseen the implementation of the Social, Emotional, and Ethical Development (SEED) curriculum, an integrated learning experience that draws from practices in positive education, academic and social emotional learning, and emotional intelligence.

### Center for School Study Councils Celebrates 75th Anniversary

This spring, the Center for School Study Councils celebrated its 75th anniversary. CSSC has been led since 1981 by Dr. **Harris Sokoloff (7)**, executive director of CSSC and Catalyst Community Conversations. Made up of four distinct regional groups of education leaders, CSSC is a place where education leaders can gather to exchange wisdom and solve problems. Membership includes districts in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Now part of Catalyst @ Penn GSE, the councils are looking at ways to help schools innovate.

“Just as Penn GSE faculty are on the cutting edge of educational research, the study council members are on the cutting edge of ways to use that research to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and education,” says Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman. “Together we are thinking, and rethinking, what it means to be an educational leader.”

■ Associate Professor **Ryan Baker (8)** and colleagues at the University of Wisconsin and Harvard University were awarded approximately \$447,000 by the National Science Foundation (NSF) to develop a new game that teaches about aquatic ecosystems and scientific inquiry skills.



In addition, Dr. Baker and colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Worcester Polytechnic Institute received an award from the NSF for \$219,000 to study how to develop artificially intelligent learning systems that ask teachers for advice on how to interact with students.

■ Associate Professor **Manuel S. González Canché (9)** has received a grant award from the AccessLex Institute for the project “The Effect of the Uniform Bar Examination on Diversity, Affordability, and Employment Prospects.” The purpose of the study is to evaluate whether the adoption of the Uniform Bar Examination has positively influenced increased diversity in law school enrollment and completion, bar passage rates, tuition costs, employment mobility, and overall employment prospects.

■ Professor of Practice **Michael J. Nakkula (10)** received a \$145,000 grant from The Future Project to lead a study of an innovative national project on developmental life coaching to promote “possibility thinking” in urban high schools. The initiative helps fill the gap in counseling and related life-planning supports in urban schools across the country. The study focuses on initiatives in Detroit, Newark, New Haven, and Washington, DC. *See page 22 to learn more about Dr. Nakkula’s work.*

■ Professor **Betsy R. Rymes (11)** and the Educational Linguistics division have received an inaugural Penn GSE Global Engagement Award to create a new elective course, Approaches to Teaching Chinese, in collaboration with the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Penn Arts and Sciences. The proposed course will address the needs of current students as well as a need for Chinese immersion teachers in the United States.

### Congratulations to the Recipients of...

#### The 2019 Penn GSE Annual Awards

**Penn GSE Excellence in Teaching Award**  
Amrit Thapa, Lecturer, Literacy, Culture, and International Education Division

**Lois MacNamara Award for Outstanding Service to Students**  
Krista Featherstone, Program Manager, Education Policy Division  
Ann Tiao, Assistant Dean for Student Services

**William E. Arnold Award for Outstanding Contributions by a Student**  
Katie Pak, GRD’19

**Penn GSE Award for Excellence in Promoting Diversity and Inclusion**  
Jax Lastinger, master’s student

**Laurie Wagman Award for Visual and Performing Arts in Education**  
Yared Portillo, GED’19

#### University of Pennsylvania 2019 Awards

**Penn Prize for Excellence in Teaching by Graduate Students**  
Abigail Dym, GED’18, LPS’18, doctoral student

# In the Media

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:

“Revolving Door: Teachers, Principals Churn Through HISD’s Lowest-Performing Schools” | *Houston Chronicle* | August 5, 2019  
**Richard Ingersoll** speaks about the importance of teaching-staff retention. “We have fifty years of research that shows good schools have a sense of community and strong bonds,” he says.

“Go to College for Free—Yes, Free—at These PA and NJ Schools” | *Philadelphia Inquirer* | July 15, 2019  
**Laura W. Perna’s** College Promise database is cited as a resource that helps consumers track free and highly subsidized college programs in the United States.

“Bernie Sanders Unveils Education Plan to Eliminate Student Loan Debt” | *The New York Times* | June 24, 2019  
**Joni E. Finney** says presidential candidate Bernie Sanders’s plan to eliminate student loan debt “doesn’t match the complexity of the cost education problem.”

“Teachers Push for Books with More Diversity, Fewer Stereotypes” | *EdWeek* | June 11, 2019  
**Ebony Elizabeth Thomas** speaks about patterns in the literary representations of people of color that are accessible to students in classroom libraries.

“Where the Presidential Candidates Went to School” | *EdWeek* | May 30, 2019  
**Jonathan Zimmerman** comments on 2020 presidential candidates’ educational backgrounds and what history reveals about how experience with public schooling relates to policymaking.

“What to Know About a College’s Net Price Calculator” | *U.S. News & World Report* | May 8, 2019  
**Laura W. Perna** cautions that the information on net price calculators can be misleading, outdated, incomplete, and difficult to compare across institutions.

Names in **bold** are members of the Penn GSE faculty.

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# DRIVING INNOVATION

## Penn GSE Transforms Education for a Changing World

by Juliana Rosati

A pioneer of innovation in education, Penn GSE boasts a twenty-year legacy of re-envisioning teaching and learning, solving problems on the ground in classrooms and schools, fostering new businesses and ventures, and translating research to practice.

“Penn GSE constantly strives to reimagine learning and anticipate the leading edge of education,” says Dean Pam Grossman. “Our innovative approach yields programs and initiatives that are built for agility, so that we can ensure our relevance to practitioners and the communities they serve.”

With the launch of the School’s first executive-format programs more than two decades ago, Penn GSE rose to the challenge of preparing educators for new and growing fields, assembling a distinctive array of Ed.D. and master’s programs for working professionals. The School’s renowned efforts to foster entrepreneurs began in 2010 with the launch of the Milken-Penn GSE Education Business Plan Competition, the

first competition of its kind at an education school, and intensified with the launch of the world’s first master’s degree program in education entrepreneurship in 2014 and the first global certificate in education innovation in 2019.

Today these and other groundbreaking programs and initiatives are advancing the School’s role as a force for change in education. “We are bringing stakeholders from within and outside of Penn GSE together to create transformative learning opportunities for people in Philadelphia, across the country, and around the globe,” says Michael Golden, GRD’07, executive director of Catalyst @ Penn GSE, the School’s new hub for education innovation.

Whether by galvanizing urgent conversations, empowering educators, inspiring entrepreneurs, or propelling innovative degree programs, Penn GSE is at the forefront of transforming education for a changing world.

### Catalyzing Change

How can education prepare students for a future in which the pace of change is faster than anything humans have experienced? What skills will be most in demand once breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, robotics, 3D printing, and other technologies have transformed multiple industries? Participants sought to answer questions like these at “Exploring the Future of Work and Learning,” an event convened in June by Catalyst.

“We identified key visionaries and innovators to discuss how education can transform to meet the needs of the future,” says Dr. Golden. “Given the rapid pace of change in the workplace and our world, we expect huge disruption in how, where, and why we educate young people.”

At the event, multicolored sticky notes dotted the walls and tablecloths at Penn’s Perry World House as high school students, education leaders, entrepreneurs, and workforce developers gathered to identify twenty-first-century skills and envision how to impart them to learners of all ages.

“We need to create classrooms that prepare students to gain the capacity to be nimble and flexible, to learn how to learn, and develop new skills,” says Dean Grossman.

Twenty-first-century skills such as collaboration, communication, problem solving, relationship building, project management, entrepreneurship, and design thinking quickly became the focus of conversation at the event. Teams brainstormed active learning opportunities for students in K–12, adult, postsecondary, and higher education.

“It was a chance to make sure we keep pushing around innovation, so we don’t miss the opportunity for the people we serve,” says participant Patrick Clancy, president and CEO of Philadelphia Works Inc. As the city’s workforce development board, Philadelphia Works oversees how the city invests federal funds to help people gain training and skills to enter the workforce after periods of unemployment, serving approximately fifty thousand individuals per year.

By convening key leaders for forward-thinking conversations and undertaking a host of other initiatives to spur entrepreneurship and create models for change at school, district, and national levels, Catalyst strives to reimagine how universities can solve problems on the ground. Launched in 2017, Catalyst is building and expanding upon the advances of the former Office of Academic Innovation led by Barbara “Bobbie” Kurshan.

“Our work is all geared to coalescing forces to improve the educational system,” says Dr. Golden. Through a new series of problem-solving initiatives, or inquiries, in schools, Catalyst is creating a two-way exchange with educators. “We start by going out into the field and working with them to identify their biggest problems,” says Golden.



“Given the rapid pace of change in the workplace and our world, we expect huge disruption in how, where, and why we educate young people.”

—Catalyst Executive Director Michael Golden, GRD’07

↓ Key visionaries and educators, including high school students, education leaders, entrepreneurs, and workforce developers, gather at Penn’s Perry World House to explore the future of work and learning.  
Photos by Jay Gorodetzer Photography







“We need to create classrooms that prepare students to gain the capacity to be nimble and flexible, to learn how to learn, and develop new skills.”

—Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman

↓ Michael Golden, executive director of Catalyst @ Penn GSE, speaks to participants at an entrepreneurship boot camp. Catalyst, the School's new hub for education innovation, strives to reimagine how universities can solve problems on the ground. Photos by Jay Gorodetzer Photography



Inquiries have addressed topics such as students' sense of belonging, mathematics instruction, and the use of data by school districts. The latter grew out of the concerns of the South Jersey Data Leaders Partnership (SJDLP), a network of forty-five school districts in New Jersey.

“There is a real void in terms of how educators are prepared to work with data,” says SJDLP President Marc Mancinelli, GED’07, GED’08, GRD’14, director of curriculum and instruction at Lindenwold Public Schools. Data can be a powerful tool for understanding a school’s community and performance, Mancinelli says, yet educators often lack the skills and confidence to use it well.

A team from Catalyst helped SJDLP conduct a survey to gauge member districts’ capacities for data use. “Catalyst provided the structure of a research-based inquiry cycle, where you take the baseline information, envision where you want to be, and form a plan to get there,” says Mancinelli. As Catalyst and SJDLP enter the second year of their partnership, Mancinelli looks forward to helping districts implement interventions.

Catalyst’s new initiatives also include expanding the reach of Penn GSE’s certificate programs and webinars, with the understanding that for many educators, time, costs, and geography are barriers to enrolling in a degree program. In this vein, Catalyst recently partnered with Aditya Birla Education Academy (ABEA) in India to provide a customized version of Penn GSE’s VOLT (Virtual Online Learning and Teaching) certificate program, launched in 2014 as the first program of its kind.

“Change is the only constant in today’s world, and more than anyone, the teacher must be well acquainted with change,” says Neerja Birla, chairperson of ABEA, which was founded by the Mumbai-based multinational conglomerate Aditya Birla Group.

To help ABEA address a lack of professional development for teachers in India and prepare educators to use technology more effectively in the classroom, Betty Chandy, GED’05, GRD’13, Catalyst’s director for online learning, adapted VOLT to meet ABEA’s needs.

