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Letter from the Dean

Dear Alumni and Friends,

This fall has been a time of renewal and reconnection at Penn GSE. Thanks to our return to in-person operations, I am so pleased that we have successfully welcomed faculty, staff, and students to campus after seventeen months of remote learning and work. Whether you are in circumstances similar to or very different from these, I hope recent months have brought you the opportunity for interactions and experiences you value.

An important part of our transition back has been to aid in the transitions of our neighboring schools. Our Office of School and Community Engagement and several of our faculty contributed to a wonderful summer program that blended learning and fun to help five public schools in Philadelphia welcome back students and teachers, in collaboration with Penn’s Netter Center for Community Partnerships. Given the disruptions and inequities of our times, there has truly never been a more important time for preparing and supporting teachers, and I am grateful for how our teacher education programs featured on page 22 address this crucial need.

While there has been much to celebrate this fall, it remains a very challenging time in our world. A stirring lecture in September on October 28, 2021.

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

Editor’s note: This issue of The Penn GSE Magazine went to print on October 28, 2021.

Catherine DiFelice Box (1) was selected by the U.S. Department of State’s English Language Specialist Program to conduct a virtual project focusing on training professorial faculty to design and implement English Medium Instruction at Brazil’s Universidade Federal Fluminense in Rio de Janeiro state. Manuel S. González Canché (2) was selected to offer a course in qualitative data analysis and dynamic visualizations as part of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2021 Virtual Research Learning Series. He has also been named to the editorial board of Sociology of Education. Caroline B. Ebby (3) and a team have been awarded a grant of $199,947 from the Heising-Simons Foundation to study impacts of professional development and support for the Ongoing Assessment Project, a formative assessment system for mathematics. Vivian L. Gadeden (4) delivered a Distinguished Lecture about the educational and social imperative for responsibility and partnerships for the 2021 Annual Meeting of AERA. Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher (5) was awarded support from the Penn Global Engagement Fund to develop “The 9/11 20/20 Project: Twenty Lessons for Twenty Years Post-9/11,” a multimodal curriculum. (See the cover story on page 6 to learn more about this project.)

Charlotte Jacobs (6) was awarded a Diversity Traction Grant from Cleveland State University for work promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. She also received a Division G Mini-Research Grant from AERA for a project about understanding the experiences of EPYC youth in girls’ schools. Howard Stevenson (7) was invited to appear as a racial literacy professional development speaker for the Philadelphia Eagles in August 2021 on the topic of how to manage a racially stressful conversation.
Penn GSE supports GSE school reopenings
This summer, Penn GSE contributed to a collaboration serving five schools in The School District of Philadelphia as they prepared to resume in-person schooling. Penn GSE’s Office of School and Community Engagement (OSCE), led by Dr. Caroline L. Watts, OSCE director and senior lecturer, oversaw the School’s efforts, which added academic and mental health support to the annual summer program of Penn’s Netter Center for Community Partnerships.

Penn GSE welcomes new faculty
Penn GSE welcomed the following new faculty in 2021:

Dr. Matthew Dowdall (1) is a lecturer in the Teaching, Learning, and Leadership division. Dr. Dowdall researches technology-enhanced learning, game-based learning, computational thinking, teacher professional development, and corporate training.

Dr. Walter G. Eton (2) is a visiting assistant professor in the Education Policy Division. His research focuses on the pathways students take as they navigate high school, higher education, and the workforce.

Dr. Roberto Gonzales (3) is the first Penn Integrates Knowledge (PIK) professor to hold an appointment at Penn GSE. Gonzales’s award-winning scholarship assesses how immigration policy shapes the ways that immigrant youth adapt, come of age, and experience life in their receiving countries. As Richard Perry University Professor, he holds joint appointments in the Literacy, Culture, and International Education division of GSE and in the Department of Sociology of the School of Arts & Sciences. See page 18 for a future article about Gonzales.

Dr. Andrea M. Kano (4) is professor of practice in the Teaching, Learning, and Leadership division. Formerly superintendent of schools for Queen Anne’s County Public Schools in Maryland, Kano earned the Governor’s Citation for instructional leadership, recognition for the first fully virtual learning program for public elementary and middle school students in Maryland, and many accolades. Her research interests include a practitioner-centered approach to solving problems of practice and addressing critical issues in education.

Dr. Michelle Neuman (5) is a lecturer in educational practice in the Literacy, Culture, and International Education division. Her research takes a comparative and multi-disciplinary approach to study policies and programs for young children around the world.

In addition, Dr. Rachel Baker, currently assistant professor of education at the University of California, Irvine School of Education, will join Penn GSE in January of 2022.

Penn GSE raises $98.3M in Extraordinary Impact Campaign
Penn GSE had raised $98.3 million, surpassing the $75 million goal of the Extraordinary Impact Campaign, more than 30 percent, when the campaign concluded on June 30, 2021, as part of the University-wide Power of Penn Campaign. A multi-year campaign and the largest fundraising effort in the School’s history, Extraordinary Impact has dramatically increased support for priorities across Penn GSE, including facilities and technology, scholarship and fellowship, programs and research, faculty, and the Penn GSE Annual Fund. See page 16 to learn more about the campaign’s accomplishments.