According to Surabhi Goel, CEO of ABEA, the result was a powerful learning experience. “A lot of the teachers’ habits and beliefs were shaken up, and they had to unlearn and relearn some concepts. Penn GSE was able to make that happen for them,” she says. As the partnership enters its second year, Goel notes that ABEA is eager to expand the program. “There are so many people who really need this training,” she says.

### Fostering Entrepreneurship

Working directly with practitioners is one unconventional way that a university can solve problems in education. Propelling new businesses and ventures—digital learning platforms, college funding innovations, school designs, and more—is another.

As Catalyst celebrates the tenth year of the Milken-Penn GSE Education Business Plan Competition (EBPC), a competition open to entrepreneurs around the world, it is recognizing the considerable accomplishments of past winners (see “Celebrating Ten Years of Entrepreneurship,” right), introducing a semifinalist round, and offering a robust, year-round series of boot camps and webinars for entrepreneurs within and beyond the competition.

When EBPC semifinalists are named in April, they gain free access to the boot camps and webinars as they prepare for the October finalist competition. The programs cover topics such as how to develop a pitch, hone a business idea, demonstrate a product’s impact, and sell into the U.S. education marketplace. “We focus on the most crucial skills that entrepreneurs need to develop and the key knowledge required for success,” says Golden. “We’re providing opportunities to strengthen your business through networking with Catalyst’s ecosystem of researchers, investors, and other professionals.”

Working alongside Catalyst, Penn GSE’s Education Entrepreneurship master’s program seeks to create a culture of sustainable problem solving and global impact. Its students, who hail from a variety of industries and backgrounds, each build an education venture during the program’s thirteen months. The program’s executive format combines weekend on-campus sessions and virtual learning to meet the needs of working professionals.

“Between Catalyst and the Education Entrepreneurship program, we are proud to be building and propelling a dynamic community of people who seek to make change through new ventures,” says Dr. Grossman.

Since its launch five years ago, the Education Entrepreneurship program has doubled in size. Its nearly 150 alumni have created as many education enterprises, founded new schools and programs on five continents, launched education startups, and led entrepreneurial activities in schools, businesses, governments, and communities. The program’s graduates now represent twenty-five countries.

“Each year we see how our students use the power of education knowledge, business skills, and entrepreneurial thinking to find really novel solutions that help kids learn and thrive,” says Penn GSE Senior Fellow Jenny Zapf, the program’s director.

At the program’s concluding Demo Day in 2019, students pitched their ventures to a panel of judges, offering an array of solutions to problems in education around the world. Ventures included a charitable foundation that invests in the skill sets of talented youth living in vulnerable U.S. communities, a program to connect U.S. students with meaningful study abroad opportunities in Africa, a mobile platform to help parents in Ghana and Nigeria plan college funding for their children, an online platform to connect instructors and learners in Egypt for professional training, and a project-based school emphasizing agricultural entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe.

Dr. Zapf views the program itself as an education startup to be continually and rigorously tested and improved. Drawing upon problem-solving methods from the fields of design, business, and engineering, the program implements changes on a small scale to gauge their efficacy. Zapf estimates that at any given moment, ten “design experiments” are underway—components of the curriculum are launched for a short time, assessed through student and faculty feedback, and improved or replaced. For example, rapid testing and feedback yielded a new approach for mentoring students and a new design lab for education innovation. “I believe that you teach entrepreneurial thinking and design by creating experiential learning opportunities where people grapple with problem-solving and uncertainty,” says Zapf.

With this approach, each year of the program has differed significantly from the last, and students have become co-creators of the experience. Students have also made the program distinctive through their varied backgrounds. In recent cohorts, 60 percent have been people of color, more than 60 percent have been women, 25 percent have come from lower-income backgrounds, and 20 percent have been international. “The diversity of the student body provides a robust and rigorous learning environment, with tremendous differences in perspective and a strong focus on how education solutions can meet the needs of underrepresented communities,” says Zapf.

## Celebrating Ten Years of Entrepreneurship

Now in its tenth year, the Milken-Penn GSE Education Business Plan Competition (EBPC) has identified fifty winning ventures and awarded more than \$1.4 million in cash and prizes. Previous winners and finalists have raised an additional \$140 million in funding since competing. They have also been named to *Forbes’* 30 Under 30 list, featured on “Shark Tank,” listed on *Fast Company’s* World’s Top 10 Most Innovative Companies in Africa, and named to President Obama’s Advisory Council on Financial Capability for Young Americans. Here, a few reflect upon the competition:

### Osmosis

2014 Winner

Through a video library and learning platform, Osmosis seeks to empower clinicians and caregivers to gain and update medical knowledge. “The impact Penn GSE’s EBPC had on our business was significant,” says cofounder Shiv Gaglani. “Our customers, both direct users and institutions, felt validated in choosing us when we were recognized by Penn GSE for our work.”

### InferCabulary

2016 Chancellor Award Winner

An interactive, web-based K-12 literacy program, InferCabulary teaches vocabulary in a way that engages critical thinking. Cofounder Beth Lawrence says, “It’s prestigious to be chosen to compete at the EBPC final event, and it’s an asset to have access to that network. We competed with people from around the globe, and saying we’re winners of the Penn GSE EBPC has been invaluable.”

### Caribu

2017 Finalist

An app that helps parents, family, and mentors read and draw with children via a video call, Caribu was selected as one of eight finalists of SXSW EDU 2019. “As someone who has been a winner or finalist in twenty competitions, I can say that the team at Penn GSE and the caliber of people they brought in were extremely impressive,” says CEO Maxeme Tuchman.

Visit [www.educationcompetition.org/alumni-profiles](http://www.educationcompetition.org/alumni-profiles) to find more EBPC participants’ stories.





As students graduate, they enter a burgeoning community of alumni poised to sustain their work through partnerships and networking. “Our students and alumni are creating a new movement in education, supporting one another as they take on some of the hardest work possible—creating better and sustainable futures for our kids and communities,” says Zapf. (See page 12 to read more about Education Entrepreneurship alumni.)

### Improving Learning in a Changing World

Across the School, a spirit of innovation ensures the vibrancy of Penn GSE’s work. Other executive-format programs, including the Mid-Career Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership and the PennCLO (Chief Learning Officer) program, fortify their relevance to working professionals by evolving their offerings in response to student feedback. The Collaboratory for Teacher Education, which encompasses all of Penn GSE’s teacher education programs and includes faculty, staff, and doctoral students, is exploring innovative approaches to teacher preparation. The Collaboratory is currently placing a focus on improving mentoring for prospective teachers and equity and inclusion in teacher education programs. The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), a community of researchers from renowned research institutions and schools of education based at Penn GSE, is fostering interdisciplinary dialogue among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners through the CPRE Knowledge Hub *Research Minutes* podcast located at [www.researchminutes.org](http://www.researchminutes.org) and other openly accessible programming.

In Penn GSE’s Learning Sciences and Technologies program, record enrollment and distinctive faculty expertise are putting the School at the forefront of a field that is shaping what learning looks like in a changing world.

“This is a field that strives to make real-world changes through innovative experiences and tools that respond to current needs in our society,” says Professor Susan Yoon, one of the program’s three primary faculty members. “It also fosters a mindset of creativity, problem solving, and critical thinking.” Dr. Yoon works with Associate Professor Ryan S. Baker, Lori and Michael Milken President’s Distinguished Professor Yasmin B. Kafai, and other colleagues to prepare master’s students in the program for careers as educators, researchers, and curriculum developers.

With expertise that spans a number of hot topics in education, including data, computing, makerspaces, science, and digital tools, Drs. Yoon, Baker, and Kafai have generated over \$30 million in research funding from organizations including the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, the MacArthur Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Google, IBM, and Lenovo.

Baker applies his expertise in big data and data literacy to study how learning unfolds in a variety of formats, including online environments like massive open online courses (MOOCs), traditional classroom instruction, and classrooms equipped with technology. As director of the Penn Center for Learning Analytics, he works with a team to analyze student behavior and performance, applying the powerful computing techniques of data mining. “With traditional research methods, typically you can only ask one question at a time,” says Baker, a recipient of the 2018 Educational Research Award from the Council of Scientific Society Presidents. “With data mining, if you have enough data, you can ask ten thousand questions at a time.”

Kafai, world-renowned as a pioneer of computer science and makerspaces, develops curricula that engage students in creative work while they learn skills in coding and design. Her curriculum in electronic textiles, “Stitching the Loop,” is being implemented in school districts across the country and aims to bring underrepresented groups like girls and students of color into computing. “Creating is a very powerful way of learning because it helps you to externalize your thinking,” explains Kafai. “You create something that is shareable and visible. Your teacher and peers can interact with it, and this gives rise to great conversations.” (See page 18 to learn more about Kafai’s work.)

Yoon, named a 2019 Fellow of the International Society of the Learning Sciences in recognition of major contributions to the learning sciences, works at the nexus of science education and digital tools. Her current project in the emerging field of bioinformatics is

helping teachers prepare students for active citizenship and STEM careers.

“Bioinformatics is really about the use of computers in biology,” says Yoon. “You can detect patterns in thousands or millions of data points to inform medical therapies and solutions.”

With funding from the National Science Foundation, Yoon and partners at Penn Medicine and the Institute for Biomedical Informatics are preparing a group of teachers from The School District of Philadelphia to create curricula in bioinformatics. Students will design mobile applications to study air quality and how it can be improved, focusing on the locally relevant issue of pollution’s role in asthma. “Students will construct solutions that will make a difference in their community,” says Yoon. “We’re teaching about the latest and greatest applications of technology in big data and data literacy.”

She envisions eventually rolling out the bioinformatics program on a larger scale, much as one of her earlier projects, BioGraph, recently became a MOOC available to educators internationally. As a partner in BioGraph, Yoon collaborated with MIT’s Scheller Teacher Education Program to help teachers integrate coding and visual simulations into biology lessons. BioGraph has been shown to produce a threefold increase in students’ understanding of complex scientific systems like ecosystems and human respiration.

By studying educational environments and partnering with teachers to create professional development, Yoon and her colleagues in the Learning Sciences and Technologies program increase access to cutting-edge opportunities that schools often lack the resources to implement. “Teachers are yearning to teach with progressive pedagogies and tools, but without an advocate like us and high-quality professional development, education is hard-pressed to improve,” she says.

### Looking Ahead

As Penn GSE continues partnering with practitioners and producing graduates who are equipped to shape education in powerful new ways, the future is as bright as the School’s legacy of innovation.

“We are convening people and ideas for disruptive change,” says Golden. Catalyst is developing new resources, pathways, and conversations to solve problems and anticipate the future of education. The Education Entrepreneurship program is expanding its global reach through a three-to-five-day on-site certificate in education innovation, first offered in San Francisco and Tel Aviv, and scheduled to launch in Dubai, Mumbai, and China in the spring. The Learning Sciences and Technologies program is exploring potential new offerings. And faculty, staff, and students across the School remain tireless in their efforts to improve education.

“Innovation is a part of everything we do,” says Grossman. “It’s a mindset that we cultivate across Penn GSE—asking what will be the next frontier in education and how we can leverage our expertise to prepare for it.” ■



↑ Penn GSE Learning Sciences and Technology Program faculty member Susan Yoon (left) helps prepare students in the program for careers in education, research, and curriculum development.

Photo by Greg Benson Photography

“Penn GSE constantly strives to reimagine learning and anticipate the leading edge of education. Our innovative approach yields programs and initiatives that are built for agility, so that we can ensure our relevance to practitioners and the communities they serve.”

—Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman

↓ The Education Entrepreneurship master’s program, directed by Penn GSE Senior Fellow Jenny Zapf, seeks to create a culture of sustainable problem solving and global impact. Photo by Lisa Godfrey Photography



From top: photos by Lisa Godfrey Photography, Jay Gorodetzer Photography, Lisa Godfrey Photography



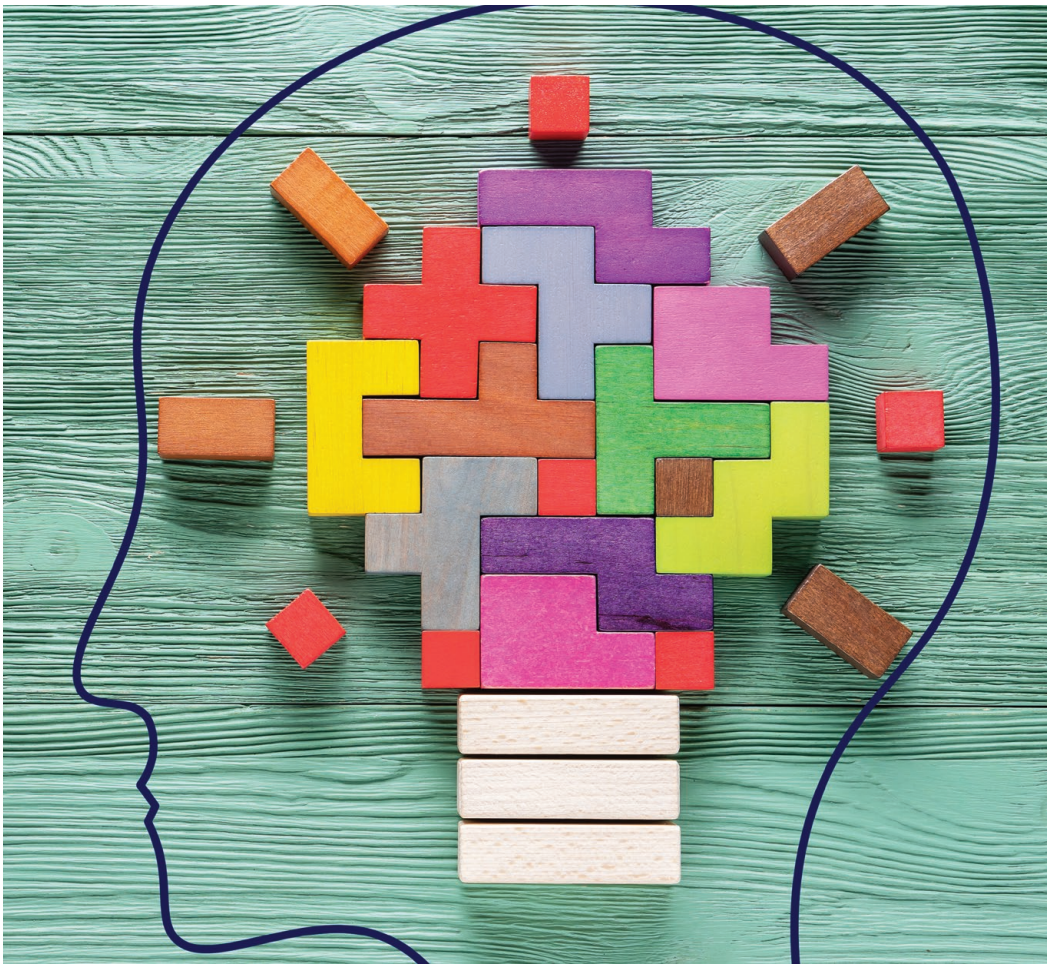


Photo by iStock.com/Radachynskyi

# Propelling Change

PENN GSE EDUCATION ENTREPRENEURSHIP ALUMNI

by Lini S. Kadaba

How can an educator take an idea for a groundbreaking curriculum and make it a reality that enhances hundreds or even thousands of classrooms? How can a global business leader create an online platform that helps educational institutions teach more effectively? Penn GSE’s Education Entrepreneurship program, the first of its kind in the world, was launched in 2014 to address some of education’s greatest challenges. During the thirteen-month, executive-format program, students continue their lives as working professionals while earning an M.S.Ed., completing a thesis by building an impactful, sustainable, and scalable education venture.

“To date, the program’s alumni have created nearly 150 education enterprises, launched new schools and programs, worked on ed tech startups, built next-gen learning curricula, and provided leadership on entrepreneurial activities in schools, businesses, governments, and communities,” says Dr. Jenny Zapf, the program’s director and a senior fellow at Penn GSE. Since its inception the program has doubled in size and produced almost 150 alumni working in twenty-five countries. Here, four graduates share how it provided them with the knowledge and tools to innovate at all levels of education, both within and beyond the classroom, in the United States and abroad.



For Hieu Dinh Le, GED’18, a dream was born when he asked himself why he had managed to live the kind of professional life that remained out of reach for most of his high school classmates in Vietnam. “The key turning point is the education I received in the United States. That completely changed my life,” says Le, who studied economics at the University of California, Los Angeles on a Vietnam government scholarship. He went on to become a consultant at Deloitte and ING, as well as an education entrepreneur with two successful startups.

## Improving College Access in Vietnam

Now, as founding team member of Vietnam’s first world-class university, he wants to bring quality higher education to more Vietnamese through VinUniversity (VinUni), a nonprofit, private college in Hanoi expected to welcome its first class in 2020. Vietnam graduates about one million high schoolers each year, Le says, but most cannot afford a university education—particularly those from rural areas, where more than 60 percent of the country’s population lives. “Going to college is still a privilege,” he says, noting that even those who get there struggle to find good jobs because of the poor educational quality.

Enter VinUni, the 2016 philanthropic brainchild of the Vietnamese conglomerate Vingroup, which is partnering with Cornell University to establish business and engineering colleges and with Penn to create medical and nursing colleges. The rigorous, English-language college aims to bring an Ivy League standard to Vietnamese higher education, Le says, and will offer scholarships to most students, eliminating cost constraints.

VinUni also will focus heavily on entrepreneurship. “We want to create someone who actually can bring about change, lead the workforce, create jobs,” says Le, who was named to *Forbes Vietnam’s* 30 Under 30 list in 2016 and has been director of VinUni’s marketing, public relations, and admissions since January. Earlier in his career, Le founded and then sold Everest Education, a tech-based tutoring service, and used the proceeds to start G.A.P. Institute, a career development hub meant to raise the global competitiveness of Vietnamese college students. Le says he put his knowledge from Penn GSE’s Education Entrepreneurship program into practice at the institute, which grew so rapidly that the Vingroup considered acquiring it. Instead, he was invited to join VinUni’s leadership team while continuing as CEO at G.A.P. “At Penn, I learned so much about education, so much about running my company and doing entrepreneurship the right way,” he says. Now, Le uses his skills from Penn GSE to pitch VinUni and its holistic admissions approach to attract potential applicants, to seek professors in the mold of Penn GSE faculty, and to help design a campus. “I strongly believe in the potential of Vietnamese students,” he says, “because I was one of them.”

*“I learned so much about education, so much about running my company and doing entrepreneurship the right way.”*



During eight years of homeschooling a son who has autism, **Andrea Pollack, C’83, L’87, GED’17**, figured out which strategies work and which do not—and most importantly, what might help other parents who face similar challenges. “There are so many different therapies for kids,” says Pollack, who left a nineteen-year law career to focus on her son’s education. “At their core, there are common elements that are really related to good parenting. I wanted to help parents learn those skills without having to read a thousand books and figure it out for themselves.”



distinctive in its category, according to Pollack. She is president of the company and also chairs the board of trustees of the Cooke Center for Learning & Development in New York, where her son, now twenty, went to school. Pollack learned the hard way that parenting tips gleaned from lectures often failed when attempted at home. “I had nowhere to go to get further guidance on how I could implement

the ideas that were shared,” she recalls. “They would deliver information, and then you were on your own.” In the workshops, Pollack teaches strategies such as modeling self-regulation. She also examines causes of difficult behavior, setting your child up for success, and getting your child’s buy-in, aiming to help participants become more confident in their parenting skills. An online forum provides additional help and a supportive community. “There are programs that support parents,” she says, “but this is new and different. I’m focusing on building skills rather than sharing information.”

In addition to leading the workshops, Pollack continues to pitch the concept to community organizations, looking to expand her program’s reach through partnerships. She credits practice pitches and valuable coursework at Penn GSE with refining her ideas through feedback from both professors and fellow students. “The program and the interaction with my cohort were enlightening and invaluable for me,” Pollack says. “The experience has been incredibly helpful in enabling me to do work I wanted to do and am passionate about.”

Pollack sought to establish a nonprofit—but first needed expertise in launching a new venture in the education space. She determined that the Education Entrepreneurship program at Penn GSE “could spare me a lot of mistakes,” she says. In 2018, Autism Parents Connect got underway. Based in New York City, the emerging outfit offers a series of three workshops on strategies to address challenging behavior in children with autism, such as meltdowns or inflexibility. Combining a focus on developing parenting skills with ongoing support makes Autism Parents Connect

As an entrepreneur dedicated to the teaching of entrepreneurship itself, **Mark Greenberg, GED’17**, strives to bring what he views as a “great equalizer” to students. “Access to a powerful curriculum, strong platform, and community of support can change the trajectory of lives,” he says,



Photo by Hilary Hunt

noting his belief in the power of entrepreneurship education “regardless of where you grew up, your family social status, your race, or your socioeconomic status.” As founder and CEO of the Philadelphia-based BuildEd, established in 2015, he delivers

education in entrepreneurship to the K–12, workforce development, and higher education markets. His companion nonprofit, the World Series of Entrepreneurship, is a national pitch competition that gives high school students the opportunity to pursue venture funding and college scholarship dollars.

## Fostering the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs

Both ventures benefit from the knowledge he gained in the Education Entrepreneurship program at Penn GSE. “While I had a strong entrepreneurial base, I was lacking the education theory and practice that I knew were of critical importance,” he says. “The program was lens-changing.” After selling startups in the real estate industries, in 2012 Greenberg joined Springside Chestnut Hill Academy, a school in Philadelphia that his children attended. He was hired as executive director of the school’s new Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership and helped implement what he describes as “the first known fully integrated K–12 entrepreneurship program” to foster the mindset, skills, and competencies associated with entrepreneurs, he says. Students’ initiatives ranged from a climate change nonprofit to an art supply box made for travel.