Classroom Renovations Support Active Learning
Penn GSE recently completed a joint project to renovate two classrooms into flexible, interactive learning spaces in collaboration with the Office of the Provost, the Division of the Vice Provost for University Life, the Office of the University Registrar, and Penn Information Systems and Computing. The tiered-floor classrooms were converted by Atkin Olshin Schade Architects into a SAIL (Structured, Active, In-class Learning) design meant to support structured, in-class activities in which students engage in real practices of their disciplines. The renovated classrooms (2) are rooms 285B and 285C in Stretcher Hall, which will connect to Penn GSE’s main building at 37th Street through the School’s building expansion project.

Penn GSE and McGraw Family Foundation Award 2021 Prizes

Penn GSE and McGraw Family Foundation Award 2021 Prizes

The Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Family Foundation and Penn GSE announced the 2021 winners of the prestigious Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education and honored them in a virtual celebration on November 10. The winners are revolutionary education entrepreneur and researcher Dr. Richard Bazarak (2021 McGraw Prize in Higher Education), special education trailblazers Dr. Lynn Fuchs and Dr. Doug Fuchs (2021 McGraw Prize in PreK–12 Education), and transformative scholar and leader Dr. Carol D. Lee (2021 McGraw Prize in Learning Science Research). Since 1988, the McGraw Prize has celebrated innovation in education by recognizing outstanding individuals who have dedicated themselves to improving education and whose accomplishments are making a significant impact. Learn more at www.mcgrawprize.com.

Best-selling author Jill Lepore Discusses Teaching the U.S. Constitution
The guest speaker for the Steven S. Goldberg and Jolley Bruce Christman Lecture in Education Law, best-selling author Dr. Jill Lepore, argued that modern interpretations of the U.S. Constitution should include opinions of people who were living but disenfranchised when the document was created, such as women, African Americans, and immigrants.

Lepore (center), a Harvard University history professor and staff writer at The New Yorker, spoke to an audience both live and live-streamed on September 23, 2021, for her talk, “Amend: Teaching the U.S. Constitution in an Era of Constitutional Crisis.” The event included a Q&A with Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman and keynote speaker on September 23, 2021, for her talk, “Amend: Teaching the U.S. Constitution in an Era of Constitutional Crisis.” The event included a Q&A with Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman and keynote speaker

Celebrating Commencement

Penn GSE celebrated the Class of 2021 in a virtual Commencement ceremony led by Dean Pam Grossman on May 31, 2021. Dr. Michael Sorrell, president of Paul Quinn College in Dallas, Texas, and a member of Penn GSE’s Board of Advisors, delivered the keynote address. The 2021 recipients (below) of annual awards from GSE and Penn were announced this spring:

The 2021 Penn GSE Annual Awards Honoring students, staff, and faculty for their dedication

The William E. Arnold Award for Outstanding Contributions by a Student

Dr. Michelle Neuman

The 12th anniversary Milken-Penn GSE Education Business Plan Competition Announces Winners

The 12th anniversary Milken-Penn GSE Education Business Plan Competition (EBPC) held its virtual finals on October 5, 2021. For the first time, the judging criteria included a venture’s ability to support underserved communities and potential to increase equitable outcomes. Readline captured the Michael & Lori Milken Family Foundation’s Grand Prize of $40,000. HomeWorks Trenton won the $25,000 AmeriCan Public University System Prize; Weird Enough Productions earned the $10,000 SAGE Scholars Prize, and 9ijakids Educational Games collected the $5,000 Osage Venture Partners Audience Choice Prize. All nine finalists received $1,000 in cash and $5,000 in Amazon Web Services Promotional Credits. Considered the most prestigious and well-funded competition of its kind, the EBPC attracts innovative education ventures from around the world.

The 2021 Penn GSE Prize for Excellence in Teaching by Graduate Students

Recognizing the profound impact of graduate students on education at Penn

Jasmine Blanks Jones, GR’21

Yumi Matsumoto, Educational Linguistics

Best-selling author Jill Lepore Discusses Teaching the U.S. Constitution
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Examining Freedom, Voice, and Dialogue

Education for citizenship in a democracy must involve opportunities for students to develop their voices while engaging with perspectives different from their own, according to Professors Sigal Ben-Porath and Jonathan Zimmerman, both of Penn GSE’s Literacy, Culture, and International Education division. Each has produced decades of scholarship relevant to the current moment. Dr. Ben-Porath examines the subject from a philosophical perspective, while Dr. Zimmerman considers it from a historical one.

“As a democratic citizen, you ought to be able to develop, change, and express your opinions,” says Ben-Porath, whose work focuses on how educational institutions can sustain and advance democracy. In *Free Speech on Campus*, published in 2017 by University of Pennsylvania Press, she responds to controversies in which inclusion and freedom of speech are characterized as opposing values. For instance, arguments have been made about whether colleges should promote free speech by hosting a speaker with views that are offensive to some constituencies, or promote inclusion by banning the speaker. Ben-Porath sees this approach as a false dichotomy that distracts from a larger picture.

“I see freedom of speech and inclusion as not actually juxtaposed, but as mutually reinforcing,” she says. Ben-Porath proposes that institutions should focus on creating “inclusive freedom”—conditions in which freedom of speech and inclusion go hand in hand. “What do young people need to learn to become informed, active citizens who can engage productively with those whose views differ from their own? What approaches can foster this learning?"