While at Penn GSE, Greenberg put his newfound knowledge into practice, tweaking the center at Springside Chestnut Hill to provide “sharper and better ways to send students on journeys of self-discovery,” he says. Next, he turned his energies to BuildEd, creating courses and instructor training that schools, colleges, and workforce development service providers can offer to teach the skills of entrepreneurship, such as critical thinking, communication, idea generation, self-reflection, and market analysis. Arizona State University and the Radnor School District, among others, use the program, which includes over three thousand hours of content. BuildEd’s continued success is due in part to what Greenberg gleaned at Penn GSE, he says. “The program gave me the ability to have conversations and build out ideas,” he says. “I could not go down the path of what next-generation learning looks like without my experience at Penn GSE.”

In Brazil, English skills are associated with job opportunities and work success, and the market for after-school programs that teach the language is increasingly competitive. **Cristiane (Zagol) Molina, GED’19**, founder and director of the ten-year-old CalEnglish Learning Center in Presidente Prudente near São Paulo, has found an unusual approach to meet that challenge: a project-based curriculum that teaches English through experiences, especially in STEM subjects.



more students. “That’s why I chose Penn GSE,” she says. “It had two strengths in one program.” Molina started CalEnglish as a way to support herself during law school. Open to all ages, it focuses on developing learners’ conversational English. In 2012, Molina completed her law degree, but instead of pursuing that career, she found that her true interest lay in building educational programs. In 2015, Molina

earned a master’s in business from Fundação Getulio Vargas, and two years later, she cofounded uGo, an exchange program agency. Currently at CalEnglish, about six hundred students ranging in age from four to seventy learn English through experiences, attending classes two hours per week. In the café-like Coffee Shop Classroom, for example, students practice ordering lattes. In the Business Classroom, complete with a conference table, they practice pitches. Now, for the launch of Molina’s new STEM classes, CalEnglish is adding a makerspace for projects in robotics, programming, and digital media and technology. She also plans to add soft-skills courses on empathy and emotional intelligence. From the get-go, the Education Entrepreneurship program helped her scrutinize and ultimately validate her approach, and also provided guidance on financial models and market research, says Molina. But that’s not all. “They really help you with yourself,” she says, “with what’s going to make you happy as a person. The program makes you think that you’re bigger than you see yourself, that you can actually innovate. So, you start believing in yourself as an innovator who can effect change.” ■

## Redefining After-School Language Learning

“My vision is for children and teenagers to learn English while developing skills in other subjects,” says Molina, who expects to launch new classes in 2020. “The landscape of language teaching is changing very fast. I wanted to innovate, change my business model.” In recent years, CalEnglish was losing students to the many bilingual schools that teach in both Portuguese and English, she says. Penn GSE’s Education Entrepreneurship program provided Molina with the practical education theory to improve the center’s course offerings, along with the entrepreneurial skills to set in motion plans to draw



# Faces of Philanthropy

by Karen Doss Bowman



Penn GSE develops groundbreaking research and practice to shape and lead education in the twenty-first century. As the *Extraordinary Impact Campaign* continues, Penn GSE is grateful to generous donors who are investing in the School’s strengths and vision. Here are four stories of support for the mission of Penn GSE.

## Advancing Innovation in Education



Photo by Chi Chi Ubiña Photography

**Andrew Harris Jacobson, WG’93 & Marina Kunis Jacobson, G’93, WG’93**

Andrew Harris Jacobson, WG’93, and Marina Kunis Jacobson, G’93, WG’93, believe in the potential of innovation and technology to transform education. As online platforms broaden the reach of educational content and digital tools offer new approaches to learning in and outside the classroom, the Jacobsons hope the result will be an expansion of quality learning opportunities for children regardless of background.

“Technology can be a powerful resource when applied effectively and creatively to education,” says Andrew, founder, president, and CEO of Axiom Investors LLC.

“With technology, you’re not limited by your physical location in accessing teachers, and that’s a powerful educational opportunity,” adds Marina, managing partner at Amicle Management LLC.

In keeping with their interests, the Jacobsons have named the Andrew and Marina Jacobson Innovation Studio, part of Penn GSE’s planned building expansion (*see page 21 to learn more about the project*). The Innovation Studio will provide future educators with a state-of-the-art space in which to design groundbreaking ventures that may shape the future of learning.

“We want to support Penn GSE’s mission of remaining at the forefront of education, both nationally and internationally,” says Andrew, a member since 2019 of Penn GSE’s Board of Overseers.

Andrew and Marina—who also established the Jacobson Global Venture Awards at The Wharton School’s Joseph H. Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies—both feel fortunate that their parents emigrated to the United States, in part for better educational opportunities.

Administrators at Penn were instrumental in helping Andrew’s parents move to the States from England so that his father could study and teach at the University. Marina’s family left Ukraine when she

was seven years old, establishing their new home in Los Angeles.

“The teachers who gave me the push and the resources I needed to succeed made a real difference, because my parents were immigrants and weren’t aware of all the opportunities available to me,” Marina says. “The influential role of teachers in people’s lives cannot be overstated.”

## Preparing Future Teachers



**Deborah Ancona, C’76, GED’77**

Deborah Ancona, C’76, GED’77, a professor at MIT Sloan School of Management, conducted groundbreaking research into how successful teams operate. Her work led directly to the concept of X-teams—a structure that helps individuals and organizations adapt to changing external circumstances to accomplish their goals. The dynamic approach is conducive to creativity and innovation. As a

member of the Penn GSE Board of Overseers, Ancona is pleased with the School’s approach to developing future leaders in education.

“Preparing teachers with the latest ideas, examining what makes school districts effective, and training a cadre of future teachers and superintendents—those things can make a positive difference,” says Ancona, author of *X-Teams: How to Build Teams That Lead, Innovate, and Succeed* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2007) and founder of the MIT Leadership Center. “Penn GSE is doing great things to train future educators to improve schools around the country and the world.”

Ancona, who is Seley Distinguished Professor of Management at MIT Sloan, says her experience studying counseling as a Penn GSE student was “foundational.” Though she started with plans for a career in clinical counseling, taking a business course at The Wharton School shifted her interest to applying psychology to organizations. At MIT, she teaches executive MBA students and business executives about leadership, teams, and organizational development.

In honor of her father, the late dermatologist and professor Dr. Arthur G. Gladstein—the inventor of a device to treat cancer of the eyelid—Ancona has established The AG Scholarship Fund at Penn GSE. The fund supports students training to be teachers and leaders. “Through my daughters’ impact as public school teachers, I’ve seen the difference that a great teacher and a great school system can make,” Ancona says. “In my own small way, I wanted to be part of creating positive change for teachers.”

## Strengthening Partnerships to Serve Children



**Steven Wagshal, W’94 & Emily Loft-Wagshal**

As his term as co-chair of The Penn Fund neared its end several years ago, Steven Wagshal, W’94, started looking for other ways to serve Penn. He was impressed with the mission of Penn GSE—in particular, the work of the Office of School and Community Engagement (OSCE). The office supports partnerships between Penn GSE, The School District of Philadelphia, and community organizations to

improve the academic and life outcomes of Philadelphia children and youth who face challenges including high rates of poverty and underfunded schools.

When Steven met with OSCE director Dr. Caroline Watts, as well as some of the Penn GSE alumni who participate in OSCE activities, he found their passion contagious. He and his wife, Emily Loft-Wagshal, created the Wagshal OSCE Gift Fund at Penn GSE to support the OSCE’s work.

Each year, initiatives facilitated by the OSCE engage Penn GSE students, faculty, staff, and alumni in more than four hundred activities at 250 Philadelphia schools, as well as over eighty activities in the community. Highlights include a partnership to improve mathematics instruction in thirteen elementary schools; programs in science, coding, filmmaking, journalism, and college preparation for District students; and community offerings in counseling and English language learning. The Wagshals hope their support can help maintain and expand this outreach.

“We’re happy to provide this support so that Penn GSE students can gain hands-on experience that prepares them to be educators for the rest of their lives,” says Steven, COO of Samlyn Capital LLC and a member of the Penn GSE Board of Overseers, noting that his mother and Emily’s mother were both schoolteachers.

“The OSCE activities provide a safe place for Philadelphia children,” adds Emily, a licensed master of social work and a community volunteer. “They socialize and gain exposure to learning

opportunities they would not otherwise have. That makes a difference for many children.”

## Supporting Strong Advocates for Learners



**Jennifer Saul Rich, C’92**

As a young student, Jennifer Saul Rich, C’92, struggled with a learning difference at a time when such issues were not well understood or diagnosed. Hard work and perseverance allowed her to master her studies and continue a family tradition by entering Penn as an undergraduate. Majoring in elementary education, she committed herself to teaching all children, especially those facing learning challenges similar to her own.

“Each of us learns in multifaceted ways,” Saul Rich says. “I believe every student should have the opportunity to become a successful, curious, and accomplished learner.” She views her time at Penn as a transformative experience that gave her critical tools, techniques, and knowledge. She would later rely upon these to develop a multi-disciplinary curriculum, organize a classroom, and structure student development as a pre-K and kindergarten teacher.

Saul Rich’s passion for teaching has led her to support the Penn GSE Term Scholarship Fund and establish the Rich Family Endowed Scholarship at Penn GSE, aiming to help others pursuing a career in education by making their studies more affordable. A former member of the Penn GSE Board of Overseers, she views the School as playing an important role in producing the next generation of forward-thinking educators. “Penn GSE has the expertise and experience to prepare future educators to be kind, compassionate, and strong advocates for children,” she says. “I’m excited about the School’s vision.”

Saul Rich earned master’s degrees in reading and special education from Bank Street College of Education and completed a year of Ph.D. studies at Teachers College, Columbia University. While no longer a classroom teacher, she remains active in education as a member of the board of the Dwight Englewood School in New Jersey and previously served on the boards of the Town School and the Stephen Gaynor School in New York. “I will always be a proponent of and advocate for education,” she says. “It is the greatest gift we can give to America’s children.” ■

To learn more about the *Extraordinary Impact Campaign*, see the building expansion update on [page 21](#), visit [www.gse.upenn.edu/support/extraordinary-impact](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/support/extraordinary-impact), or contact us at [215.573.6623](tel:215.573.6623) or [alumni@gse.upenn.edu](mailto:alumni@gse.upenn.edu).





# MAKING MEMORABLE LEARNING

Penn GSE Urban Teaching Residency Students Embrace the Maker Movement

by Karen Brooks



↑ Dr. Kafai's Maker Studio class prepared two Urban Teaching Residency master's students for their mission to enhance the makerspace at Christina Seix Academy. Photo by Jay Gorodetzer Photography

When Jenna Brower heard her middle school students at Christina Seix Academy grumbling that the campus playground catered only to younger students, she saw a timely learning opportunity. Having recently introduced an innovation laboratory at the independent school, which enrolls underserved three-year-olds through eighth graders in Trenton, New Jersey, she challenged her students to take action and use the innovation lab to design a playground that would appeal to adolescents. “I wanted them to use their imaginations to solve a problem that was relevant to their lives. They were amazingly intentional with their plans and thought about everything: cost, safety, accessibility for people with disabilities,” says Brower, who helped the group draft a formal proposal to submit to the head of school. “A big point of the lab is to make students feel heard

and to show them that they can be agents for change, whether it's in their school, in their community, or around the world.”