Along with related subjects such as history and social studies, civics has generally been deemphasized in U.S. schools in recent decades as standards and testing have focused on math, writing, and reading. Now, as an era of political polarization, a historic civil rights movement, and the wake of the January 6 insurrection fuel urgent questions about the state of American democracy, increased attention has come to the role of education in imparting the ideals of civic life. Recently, teaching in an era of constitutional crisis was the topic of the Steven S. Goldberg and Jolley Bruce Christman Lecture in Education Law, given at Penn by best-selling author Dr. Jill Lepore (see page 5 to learn more).

Penn GSE faculty, students, and alumni have long been exploring and strengthening the ways that education can prepare students to understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a nation governed by the people. The Spring 2021 issue of *The Penn GSE Magazine* offered a glimpse of how Penn GSE alumni are educating and nurturing the next generation of citizens through their teaching and leadership. Here, we focus on the contributions of Penn GSE faculty and students in the areas of civic dialogue, classroom practices and curricula, and learning beyond the classroom.

“I am proud of the ways in which our faculty and students are creating opportunities to learn about democracy and engage in deliberation,” says Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman. “This work is essential to our future, as our country grapples with deep divisions during a time of constitutional crisis.”

Exchanging Freedom, Voice, and Dialogue

What do young people need to learn to become informed, active citizens who can engage productively with those whose views differ from their own? What approaches can foster this learning?
is key is not just the formal regulation of speech that preserves the availability for people to speak,” she says. “What matters in K-12 and higher education is that people, in fact, are speaking and listen- ing to each other.

How to create such conditions is a complex question. Zimmer- man, whose work examines how educational practices and policies have developed over time, is troubled by evidence that many indi- viduals may be choosing not to express their views. He points to survey results such as those of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. “Across political parties, both students and faculty are reporting that they’re not raising their voices,” says Zimmerman, who is the Judy and Howard Berkowitz Professor in Education. “I think the biggest inhibitor now on all kinds of education is self-censorship.” Zimmerman calls for educational institutions to model exchange across difference. For example, an initiative he and Penn GSE’s Dr. Harris Sokoloff created after the 2016 election brought together students from Penn and Cairn University, a Christian institution near Philadelphia, for conversations that began with the prompt, “Tell me who you voted for and why.”

College, however, is too late to begin fostering respectful dia- logue, according to Zimmerman; students may already have spent years “watching people screaming at each other on cable TV and thinking that’s what political is.” He envisions exchange beginning at the earliest grades, with predominantly “blue” communities hosting classroom speakers with “red” views, and vice versa. “If there is going to be an answer to polarization, it has to start in our public schools,” he says. “That’s our major public institution for schooling our young and for making citizens.”

Ben-Porath sees in the current landscape an opportunity to re- build trust. “The environment is a challenging context for education for citizenship, but also a very clarifying one in terms of the need to engage in conversations across ideological and other differences, so that people learn again to trust each other,” she says.

Fostering Discussion and Exchange in the Classroom

Ben-Porath cites discussions—whether in civics, history, social studies, or another subject altogether—are vital to help- ing students practice and develop their voices as citizens, both in K-12 and higher education. “It’s important to preserve some class time for discussion and collaboration, for students to try out ideas and make the best argument that they can for different positions,” she says. Penn GSE faculty and students are advancing discussion in the classroom through innovative approaches and curricula.

Discussion is a prominent part of the award-winning “Reading Like a Historian” curriculum, which Penn GSE Associate Professor Abby Reisman helped develop to foster critical thinking in history and social studies classes. Through “document-based” inquiries, students read multiple perspectives on a single event, use them to investigate a central question posed by the teacher, and share their reasoning with the class.

“In a traditional classroom, historical knowledge exists in fixed narratives held by the teacher and the textbook. In an inquiry classroom, students construct the knowledge themselves,” says Dr. Reisman. For example, a lesson on the Battle of Little Bighorn asks students to analyze accounts that depict the 1876 event differently. The goal is for students to be able to answer not only “What happened?” but also “How do you know?” and “Why do you believe your interpretation is valid?”

Because the skills of facilitating such discus- sions are complex, and professional development specifically for social studies teachers is rare, Reisman’s current research focuses on how to help social studies teachers learn to lead productive discussions. “Often, teachers have to rethink their role—to make teaching a space of listening and connecting rather than of monologue,” says Lightning Jay, a doctoral candidate in Penn GSE’s Teaching, Learning, and Leadership program, who has contributed to Reisman’s research. Reisman and colleagues are studying the learn- ing of novice social studies teachers in Philadel- phia schools with a $2.46 million grant from the James S. McDonnell Foundation. Reisman is also working with a school district in Virginia with support from the Spencer Foundation to create a coaching program in document-based history in- struction, a project with the potential to produce a scalable model of professional development.

Aware that historical material pertaining to race can easily bring up students’ responses to current events, Reisman, Jay, and Lisette Ennumah, G'19, developed a framework in help teachers navigate such moments, published in Theory & Research in Social Education (Volume 48, 2020).

The stakes of discussing race and other charged topics in the classroom have dramatically increased in recent times, with laws in many states mandating that teachers from taking on material including the 1619 Project and critical race theory. The trend threatens teachers’ ability to prepare students effectively for civic life, according to Zimmerman. In The Case for Contention: Teaching Controversial Issues in Early Years, The University of Chicago Press, 2019, he and co-author Emily Robertson advocate for teachers to tackle hot-button issues so that students can learn to discuss them respectfully. “In case you haven’t gotten the memo, Americans disagree about Amer- ica. The problem is we still don’t have a consensus about addressing those disagreements in our schools,” says Zimmerman.

The 2020 election and a course taught by Zimmerman prompted Elizabeth Reynolds, GED'21, to research how teachers discuss politics in the classroom for a project she undertook as a student in Penn GSE’s Teaching, Learning, and Leadership program. “Often teachers simply don’t talk about controversial issues—for lots of reasons, including not having the support or pedagogical tools to do so,” she says. Now enrolled in a doctoral program at the Univer- sity of Maryland, Reynolds is working to develop such tools. At the same time, she says, teacher preparation is only part of the solution. “There also needs to be a commitment on the part of communities to the messiness that is teaching for democracy and deliberation,” she says.

Support for teachers to address a host of sensitive issues and often-marginalized perspectives is the core of “Teaching beyond September 11,” a new curriculum about the years from 2001 to 2021, developed by Penn GSE Senior Lecturer Ameena Ghaflah-Kocher with support from the Penn Global Engagement Fund, Penn GSE, the Penn Libraries, Penn’s Middle East Center, and Penn’s South Asia Centre. From the human costs of the Iraq and Afghan wars to the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment in both media and policies, the topics of the twenty modules, available at www.gse.upenn.edu/academics/research/september-11-curriculum, are complex and challenging.

“September 11 was an awful day. But what is never talked about in schools is the aftermath,” says Dr. Ghaflah-Kocher, whose work is also exploring civic engagement among American youth from Mus- lim immigrant communities in the years since September 11, 2001. As an Afghan-American and a former New York City public school teacher, Madina Wahab, GED'20, appreciates both the cur- riculum’s content and the fact that its authors are members of Mus- lim communities and people of color. “I think it’s really important to be teaching about the aftermath of September 11 in a way that is nuanced, in a way that is complex, and in a way that highlights voices of Muslims,” says Wahab, who contributed to the curriculum. A graduate of Penn GSE’s International Educational Development Program, she is now a curriculum development associate at Girl Up, a United Nations Foundation program.

“The continuity of our nation depends upon each generation’s capacity to further the ideals of a democratic society,” says Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman. “At Penn GSE, we are strengthening the future of our nation through our efforts to prepare young people to engage in democratic deliberation and civic participation.”

Engaging beyond the Classroom

Powerful experience in citizenship and democracy can happen when students engage and raise their voices outside the class- room through community involvement and extracurricular activi- ties. Ben-Porath sees this as an area of recent growth in K-12 and higher education. “Education for citizenship is becoming more robust outside of the classroom in pedagogical practices and in the steps that young people are taking,” she says. Penn GSE faculty and students are advancing this kind of learning through innovative opportunities.

Learning by effecting change is the topic of research by doctoral student Alagib Dym. “When people are actively working on a prob- lem that they think matters in their environment or to their com- munity, they are able to make change in the world and often learn deeply about themselves and their community in the process,” says Dym, who is pursuing a joint degree in education and political science at Penn GSE and Penn Arts and Sciences, with Ben-Porath as her advisor.

Dym’s research is exploring how student-driven learning with a local emphasis could increase students’ political knowledge and motivation to be civically engaged. In focus groups that she led, Philadelphia high school students voiced an interest in learning about local elections, saying that these may have a bigger impact on their daily lives than presidential races, but are rarely discussed in school. “My hope is to co-create knowledge about politics with young people in ways that are locally and personally relevant,” she says.

Dym recently applied this approach to support a Penn undergradu- ate course in election politics and law taught by Associate Professor Marc Meredith. As a 2020–2022 Provost’s Graduate Academic Eng- agement Fellow for Penn’s Netter Center for Community Partners- ships, Dym adapted the course into the Netter Center’s Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) format, which engages students in real-world problem solving on campus and in the local community.
Students identified an issue to address—how to simplify the pro-
cess of voting for undergraduates on campus—and partnered with
the student organization Penn Leads the Vote as well as the Office
of the Philadelphia City Commissioners to conduct research.

Graduate-level opportunities to collaborate with community
organizations are the basis of another ABCS course, “Activism
beyond the Classroom,” developed by Penn GSE Assistant Professor
Krystal Strong. “I wanted to create a classroom that could be
a bridge between the campus and local communities and move-
ments,” says Dr. Strong. In a recent iteration of the course, students
engaged with local teacher organizing, as well as efforts by commu-
nities and youth of color to reclaim and memorialize particular
city sites. “The class tends to attract people who want to make
change in the world as educators or simply as human beings,” says
Strong. “This class is not giving them a blueprint, but it is really
thinking about the praxis of effecting change.”

Much of the course content is student-driven, and multimedia
resources created by students have brought visitors from around the
“Producing podcasts, writing editorials, and contributing to the
social media account for the class—all of those things really put
into practice the idea of building a bridge between academia and
communities,” says Rohana Odedra, a doctoral student in Penn
GSE’s Education, Culture, and Society program, initiated a
Philadelphia regional competition of the National High School
Ethics Bowl. Teams are rewarded not for arguing a single position,
but for presenting multiple positions in response to an ethical
question and collaborating with their competitors. Local students
take part annually in the Philadelphia competition, based at Penn,
and the winning team goes on to compete nationally. “Students are
working together to learn and understand. That requires and de-
velops traits that are very important for civic life in general—in-
tellectual humility, open-mindedness, civic trust,” says Webster,
who has studied with both Ben-Porath and Zimmerman.