Now enrolled in the Urban Teaching Residency master's program at Penn GSE, Brower continues to teach at the academy and recently partnered with colleague and classmate Adrinne St. Fleur to overhaul the burgeoning innovation lab. The effort served as their final project for Maker Studio, a course developed by Yasmin Kafai, the Lori and Michael Milken President's Distinguished Professor at Penn GSE.

Dr. Kafai launched Maker Studio four years ago to foster technical skills and creativity among Penn GSE students. The course is a nod to the maker movement, a cultural phenomenon that promotes discovery through active brainstorming and building as opposed to passive consumption of information. Educational

Photo by iStock.com/Thirawatana Phaisaitatana

“makerspaces” such as the innovation lab at Christina Seix have been cropping up in academic institutions worldwide, giving learners communal spaces where they can carry out do-it-yourself experimentation with resources like craft and hardware supplies, computers and tablets, robotics, fabrication equipment, and multimedia tools. To increase Penn GSE students' exposure to these learning environments, a makerspace is included in the School's planned building expansion.

“There is an important difference between reading or listening and having a hands-on learning experience. This movement is about returning to experiential learning, bringing back a DIY component that many people feel has gone out the door with all of the emphasis on test scores

today,” explains Kafai, who designed the course with technology top of mind. By the end of the semester, her students have constructed electronic circuits using copper tape, LED lights, and batteries; designed and fabricated small objects using a 3D printer; and coded their own video games using basic programming language.

Assignments like these prepared Brower and St. Fleur for their mission to enhance the makerspace at Christina Seix. Although Brower conceptualized the innovation lab more than two years ago, she was teaching full time and didn't have the capacity to manage it singlehandedly or to orient other teachers to the facility—and since she primarily worked with older children, she struggled to identify ways to engage the school's youngest students.

That's where St. Fleur, lead educator for the school's three-year-old preschoolers and Brower's classmate in the Urban Teaching Residency master's program, came in. “Before Maker Studio, I had never heard of a makerspace. And before Jenna asked me to help make the innovation lab more accessible to kids of all ages, I didn't even know it existed,” St. Fleur recalls. After completing the physical task of organizing and labeling materials into cohesive stations that ranged from simple (general art supplies) to complex (3D modeling and printing devices), they switched their focus to devising curricula that incorporated toddlers to teenagers. They wanted to establish pre-K activities that could be extended all the way through middle school.





“I do something called graphics practice, where the three-year-olds draw on dry-erase boards, and it seemed like a good place to start,” says St. Fleur.

She brought the graphics practice activity into the innovation lab by incorporating a robotics element. Her students drew mazes that were then navigated by pocket-sized robots called Ozobots, which are programmed to read lines as pathways they should follow. Brower then built on the activity with her older students, who used Dash Robots—larger robots that respond to a drag-and-drop command system—to solve oversized versions of the preschoolers’ mazes.

“The younger kids were watching the robots go through their mazes and getting a visual idea of what coding can do. The older kids were actually doing the coding, telling the robot where to go and how to solve a bigger maze that was similar to what the younger kids drew,” Brower says. “This allowed the students to learn through play and to bring their creations to life while developing some simple coding skills.”

Today, collaboration, communication, computer literacy, and independent thinking are considered twenty-first-century skills essential to success in high school, college, and beyond. Honing such skills in a traditional classroom can be challenging, while makerspaces—where students tinker alongside their peers without explicit instructions from a teacher—lend themselves to enhancing these competencies organically. Both Brower and St. Fleur, who plan to graduate in May 2020 with master’s degrees, credit the Urban Teaching Residency program with illuminating the crucial need for these resources in schools where social and economic problems abound. With an executive-style format designed to fit the schedules of full-time educators, the program explores issues relevant to schools in high-needs areas, including access, poverty, and policy.

“This program has exposed me to a lot of the realities in different communities and schools,” St. Fleur says. “Some teachers don’t have the supplies they need to do their jobs—not even textbooks. We want all kids to have access to technology and creative outlets starting at a young age so they are prepared when they get to high school.”

## Makerspaces give students an invaluable sense of purpose and allow them to shine in ways that are not possible while seated at a desk.

Makerspaces give students an invaluable sense of purpose and allow them to shine in ways that are not possible while seated at a desk, Brower adds. “Having these spaces in urban environments is important because they provide a more relaxed environment that gives students more agency, allows them to see their full potential, and introduces them to technology they might not have access to anywhere else. They can do anything in the space as long as they are innovating.”

Rob Connor, GR’11, Christina Seix Academy’s founding head of school, credits the innovation lab with students’ success in collaborative problem-solving tournaments hosted by Destination Imagination. A group from the school finished first place in last year’s statewide competition and qualified for the global finals for the past two years.

“This is a wonderfully eclectic group of kids who are thoughtful, contemplative, and diligent about their work, but are not always the most outspoken students,” says Connor. “The innovation lab provides a space for them to find themselves. When engaged in real problem-solving work and open-ended projects, they come out of their shells and find their voices. It’s amazing to see.”

Brower and St. Fleur presented their final Maker Studio project in spring of 2019, but that doesn’t mean their work to improve the school’s innovation lab is done. They expect the space to evolve continually as new tools become available and new lesson ideas emerge. The next station they aim to introduce will center on video production, giving students an opportunity to film and edit their own news and talk shows. They are also diligently spreading the word about the lab to their educator colleagues, inviting them to bring their classes into the space.

“The most compelling part of all this is that Jenna and Adrinne are from a school that had a makerspace, and most of the teachers didn’t even know about it. This illustrates a challenge that many makerspaces in schools face,” Kafai says. “You can put all the tools and materials there, but how do you make it work to the fullest? They have created a meaningful resource, not just for students but also for teachers who might not know much about makerspaces and technology but will learn as they become part of the community that creates activities within their lab.” ■

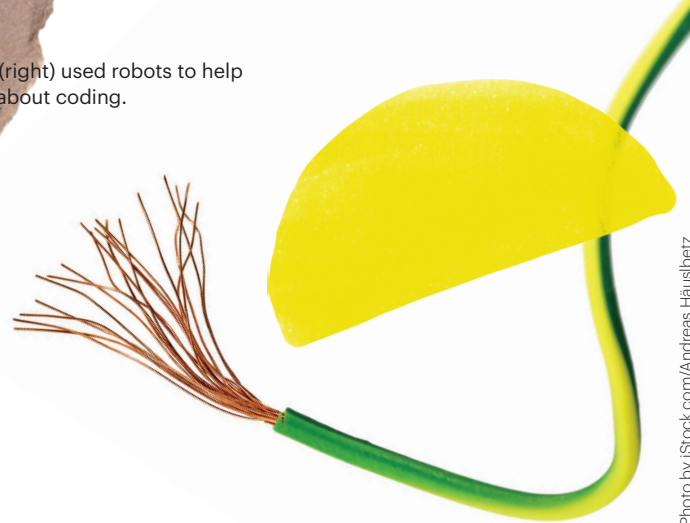


Photo by iStock.com/Andreas Häuslbeitz



## A Landmark of Twenty-First-Century Learning

The momentum of Penn GSE’s *Extraordinary Impact Campaign*, a multiyear fundraising effort within the University’s *Power of Penn Campaign*, continues to draw support for priorities across the School. These include a dramatic building expansion—the School’s first new construction in more than fifty years—to create a hub of twenty-first-century teaching and learning.

Penn GSE has completed the schematic design process with Ann Beha Architects to consolidate the majority of the School’s programs, students, faculty, and staff in one location. Highlights of the project include the following:

- **A new main entrance** on 37th Street, leading to a lobby, a second-floor overlook, and a third-floor atrium, all to connect the School’s central 3700 Walnut Street building to nearby Stiteler Hall
- **A two-story academic innovation addition** that extends Stiteler Hall into the Social Sciences Quadrangle and contains an innovation hub with a makerspace and media lab, five active learning classrooms, a learning commons, and an outdoor plaza
- **Various flexible student lounge and study spaces** to provide an enhanced experience of academic and professional community

State-of-the-art learning environments will support cutting-edge teaching and learning and foster the development and use of new technologies to meet the demands of the twenty-first century and beyond. In this dynamic hub, students will gain a broader understanding of the scope of education; its social, economic, and political contexts; and how to address complex issues in order to effect change.



To learn more about the building expansion project, or to contribute, visit [www.gse.upenn.edu/support/extraordinary-impact](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/support/extraordinary-impact) or contact **Melissa Calvert** at **215.573.6623** or **alumni@gse.upenn.edu**.

*The images shown here are of a conceptual nature, illustrating the intended massing of potential additions and proposed scope of interior work. The final design of the addition and interior renovations will continue to develop and advance in future months in accordance with the program requirements and budget targets.*



# helping adolescents *learn and thrive*

interview by Juliana Rosati



Penn GSE Professor  
Michael J. Nakkula on  
*Supporting Young People*

Young people face a variety of challenges—whether due to emotional, socioeconomic, societal, or other factors—that may interfere with their ability to learn and thrive. Penn GSE Professor of Practice Michael J. Nakkula, chair of the School’s Human Development and Quantitative Methods division, has spent decades investigating what approaches can change students’ life trajectories for the better. We sat down with him to discuss his work and what he enjoys most about teaching Penn GSE students.

← Michael J. Nakkula, chair of the Human Development and Quantitative Methods division, studies approaches to helping young people set goals, connect to support networks, and pursue the lives they want.  
Photo by Darryl W. Moran Photography

**Your work focuses on possibility development for young people. What does that mean, and how does it differ from other ways of looking at adolescent psychology?**

I define possibility development as the capacity to conceive of possibilities in one’s life and then actualize them with support. This work started in the mid-nineties when I helped start a program at Harvard Graduate School of Education. We were looking at interventions meant to prevent problems, such as disengagement and substance abuse, that contribute to high school dropout rates. But it became clear to me that the need was less about preventing problems than creating opportunity structures that allowed young people to thrive or pursue their interests. The students we worked with almost always held aspirations for a better future, and it wasn’t only the “troubled” kids, but rather the vast majority of students who needed support to access better opportunities. So we shifted our focus to helping young people envision and pursue the lives they wanted, and it was amazing to see the impact on students.

**This issue of *The Penn GSE Magazine* focuses on the theme of innovation. In your work you’ve described innovation as a key part of possibility development. How can innovation help young people?**

In many ways, young people need to be entrepreneurs to invent the futures they want. Like someone developing a new business, adolescents can exercise creativity and innovation to envision what they would like to happen in their lives, and then create a plan to pursue their goal. Of course, access to resources and support is an important part of the process. In my current work with two middle schools in Philadelphia, we are doing what I call possibility mentoring. Groups of Penn GSE master’s students work with seventh graders to help them envision possibilities in their lives—for example, becoming a scientist—and create strategies for pursuing them, such as taking certain classes in high school and learning about college programs and who can help them along the way. We want them to get into the habit of setting goals related to their interests and pursuing them with support.