For Penn GSE, perhaps the greatest source of hope for democ-
Racy and civic life is the School’s students, who are becoming
transformative educators, scholars, and leaders that the nation and
world need.

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capacity to further the ideals of a democratic society,” says Dean
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Decades of Outstanding Service

Betty Deane’s tremendous commitment to Penn GSE is reflected in
the Spring 1987 issue of the GSE Newsletter, a publication that
preceeded The Penn GSE Magazine. The article shown here (above,
right) commemorates Deane’s twentieth anniversary at the School,
noting that Deane planned to spend another twenty years at Penn
GSE. It is Penn GSE’s good fortune that she surpassed this goal by
more than fourteen years.

T he Penn GSE community
mourns the loss of longtime staff
member Betty Deane, who passed
away on August 2, 2021.

“Betty was an exemplary professional
for nearly fifty-five years at Penn GSE,” says
Dean Pam Grossman. “Many in our commu-
nity have had rich and meaningful relationships with
Betty. She was a dedicated employee, a tireless worker,
and a great colleague.”

Deane joined Penn GSE in 1966, moving into the building
at 3700 Walnut Street shortly after its construction. During her
extraordinary tenure of more than five decades, she held multiple
positions across the School and was known for her “meticulous,
extacting, and absolutely fair-minded” approach to her work, in
the words of Professor Emeritus of Education Nancy Hornberger.

In addition to working with faculty members Jim Larkin and Harris
Sokoloff in support of teacher certification, Deane worked
alongside faculty in various academic divisions, and in service to
students across programs.

“Betty Deane was the first person I met in 1972 when I came
begin my work at Penn GSE,” recalls Professor Emeritus Susan
Lytle, G’82. “She was so important to everyone in the teacher
education program and such a knowledgeable, competent, and
always helpful person who, over time, became indispensable to
many functions of the School. The work of Penn GSE is complex
and, by necessity, collaborative, and Betty was an impressive and
generous contributor.”

In 1997, Deane received Penn GSE’s Outstanding Service
Award. At the time, the School’s publication, GSE News, described
her as “the mainstay of the Teacher Education Program for over
thirty years” and stated, “Betty is considered one of the most
professional and community-minded individuals at GSE, she is
committed to education, to students, and to the faculty and staff
with whom she works.”

For the past fifteen years, Deane served as the faculty affairs
coordinator, offering invaluable support with numerous faculty
appointments, reappointments, and
promotions. She was well known to Penn
GSE students through not only her support
of the School’s teacher education programs,
but also her oversight of the editorial review
and submission of dissertations. “Many doctoral
students saw her as the final step in a long disserta-
tion marathon and were joyous at receiving a green-light
email from her indicating that their dissertation met all
requirements for final submission,” says Dean Grossman.

Members of the Penn GSE community gathered on August 26
in the courtyard of 3700 Walnut Street and shared heartfelt recol-
lections of Deane with members of her family. “I am grateful that
we can be here together—in community—at the place that Betty
worked for so long, to remember her and share our memories,”
says Dean Grossman at the gathering. Surviving Deane is her loving
family, including her husband, Raymond D. Deane; step-son,
Robert T. (Margaret) Deane; granddaughter, Sophia Deane; sister,
Pamela Camarda; and nieces and nephews Robert Stiles, Chris-
topher Camarda, Leslie Valenent, Denise Stiles-Kaufman, and
Michael Stiles.

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“Betty Deane was the first person I met in 1972 when I came
begin my work at Penn GSE,” recalls Professor Emeritus Susan
Lytle, G’82. “She was so important to everyone in the teacher
education program and such a knowledgeable, competent, and
always helpful person who, over time, became indispensable to
many functions of the School. The work of Penn GSE is complex
and, by necessity, collaborative, and Betty was an impressive and
generous contributor.”

In 1997, Deane received Penn GSE’s Outstanding Service
Award. At the time, the School’s publication, GSE News, described
her as “the mainstay of the Teacher Education Program for over
thirty years” and stated, “Betty is considered one of the most
professional and community-minded individuals at GSE, she is
committed to education, to students, and to the faculty and staff
with whom she works.”

For the past fifteen years, Deane served as the faculty affairs
coordinator, offering invaluable support with numerous faculty
appointments, reappointments, and
promotions. She was well known to Penn
GSE students through not only her support
of the School’s teacher education programs,
but also her oversight of the editorial review
and submission of dissertations. “Many doctoral
students saw her as the final step in a long disserta-
tion marathon and were joyous at receiving a green-light
email from her indicating that their dissertation met all
requirements for final submission,” says Dean Grossman.