**Why is support so important?**

Many students are resistant to it. They don’t really believe it can help them, and unfortunately there often continues to be a stigma around the idea of seeking counseling. By calling our work mentoring rather than counseling, we’re trying to broaden students’ understanding of what it means to seek support. Similarly, one of the programs I’m studying in my current research, The Future Project, based in New York City, provides students across the country with highly skilled mentors called “dream directors.” We’re still determining our findings, but what we know so far is that having a

*“We found that the schools did a good job of preparing the students for the academic realities of college, but not for larger challenges. Most first-generation and lower-income students who dropped out of college left due to a convergence of pressures that made it difficult to prioritize school.”*

key person in the school who students can go to on a regular basis for social and emotional support, without concern for being stigmatized, seems to help. Students stay in school and become more engaged in the learning process.

**Are there other support structures, beyond mentoring or counseling, that can help students pursue possibilities in their lives?**

Over time, I’ve explored various approaches. Support can mean mentoring or counseling, but it can also mean involvement in a community group. For example, one of my projects has spent ten years studying two early college high schools, which are designed to help urban high school students work toward an associate’s degree while earning their high school diploma. We found that the schools did a good job of preparing the students for the academic realities of college, but not for larger challenges. Most first-generation and lower-income students who dropped out of college left due to a convergence of pressures that made it difficult to prioritize school—for instance, they might have needed to work to support a family member. And it was the students who got connected to a support network early in college—whether it was a religious community, mentoring community, or an arts or athletic community—who were more likely to stay.

Support can also mean having the opportunity throughout the day to bring your personal experiences into the classroom and form deep connections with your classmates and teachers. In this vein, one of my other projects studied the Facing History High School in New York City. It uses a model across the curriculum called “Facing History and Ourselves,” which asks students to engage in self-reflection and discussion to make sense of what they are learning in light of their own life experiences, not only in history but across the curriculum. For instance, an English teacher might ask students to discuss how themes in a work of literature relate to their own lives. We found that by the end of twelfth grade, students were remarkably connected to one another and the educational environment, and committed to a future that included college.

Support may need to be customized to students’ identities and backgrounds. One of my studies looked specifically at young girls of color in high school. We found that due to their experiences of racism and sexism, they needed opportunities to develop the qualities of resistance and resilience to avoid internalizing harmful messages. This might be seen as a form of “critical consciousness,” or the ability to recognize and question social forces.





Photo by Darryl W. Moran Photography

Overall, what can schools do to better serve students?

There needs to be a cultural shift, and even an educational shift, towards self-understanding and understanding other people. We spend remarkably little time in many schools helping students understand themselves. But when we do, some of the everyday challenges in students’ lives become more transparent and speakable as opposed to remaining hidden. In one of my current projects, The Project for Mental Health and Optimal Development, which was cofounded with Ed.D. student and educational consultant Andy Danilchick, we’re entering our first year of bringing together a consortium of school districts in the Philadelphia area for monthly meetings at Penn GSE and training to help school personnel promote better mental health. Overall in my work, we’re providing qualitative analysis of various models as a way of bringing practical wisdom forward. If students and teachers perceive an educational model as effective, we want that information to be available so other schools can consider adapting the model for their own contexts.

What is next for your work in possibility development?

I recently coedited a three-volume series, *Adolescent Psychology in Today’s World: Global Perspectives on Risk, Relationships, and Development* (Praeger, 2018). It features chapters by a variety of authors around the world, including twelve Penn GSE students and alumni. The books are meant to be the first step in building a global possibility network. The authors and I want to share our practices and look at how they might be adapted to contexts in other parts of the world. For example, the possibility mentoring we’re doing in the United States will be adapted for a project I’m involved with in China, where we are trying to help youth from rural families who lack familiarity with higher education. I’m also working with Penn GSE Professor of Practice Sharon Ravitch and some of her colleagues in Nicaragua and India to do similar work in those countries.

“Our students bring tremendous passion for issues around learning, development, educational access, and diversity. When I go into class, I have to be prepared for tough questions.”

You are chair of the Human Development and Quantitative Methods division at Penn GSE. Could you say a little bit about the vision of the division?

One of the things that we believe we’ve done innovatively is to bring a serious mental health overlay into school counseling. To this day, the field of school counseling is hesitant to embrace too much mental health counseling work out of concern that it falls beyond the scope of what counselors are prepared for and have time to do. Our argument is that school counselors are sometimes the only service providers a student will see. Our integrated approach has made us attractive to educators who have worked with students who need something more than academic and school-related guidance. In addition, the recent merger of the Human Development and Counseling division with the Quantitative Methods division has benefited our research. We are now working more closely with colleagues who can help us to refine our research questions, data collection methods, and analytic approaches. Overall, I see our division as a unique integration of basic and applied developmental research, with an overarching mission of better understanding processes that enhance the well-being of children, youth, and families in Philadelphia and around the world.

You received the 2016 Penn GSE Excellence in Teaching Award. What do you enjoy most about teaching Penn GSE students?

Our students bring tremendous passion for issues around learning, development, educational access, and diversity. When I go into class, I have to be prepared for tough questions. It could be related to language use around race or gender, for example. Our students want to know if you are really attuned to the issues that matter to them, and to students and schools. I don’t find that to be a burden; I find it exhilarating, actually. In addition to the classes I teach, I have research teams that are organized every year, and the students who join them gain hands-on experience that allows them to put into practice what they’re learning in class. One of the gifts of working with students like ours is that you see talent that transcends your own, and you know they’re going to go out and do good work. I want to be a part of the puzzle by playing an important role in their development and the missions they have for educating and helping others. ■



From left: Senior Fellow Alan Ruby, Senior Lecturer Aameena Ghaffar-Kucher, Dean Pam Grossman, Assistant Professor Krystal Strong, and Professor Matthew Hartley discussed global research and practice. Photos by Ginger Fox Photography

Celebrating Educators

Alumni and friends celebrated the extraordinary impact of the Penn GSE community at the School’s annual Celebration of Educators on May 18, 2019, during Penn’s Alumni Weekend.

A panel discussion at the event highlighted the global research and practice of four Penn GSE faculty: Senior Lecturer Aameena Ghaffar-Kucher, co-director of the International Education Development Program; Professor Matthew Hartley, associate dean for academic affairs; Senior Fellow Alan Ruby, senior scholar for Penn AHEAD; and Assistant Professor Krystal Strong. Dean Pam Grossman moderated the conversation, entitled “Voices in Education: Reimagining Our Future.”

The celebration concluded with a reception honoring the recipients of the 2019 Education Alumni Awards. Given annually to Penn GSE alumni and other education professionals, the awards mark outstanding contributions to the School and the field of education.



From left: Marsha Comegno, GED’98, GRD’04, and Dean Pam Grossman congratulated honorees Serafin M. Coronel-Molina, GR’07; Aubrey H. Wang, GED’94, GR’01; Penn undergraduate Rohan Valrani (accepting the award on behalf of his father, Navin M. Valrani, W’93, GED’18); Jaime Lynn Hunter, GED’12; and Shelley B. Wepner, GED’73, GRD’80. Not pictured: Kimberly Truong, GR’10

2019 Education Alumni Awardees

Penn GSE Educator of the Year Award  
Shelley B. Wepner, GED’73, GRD’80

The Penn GSE Early Career Award of Merit  
Jaime Lynn Hunter, GED’12  
Kimberly Truong, GR’10

William B. Castetter Alumni Award of Merit  
Navin M. Valrani, W’93, GED’18

Ethel and Allen “Buddy” Carruth Sustained  
Leadership in Education Award  
Aubrey H. Wang, GED’94, GR’01

Helen C. Bailey Award  
Serafin M. Coronel-Molina, GR’07

Find our 2020 nomination form at  
[www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/get-involved/awards-nominations](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/get-involved/awards-nominations)

Save the Date  
Alumni Weekend  
May 15–18, 2020

Visit [www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/events](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/events)  
to find upcoming alumni events  
on campus and in your region.

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# Alumni Notes

## Penn Affiliations

At Penn, all alumni have an affiliation, or series of letters and numbers, following their name to indicate their degree, school, and year of graduation. A master’s degree from GSE is represented as GED and an education doctorate as GRD. A philosophy doctorate from any school at Penn is represented as GR. An undergraduate degree offered by the School of Education until 1961 is represented as ED. The two numbers following the letters represent the year in which that degree was completed.

## 1960s

**Bill Baker, GED’65**, is proud to be a member of the Adirondack 46ers mountain club, having hiked the forty-six highest peaks in the Adirondack Mountains of New York in 1994. A retired sixth grade teacher, he has addressed environmental concerns in Ambler, PA, as a member of Citizens for a Better Ambler.

**Katie Barney, GED’69**, has published her newest cookbook, *The Enchanting World of Food*, which includes international recipes contributed by ambassadors, their chefs, and friends of the author. A consultant on international business and protocol, she has always been involved in the diplomatic community.

**Paul Humber, C’64, GED’65**, is editor of *The Lasting Bible* (CR Ministries, 2019), which addresses how translations of the

Hebrew word *olam* and the Greek word *aionios* affect understandings of punishment and its cessation in the Bible.

**Michael Wallace, GED’69**, is coauthor of “The NOCCA Integrated World History Curriculum: A New Paradigm for Teaching History in High School” (World History Connected, 2016, Volume 13, Number 1), which describes a comprehensive design model for creating a secondary history curriculum.

## 1970s

**Conrad Snyder, GR’70**, is working on a European Union contract to develop the national ten-year education sector plan for Malawi. He recently finished a year in Ethiopia and is moving next year to Gainesville, FL.

## 1980s

**James Day, GR’87**, was recently elected professor emeritus at Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium in anticipation of his retirement in 2020. He has served as academic dean and chair of the doctoral, ethics, and undergraduate commissions; founded an interreligious dialogue project; and received the university’s highest teaching awards.

**Margaret Mulqueen, GED’78, GR’84**, has maintained a psychotherapy practice in Brookline, MA, for over thirty years. She has published a number of essays, most recently in *Psychotherapy.net*, *Psychotherapy Networker*, and *The Boston Globe*.

**Mona Weissmark, GR’86**, was keynote speaker at the 2019 Rock Valley College David H. Caskey Memorial Lecture, where she discussed the research that inspired her book *The Science of Diversity*, to be published by Oxford University Press.

## 1990s

**Mark Fabrizi, GED’95**, has been awarded tenure at Eastern Connecticut State

University, where he is an associate professor of English education. He received an award for teaching excellence from the Connecticut State Board of Regents.

**Gail Foster-Lewis, GED’92, GED’95**, is president and CEO of Go Forward Education Foundation Inc., which hosts its White Tie Gala and Fundraiser in November to support scholarships for K-12 students at low-performing schools who desire to attend a private Christian school.

**Anastasia Germain, GRD’98**, recently sold her childcare business, KidsNet Learning Center, after twenty successful years of business ownership. Proud that the school system she created continues to thrive and grow, she looks forward to exploring new educational ventures.

**Angelo Giardino, GED’86, M’87, GR’99**, is in Salt Lake City, UT, at the University of Utah School of Medicine and Intermountain Health Care. He is a faculty member and chair of the Department of Pediatrics at the School of Medicine.