Members of the Penn GSE community gathered on August 26
in the courtyard of 3700 Walnut Street and shared heartfelt recol-
lections of Deane with members of her family. “I am grateful that
we can be here together—in community—at the place that Betty
worked for so long, to remember her and share our memories,”
says Dean Grossman at the gathering. Surviving Deane is her loving
family, including her husband, Raymond D. Deane; step-son,
Robert T. (Margaret) Deane; granddaughter, Sophia Deane; sister,
Pamela Camarda; and nieces and nephews Robert Stiles, Chris-
topher Camarda, Leslie Valenent, Denise Stiles-Kaufman, and
Michael Stiles.
Creating Paths to College and Career Success

In the nearly ten years that Sean E. Vereen, GED’00, GRD’05, has led Philadelphia-based Steppingstone Scholars as president, the organization has expanded its mission from providing academic enrichment and school placement to creating multiple routes to success in college and the workforce. The aim of the educational social mobility organization remains the same—to overcome systemic barriers and change outcomes for low-income and racially minoritized Philadelphia students.

“If we’re going to move people out of poverty in the city, we’ve got to tie the education piece and the career piece together,” says Dr. Vereen, who previously spent a decade at Penn in diversity and minority affairs roles, including associate dean for opportunity and access. Over his tenure at Steppingstone, he reports, the nonprofit has grown to serve 2,500 students, up from about two hundred, and has quadrupled its budget. In addition, Steppingstone has added two new initiatives for college and workforce preparation: Steppingstone Pathways, which places staff at Philadelphia public, charter, and magnet schools; and Steppingstone Ventures, an innovation hub. As part of Ventures, a five-year collaboration called Inveniam launched between Steppingstone and Penn’s School of Engineering and Applied Science this fall. The STEM equity and innovation program will offer Penn-developed online modules to supplement high school classroom instruction for an Advanced Placement computer science course. Inveniam aims to enroll three thousand Philadelphia students in the course and later to provide similar support for advanced math and physics courses.

“There is a financial cost to not serving the kids in this city,” Vereen argues. “We’re not just doing this because it’s morally right—which it is—but also because it’s going to make a better city and better opportunities for all of us.” Central to Vereen’s vision is a commitment to providing advising and academic preparation to help Black and Brown students access and navigate high-performing high schools and colleges. Despite institutional commitments to inclusion for underrepresented groups, he notes, student access and experiences continue to vary in relation to demographic factors. Vereen’s dissertation in Penn GSE’s Higher Education Ed.D. program focused on how leaders of college resource centers for minoritized students navigated racial and class biases on campus. He continues to examine issues of inclusion at Penn GSE, where he teaches the course “Access and Choice in Higher Education.”

“Collaborating to Celebrate Differences and Disrupt Systems

As principal since 2008 of University Neighborhood Middle School (UNMS) on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Laura Peynado Castro, GRD’21, has long focused not on student deficits, but on student assets—a philosophy at the core of her commitment to educational equity.

“I have become more intentional about my role as a co-creator and co-facilitator of spaces and opportunities that celebrate differences, embrace our humanity, and disrupt systems of inequity.”

Laura Peynado Castro
GRD’21

Penn GSE Alumni Work to Support Students and Employees

In this time of a national awakening and reckoning about race, inequality, and long-overdue social justice, efforts to value diversity, promote equity, and foster inclusive environments have gained renewed attention. Here, four Penn GSE alumni share how they are striving to advance these areas through their roles at an education nonprofit, a middle school, a state university, and a tech company. These leaders report drawing upon their life experiences and insights gained at Penn GSE as they undertake the complex work of cultivating opportunity and support for students and employees.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

by Lini S. Kadaba

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As calls for social justice resound across the nation, Vereen’s response is to reach higher, by expanding the number of students Steppingstone serves and boosting internship and scholarship opportunities. He also places trust in the importance of persistence. “Everything in education takes a long time,” says Vereen. “Making change is about focusing and being nimble enough to respond to what’s happening in the world by bringing our ideas into different spaces.”

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to our community,” says Dr. Peynado Castro. She is grateful for teachers who did the same for her. At age twelve, Peynado Castro emigrated with her family from the Dominican Republic to New York City and attended public schools. “I had teachers who saw what I brought to the table,” she says.

Of the nearly two-thirds of UNMS students who are Hispanic or Latina, many are Dominican immigrants. “The practices of Dominican youth, like those of many other immigrant groups, remain invisible in the field of research,” says Peynado Castro. Working with UNMS alumni, Peynado Castro aimed to address this gap with a dissertation about literacy development for Penn GSE’s Mid-Career Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership. Her project documented the value of the transnational and bilingual perspectives that Dominican students bring to the analysis of a text’s language, biases, and power dynamics.

Through the project, she says, “I have become more intentional about my role as a co-creator and co-facilitator of spaces and opportunities that celebrate differences, embrace our humanity, and disrupt systems of inequity, within and outside our school community.” Her efforts include a multitude of avenues for “courageous conversations” at UNMS about race and social justice: community forums; reflection time and professional development for teachers; weekly small-group meetings that invite students to inform decision making; and a family book club that recently discussed Bettina L. Loev’s book We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom and met virtually with the author.

Peynado Castro describes her approach to leadership as reflective, collaborative, and rooted in her experience at Penn GSE. She has bolstered the quality of education at UNMS by partnering with local community organizations and institutions like New York University for academic and summer enrichment and Hunter College for teacher training. Always, she says, she strives to remain grounded in the realities of students’ lives. To her, equity means making sure students have the conditions and resources to learn; inclusion means offering learning experiences that put students’ perspectives at the center while embracing difference and humanity. Penn GSE affirmed some of the beliefs I had about my role as a leader, to lead by example, “she adds. “I have to constantly check my biases, seek feedback, challenge myself, get to know people, not make assumptions. It’s not about me, but the work—what we’re trying to do together with love.”