**Jill Kanski-Bruno, D’94, GED’94**, is proud to launch the Butterflies for Change campaign at Dr. Jill Bruno Orthodontics to raise awareness of and support for Lifting the Limits for PKU, Hope for Annabel, Ava Potter Pilcher Foundation, Race for Every Child, and The Willie Strong Foundation.

**Gloria McNeal, GNU’75, GR’98**, was promoted to associate vice president for community affairs in health at National University after six years as dean of the School of Health and Human Services. She looks forward to providing leadership, vision, and global outreach strategies.

**Robert Vaughn, GR’98**, lead pastor of the Community of Faith United Methodist Church in Herndon, VA, was elected to the denomination’s 2020 General Conference and is also an adjunct faculty member in sexuality and faith at Wesley Theological Seminary.

## 2000s

**John Brewster, G’03, GED’03**, has retired after teaching Latin and English at Strath Haven High School in Wallingford, PA. He looks forward to traveling and spending much more time with family and friends.

**Servet Celik, GED’02**, is an associate professor and the head of the Department of Foreign Language Education at Trabzon University in Turkey.

**Soojin Cho, GED’04**, is working at an international school in China, writing a book, and filming online courses. She has published seven books, and one of her online courses has been adopted as mandatory by a number of colleges. She is thankful for her Penn GSE experience.

**Ted Cross, GED’09, WEV’09**, has been named associate dean of graduate programs in the College of Business at Western Governors University.

**Laura Freid, GRD’05**, is entering her third year as president of Maine College of Art. She is grateful for the awesome consulting work of Penn GSE classmates **Jackie Nealon, GRD’05**, and **Sarah Steinberg, GRD’05**.

**Stefani Hite, GED’95, GRD’05**, is a global consultant on process improvement and change initiatives for organizations. She is scheduled to present this fall at Dr. Jenni Donohoo’s Collective Efficacy Institute, which helps participants to foster a sense of efficacy in schools and classrooms.

**Romilla Karnati, GED’00, GR’08**, is an advisor for early childhood care and development at Save the Children. She is responsible for the design, capacity building, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs in low- and middle-income countries.

**James Kingham, GED’09**, received his Ed.D. from New York University, where his research focused on the experiences of international graduate students.



Photo by Krista Patton Photography

**Yvette Mayhan, OT’80, GR’00**, manages “Talk With Me Baby Grady,” an initiative of the Grady Health System in Atlanta, GA. It is the first prenatal-to-birth, hospital-based program to systematically help parents develop habits of responsive interactions with their babies to promote development that can lead to better reading preparation.

**Kieran McLaughlin, GED’05**, has completed thirteen years as a high school social studies teacher. When his proposal to introduce AP Human Geography to Morris Hills Regional District in New Jersey was approved in 2016, he wrote the curriculum and began teaching the course.

**Alexis S. Montevirgen, GED’03**, was appointed president of Los Angeles Pierce College, effective July 1. He was previously vice chancellor for student affairs and enrollment management at Indiana University Northwest.

**Natasha Murray, GRD’05**, is on the board of directors of Phi Delta Kappa International. She has extensive experience as a practitioner, administrator, researcher, consultant, teacher educator, and adjunct professor within K-12 and graduate settings.

**Bernex Richardson, GED’09**, participated in a 545-mile bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles in June as part of AIDS LifeCycle to support treatment and prevention of new HIV/AIDS infections. He worked relentlessly to train for this experience while raising more than \$4,000 for the cause.

**Manami Suzuki, GED’01**, a professor at Hosei University in Tokyo, Japan, recently published collaborative work with colleagues Dr. Naoki Ando and Dr. Hidehiko Nishikawa in *Management Decision* and *Management Research Review*.

**Brianne Walsh, GED’08**, was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor in the College of Education at Rowan University.



**Michael Williams, GRD’08**, cowrote “Predicting the Quality of Black Women Collegians’ Relationships with Faculty at a Public Historically Black University” (*Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 2019, Volume 12, Issue 2) with **Jennifer M. Johnson, GED’08**.

**Mary Zigman, GED’05**, is executive director of The Parent Child Center of Rutland County in Rutland, VT, where a 2Gen Whole Family Education Campus will open in December. Funded by multiple grants, the \$2 million campus will house early childhood education, early intervention therapies, an alternative high school, and more.

**Regina Zurbano, GED’03, CGS’04**, has joined Bell Mountain Middle School in Menifee, CA, as principal. She previously spent seventeen years in 9–12 education as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal.

## 2010s

**Katherine Barlow, GED’17**, has developed accessible content for the City of Philadelphia to help English language learners use a basic banking website, making access to affordable banking tools more equitable for local immigrant communities.

**Melanie Betchen, GED’15**, graduated from the Cooper Medical School at Rowan University in May and began training at Cooper University Hospital as an internal medicine resident. She hopes to continue integrating mental health and medicine.

**Debora Broderick, GRD’15**, is creating a teacher academy program at Central Montco Technical High School in Plymouth Meeting, PA, for high school seniors interested in education careers. Students will earn up to nine college credits and complete over ninety-five hours in the field.

**Stephanie (Consoli) Cruz, GED’12**, married Mauricio Cruz on February 23 in Philadelphia, PA. The couple still lives in New York, NY, and Stephanie is starting her third year as director of college guidance at a Brooklyn high school.

**Mahesh Daas, GRD’13**, has been appointed the eighth president of the Boston Architectural College, effective July 12. He was previously dean of the School of Architecture and Design at the University of Kansas,

Lawrence. His career spans twenty-three years at four universities, including fourteen years in higher education leadership.

**Samuel C. Evans, GED’18**, assistant principal at Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School, is a Phila-Stonian, husband, father, educator, historian, and athlete dedicated to changing the world through his scholars.

**Stephanie Fazio, GED’11**, has published two new books in the Bisecter fantasy series, which features Hemera, a girl who is feared for her shared characteristics with monstrous creatures. When people start disappearing, Hemera is the only one who can save them.

**Kimberly Field-Marvin, GRD’16**, head of Louise S. McGehee School in New Orleans, LA, presented in June at the National Coalition of Girls’ Schools Conference with Wanda Holland Greene, head of Hamlin School in San Francisco, CA. They encouraged women to answer the call to educational leadership in independent schools.

**Christine Galib, GED’13**, has been named director of the Ion Smart Cities Accelerator, part of Station Houston’s vision to transform Houston, TX, into a hub for technology innovation and entrepreneurship with partners Microsoft, Intel, and TX/RX Labs. She previously designed and directed an entrepreneurship diploma program at a preK–12 school.

**Esther Glasgow, GED’18**, is a program coordinator at READ 718, a Brooklyn-based literacy nonprofit serving students from low-income families, for which she will manage a new location beginning this fall. She is grateful for Penn GSE’s role in her career.

**Kimberly Guyer, GED’05, GRD’13**, is the new vice president for student affairs at Alfred University, where she oversees departments and centers for advising, athletics, career development, academic success, student involvement and conduct, and other aspects of campus life.

**Khalilah Harris, GRD’18**, became managing director of K–12 policy at the Center for American Progress, where

she has coauthored the report “A Quality Education for Every Child: A New Agenda for Education Policy,” a comprehensive set of strategy recommendations for presidential candidates.

**Kalyn Higgins, GED’14**, is entering her fourth year of full-time teaching as a specialist, and her second year as a learning specialist, at York Preparatory School in New York, NY.

**Xiaomei Huang, GED’17**, a Ph.D. student at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, would like to say thank you to Penn GSE.

**Cassie Jacobs, GED’19**, has joined the Savannah College of Art and Design as a residence director.

**Brendon Jobs, GED’08, GED’11**, director of inclusion at The Haverford School in Haverford, PA, recently took part in Harvard Graduate School of Education’s Race, Equity, and Leadership in Schools workshop and has been interviewed by radio programs and podcasts regarding equity, inclusion, and social justice in schools.

**Ashley Johnson, GED’17**, is senior assistant director of student engagement at Columbia University School of General Studies, where she develops and implements leadership initiatives for nontraditional students and advises and supports all student groups.

**Lynette Kehoe, GED’18**, teaches fifth grade English language arts at a public charter school in the South Seattle area. She loves teaching her students how to navigate middle school and encouraging them to love literature, reading, and writing.

**Paula Langteau, GRD’17**, served as principal consultant for Academic Game Changers LLC, providing leadership consulting for innovative market-responsive programming and services in public and private higher education.

**Robert LeBlanc, GR’16**, assistant professor at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada, was named a Coyle Fellow for 2019–2021 at the University of Notre Dame’s Center for Literacy Research.

**Qianjun Lin, GED’18**, is an academic progress manager who helps students pursue their dream colleges. She says, “Isn’t it the spirit of a GSE-er, to let the world know that passion is the key to the dream.”

**Linda Luciano, GRD’13**, an entrepreneur and career coach, has been elected to another term as vice chair of the board of trustees of Caldwell University. On the board since 2004, she has served on each of its standing committees and as secretary.

**Douglas Magee, GED’13**, graduated from Vanderbilt University’s Ed.D. program in educational leadership and policy. His dissertation focused on the impact of Tennessee’s alternative teacher evaluation models on teacher growth and student performance.

**Anthony Medina, GED’17**, was awarded a Place-Based Justice Network Next Generation Fellowship. The fellowship supports emerging leaders of color who work with place-based community engagement efforts.

**Christian Miskell, GED’17**, and colleagues created WarHood, a ninth-grade program geared toward celebrating and supporting Black Excellence, which they presented at the College Board’s 2018 Dream Deferred conference in Los Angeles, CA.

**Lynn Nakazawa, GED’16**, was selected by the U.S. Department of State for a ten-month fellowship project training teachers and teaching English in Malaysia at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris. She is one of two hundred U.S. citizens selected for the 2019–2020 English Language Fellow Program, an opportunity for experienced teachers to improve the quality of English language instruction abroad.

**Moses Palacios, GED’11**, participated in a friend of the court brief in *Department of Commerce v. New York*, the recent Supreme Court case regarding adding a citizenship question to the decennial census. The brief was filed to illustrate the adverse impact an under-count of immigrant and Hispanic communities could have on urban schools.

**Ebbie Parsons, GRD’11**, managing partner of Yardstick Management, was named to the Winter 2019 cohort of the Pahara-Aspen Education Fellowship program, which seeks to strengthen and sustain diverse, high-potential leaders who are reimagining public education.

**Jess Pastore, GED’16, LPS’16**, is school and library partnerships manager in youth services at the Free Library of Philadelphia, where she develops trainings, programming, and curricula to foster sustainable partnerships with Philadelphia schools.

**Jessica Pavelka, GED’14**, is an integrative cognitive behavioral therapist and cofounder of Trauma-Informed Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, a trauma-sensitive, evidence-based, eight-week meditation series held throughout Philadelphia.

**Kasey Price, GED’18**, became founding teacher of financial literacy for Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School and consultant for the school’s TD Bank Financial Literacy Center for Adults after attending Penn GSE’s Education Entrepreneurship program to create a financial literacy curriculum.

**Allayna Ratliff, GRD’17**, accepted a position as academic superintendent (network leader) for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District in Cleveland, OH, to supervise and provide support to a portfolio of approximately twenty K–8 schools throughout the district.