Advocating to Strengthen a Workforce

Becchi Menghini, GRD’14, wrote her doctoral dissertation at Penn GSE on crisis management at public universities. Seven years later, she says she could “write a few more chapters. I think I’m living my dissertation day in and day out.”

In January 2020, Dr. Menghini became the vice chancellor for human resources and equal opportunity and compliance at the 25,000-employee University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill after serving in an interim capacity. Typically, her office manages human resources policies and handles related complaints. She says the issues of the times—a pandemic, a social justice movement, and a nation divided—have added to the challenges of her role. Events at UNC-Chapel Hill concerning a Confederate statue, campus reopening plans, and an attempt to hire Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones have made headlines and prompted many alumni, faculty, staff, and students to raise concerns about the state legislator’s role in university governance.

“People in positions of leadership sit in a very delicate and precarious spot in thinking about how they respond to national events in this moment,” she says. While Menghini notes that taking action is complicated by the fact that UNC is a public university beholden to its state legislature, she reports she is making headway in addressing pressing concerns. “Diversity is an enormous part of my job,” she says. “We depend on a diverse workforce, and only when we are fully diverse—not just in numbers, but when everybody has the ability to be fully themselves and fully present—can we benefit wholly and do our best work.”

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To build trust, Menghini spends time listening to campus constituents, including affinity groups such as the Carol Black Caucus. She also has shifted diversity and inclusion from her division to the Provost’s Office, where a new chief diversity officer was recently hired. “The notion that the diversity office sat in the same place as compliance didn’t sit well,” she says. “It didn’t say what we wanted it to say.”

Menghini credits the cohort model of Penn GSE’s Executive Doctorate in Higher Education Management program with giving her a network of peers and inspiring her approach to workplace trainings and orientations. “There are benefits to being treated like a cohort—employees can gain built-in mentorship and a sounding board,” she says.

Currently, she is grappling with equity around flexible work schedules. A pilot is allowing some departments to work remotely. But, she asks, is that equitable—especially when housekeeping or dining room staff, among the lowest-paid employees, must come to campus? Will remote workers, often women, miss out on mentoring within and outside our school community? “People in positions of leadership sit in a very delicate and precarious spot in thinking about how they respond to national events in this moment,” she says. While Menghini notes that taking action is complicated by the fact that UNC is a public university beholden to its state legislature, she reports she is making headway in addressing pressing concerns. “Diversity is an enormous part of my job,” she says. “We depend on a diverse workforce, and only when we are fully diverse—not just in numbers, but when everybody has the ability to be fully themselves and fully present—can we benefit wholly and do our best work.”

Shaking Up Approaches to Move the Needle

Over her career, Jessica Guerrero, GED’09, has held multiple roles at higher education institutions while maintaining a single goal—to provide access to people of color. Now, she has been appointed to the first position as chief diversity officer at Google Cloud. “People in positions of leadership sit in a very delicate and precarious spot in thinking about how they respond to national events in this moment,” she says. While Menghini notes that taking action is complicated by the fact that UNC is a public university beholden to its state legislature, she reports she is making headway in addressing pressing concerns. “Diversity is an enormous part of my job,” she says. “We depend on a diverse workforce, and only when we are fully diverse—not just in numbers, but when everybody has the ability to be fully themselves and fully present—can we benefit wholly and do our best work.”

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What could be possible if universities and even K–12 institutions were re-designed to be places where everyone could thrive?

“Google is a pioneer that is shaking up the workplace and shaking up diversity,” Guerrero says. One innovation she rolled out offers micro training modules—30- to 45-minute sessions—that use virtual reality in partnership with Praxis Labs to explore workplace scenarios pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Already, she says, employee interest in high and behavioral changes have occurred within teams. Guerrero also is changing up the content of training to include what she calls the how—“how to be allies, how to run inclusive hiring practices, how to think about culture when putting a team together.”

In her role, she focuses on “opening different thinking pathways”—for instance, arguing that the company could increase the number of women hired as engineers by recruiting from a wider range of colleges. It’s a case she makes with data, grateful for time spent at Penn GSE learning “to look at data, make sense of it, and construct strong arguments.”

For Guerrero, that focus on data makes her target clear: she strives for documented impact, to produce “actionable items that can be measured over time that move the needle.”

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Facilities and Technology
$13.4M Raised
A dramatic building expansion—the School’s first new construction in more than fifty years—will fulfill the dean’s vision of “One Penn GSE,” bringing the majority of the School’s programs, students, faculty, and staff into one state-of-the-art campus location.

Scholarship and Fellowship
$9.6M Raised
To advance the evergreen priority of recruiting the strongest and most diverse student body possible, the School initiated need-based aid for the first time and significantly increased financial aid offerings to master’s students.

Programs $15.7 Raised

Research $51.1 Raised
The campaign has fueled Penn GSE’s programs in university–community partnerships and educational innovation and propelled the School’s research in teacher learning, educational policy, race and racial literacy, and the learning sciences.

Faculty Support
$5.8M Raised
Faculty represent the very heart of the School. They drive research, draw prospective students, and mentor the next generation of education professionals. The School makes it a top priority to recruit and retain the strongest and most diverse faculty that it can.