**John Rogers, GRD’17**, has joined The Rise Fund, where he makes social impact investments in K–12 and in higher education in both the United States and emerging markets.

**Lior Schenk, GED’18**, accepted a position as thinking lab teacher at Pittsburgh’s Environmental Charter School, which will allow him to merge lifelong passions in science and the arts. He is driven to grow the next generation of citizens through the exploration of real-world interdisciplinary problems.

# Find *The Penn GSE Magazine* Online

Visit [www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/resources/gse-magazine](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/resources/gse-magazine) to find our issue archive featuring the magazine in flipbook and PDF form.

**Jennifer Lynn Shouffler, GRD’18**, was named superintendent and supervisor of curriculum for the Tewksbury School District in Califon, NJ, effective July 1. She was previously assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at Somerset Hills School District in Bernardsville, NJ.

**Monirath Siv, GED’14**, founder and chief executive officer of Teach For Cambodia, was named to the 2019 *Forbes* “30 Under 30/Asia” list for social entrepreneurs.

**Carolyn Sloan, GED’17**, has written a new children’s book, *Welcome to Jazz*, scheduled for release by Workman Publishing in October. She plans to debut it at the Penn Bookstore in December. Her first children’s book has nearly 100,000 copies in print.

**Derick Smith, GRD’12**, began a new position as head of Gulf Stream School, a preK–8 coeducational independent school in Gulf Stream, FL.

**Kelly Smith, GED’15**, married **Andrew Marion, GED’15**, in June. The two met while enrolled in the higher education master’s program at Penn GSE. Both are pursuing Ph.D.s at the University of Mississippi.



**Keith Sutton, GED’17**, is vice chair of the Wake County Board of Education in Raleigh, NC, and has announced his candidacy in the 2020 election for North Carolina superintendent of public instruction.

**Jessica Turner, GED’18**, a school and mental health counselor, established In Due Time Solutions with her business/life partner Paul to alleviate housing issues affecting students and their families. The company has helped hundreds of individuals receive real estate, financial, and mental wellness education.

**Rong (Lotus) Wang, GED’12**, became director for assessment, planning, and accreditation at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte College of Liberal

Arts and Sciences. She supports faculty and staff in assessing programs and services and assists in data-informed decision-making.

**Bezawit Wossene, GED’13**, is director of international studies at St. Joseph’s Preparatory School in Philadelphia, PA. She says to new Penn GSE graduates, “Stay strong, be true to yourself, and forgive your failures; it will all work out!”

**Qianqian Zhang, GED’14**, received a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from the Lynch School of Education at Boston College in May and has accepted a position as an assistant teaching professor of multilingual writing and a multilingual writing coordinator at Northeastern University.

# Share Your News

Fill out our Alumni Notes form at [www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/get-involved/submit-alumni-notes](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/get-involved/submit-alumni-notes) to tell us your updates.

*Submissions have been edited due to space constraints and magazine style guidelines.*

# CONTINUING A LEGACY OF DEDICATION

“Penn GSE has been a very special place to me from the start, thanks to the dedication of the faculty and the opportunity to pursue research as a master’s student. Because of the Castetter Fellowship, I can continue my research and prepare for a career determining which programs are truly helping youth. I want to help young people, particularly those at risk, receive a quality education and obtain the skills needed for success.”

— **Michael Frisone, GED’15, Ph.D. student in quantitative methods**  
*Recipient of the William B. and Roberta B. Castetter Fellowship*

A vital part of Penn GSE, Dr. William B. Castetter, GR’48, taught at the School for nearly forty years and served twice as acting dean. His dedication to education continues today, supporting students like Michael through a bequest made years ago. The William B. Castetter Circle, named in his honor, recognizes individuals who have remembered the School in their estate plans.



[www.gse.upenn.edu/support/ways-to-give/planned-giving](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/support/ways-to-give/planned-giving)

To learn more about how you can leave a legacy in education, please contact:  
Robert Vosburgh, JD, Director of Gift Planning | 215.898.6171 | [vosburgh@upenn.edu](mailto:vosburgh@upenn.edu)

# TIPS FROM THE EDUCATOR’S PLAYBOOK:

# TURNING AN IDEA INTO A BUSINESS THAT IMPROVES EDUCATION



**John Gamba**  
Director of Innovative Programs and Entrepreneur in Residence at Catalyst @ Penn GSE

Some issues in education can be solved by changing a lesson plan or policy. Others require innovators to create something new—a business or nonprofit—to develop and introduce a solution. Because educators are experts in learning, some of the startups having the biggest impact on education were created by teachers and school leaders. John Gamba, director of innovative programs and entrepreneur in residence at Catalyst @ Penn GSE, offers these tips to help educators take the leap into entrepreneurship:



# See yourself as an entrepreneur.

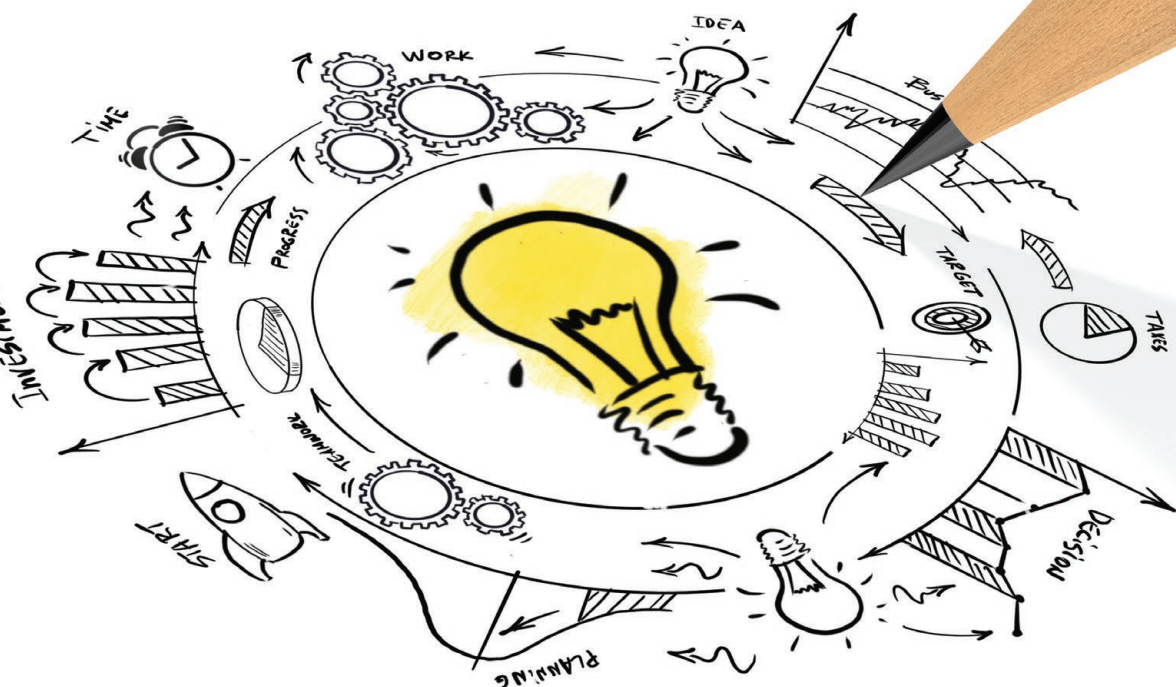
Most educators think of themselves as public servants, not businesspeople. But as a teacher or school leader, you already innovate to solve problems every day. You know how to try a new approach that is specific, meets a defined need, and is rooted in your experience and research. You also know how to refine the approach until it works. This iterative process would feel familiar at any startup company. And your earned wisdom as an educator is a significant advantage, because the team behind an education product really needs to understand how students learn.

# Define the problem.

The first goal of successful companies isn’t selling a product. It’s solving a problem. The more specifically you can define the problem, the better you will be able to solve it. For example, the team behind MentorPro—winners of the 2018 Milken-Penn GSE Education Business Plan Competition—found that teachers weren’t getting enough support from professional development sessions. So they created a mobile platform that connects novice teachers to mentors and fills in gaps within the professional development cycle. Every feature in their app was designed to address their problem.

(continued on next page) →





## Want more advice for educators?

These tips are adapted from *The Educator's Playbook*, a monthly Penn GSE newsletter that distills faculty research into useful advice for K–12 educators.

Visit [www.gse.upenn.edu/news/subscribe](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/news/subscribe) to sign up.

Catalyst's Entrepreneur in Residence Office Hours with John Gamba are open to all students, faculty, alumni, and entrepreneurs within Penn's education ecosystem on a first-come, first-served basis.

Contact [catalyst@gse.upenn.edu](mailto:catalyst@gse.upenn.edu) to learn more.

## Think about your school.

How does your idea align to the “pain points” of your institution or potential end-user? If you brought this product into your classroom, would the benefit to you and your students be worth whatever disruption comes with introducing it? How would you measure outcomes and prove the efficacy of your products or services? Be honest with yourself. If the idea wouldn't work in your school community—the place you know best—it would need even more revisions before it could work elsewhere.

## Ask around.

Confident that you've defined a problem and a solution? Now see if other educators agree. Do teachers in your building think your idea would work? What about educators in a district with different demographics who are facing different challenges than yours? Listen critically to what these people have to say. Push them to elaborate on potential weaknesses. Think about how you might modify your idea to meet these concerns. Don't be afraid to pivot—it's part of the process.

## Create a business plan.

Don't know what a business plan looks like? Consider using a simple template like Lean Canvas (<https://leanstack.com/leancanvas>). Writing a plan helps you to think about your customers—who they are and how to reach them—as well as your costs and pricing. It also spurs you to consider who you need on your team. For example, if you have an idea for an app, you might need to partner with a coder who specializes in mobile app development. A business plan is a blueprint. It will drive the next stage of development—from research, to prototyping, to product trials, to sustainable growth. ■



## Commencement 2019

Penn GSE held its 105th Commencement Ceremony on May 18 at the Palestra. Dr. Na'ilah Suad Nasir, president of the Spencer Foundation, delivered the keynote address. Penn GSE conferred 724 degrees during 2018-2019.

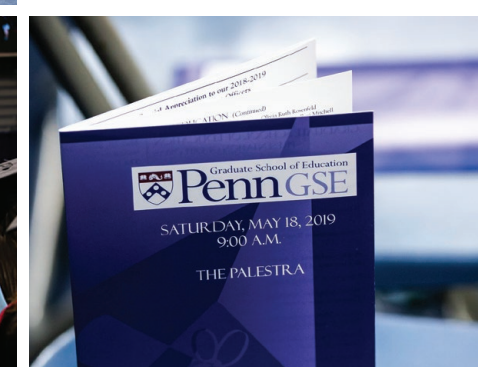


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## Create Opportunity With Us

Each year, Penn GSE faculty, staff, and students run more than four hundred programs in over three hundred partner schools, informal learning environments, and community organizations that improve the academic achievement and life outcomes of Philadelphia children and youth.

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Support our work by making a gift to the Penn GSE Annual Fund today.

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