The Penn GSE Annual Fund
$2.7M Raised
Throughout each year, gifts of all sizes to the Annual Fund are directed to areas of greatest need as opportunities arise. The result is an ongoing impact on scholarship aid, partnerships in Philadelphia, research, and faculty support.

To learn more about funding priorities at Penn GSE, or to contribute, visit www.gse.upenn.edu/support or contact us at 215.573.6623 or alumni@gse.upenn.edu.

$98,318,378 Raised
Thank You!

On June 30, 2021, Penn GSE successfully concluded the multi-year Extraordinary Impact Campaign, part of the University-wide Power of Penn Campaign. The largest fundraising effort in the School’s history, Extraordinary Impact surpassed a $75 million fundraising goal by more than 30 percent, dramatically increasing support for priorities across Penn GSE.

“I want to thank you, our alumni and friends, for all that you have done to support education and Penn GSE during the campaign,” says Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman. “Without your incredible dedication, our success would not have been possible.”
Penn GSE is welcoming Dr. Roberto Gonzales, a world-renowned scholar of the lives of immigrants in the United States, as the first Penn Integrates Knowledge (PIK) professor to hold an appointment at Penn GSE. Gonzales’s award-winning scholarship assesses how immigration policy shapes the ways that immigrant youth adjust, come of age, and experience life in their receiving countries. His work has been featured across leading scholarly and news publications and widely supported by foundations. Selected for research and teaching that exemplify the integration of knowledge across disciplines, PIK professors hold appointments in more than one Penn school. Gonzales, formerly professor of education at Harvard Graduate School of Education, was named Penn’s 25th PIK University Professor effective July 1, 2021. As Richard Perry University Professor, he holds joint appointments in the Literacy, Culture, and International Education division of GSE and in the Department of Sociology of the School of Arts & Sciences.

We sat down with Gonzales to discuss the circumstances facing undocumented youth, the role of education in their lives, and how he plans to continue his research at Penn.

Your groundbreaking book, Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America (University of California Press, 2015), has won eight major book awards and been adopted as a common reading text by universities and school districts across the country. What was the genesis of the book?

Lives in Limbo was a labor of love, born out of what I perceived to be a problem of practice as a youth worker in Chicago in the 1990s. A very significant segment of the children and teenagers in our community were undocumented, and I saw the barriers they faced as they came of age. Their friends were reaching important milestones—taking after-school jobs, obtaining driver’s licenses, seeking financial aid for college, launching careers. And the undocumented youth were instead finding out that their undocumented status meant they couldn’t do these things. I say it was a problem of practice because a host of adults—teachers, counselors, youth workers, social workers, and healthcare professionals—were struggling to understand how to support this very significant demographic.

Several years later when I was in graduate school, I realized there weren’t really any studies about this population. I launched the project that became Lives in Limbo for my dissertation and spent twelve years studying 150 undocumented young adults in Los Angeles. I had no intention of carrying out the project for so many years, but due to the unpredictability of our immigration policy, every time I was ready to finish, there was a new policy development to consider.

Part of what Lives in Limbo illustrates is a trajectory in which undocumented young people have access to K–12 and even higher education, but without legal status they are unable to be hired for jobs that match their qualifications. How do you see the role of education in the lives of these young people, given the barriers they face as adults?

I’ve met so many K–12 teachers who have undocumented students in their classrooms, and they hold a very legitimate tension of wanting to do as much as they can for their students, but also understand their students will face once they leave school. Many educators have asked, ‘Should I get their hopes up about preparing for a career, or should I have really tough conversations with them early on about a future that entails their working and living on the margins?’ It’s a difficult question—essentially it’s about how to think ethically about one’s responsibility to one’s students. Although education alone can’t remove the barriers that undocumented young people face, something that always comes back to me is how often my interviewees have told me they view education as something that can’t be taken away from them.

The circumstances of many undocumented young people changed after the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was created in 2012, offering temporary and renewable protection to young people brought to the United States as children. What did that mean for your research?

I was excited to be able to study in real time the impact of a policy that promotes integration and provides increased access to work authorization and deportation relief. With funding from the Gates Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation, I undertook a longitudinal research project, “From Undocumented to DACAmented: Understanding DACA Beneficiaries in a New Policy Context,” from 2013 to 2019. It was quite a transition for me as an ethnographer used to working on my own to begin managing a very
large team of up to ninety-six people. We carried out a national survey of 2,864 DACA-eligible young people to understand their hopes and desires, as well as the short-term impact of DACA for those who benefited from it. Then we selected sites in Arizona, California, Georgia, New York, Illinois, and South Carolina to conduct in-depth qualitative interviews with 481 DACA-eligible young adults and learn how local legislation was shaping their experiences.

What did you learn about DACAs’ impact, and how do you view the policy in light of legal developments that have made its future uncertain?

The success stories of DACA really prop up the importance of providing this population with increased access. From our work, we understand very clearly that young people who have obtained DACA have made gigantic strides; they’ve been able to get driver’s licenses, take jobs that match their education and credentials, launch themselves into lives with much more breathing room, and extend those benefits to their family members. I argue that it would not be hyperbolic to call DACA the most successful policy of immigrant integration in the last two to three decades.

But DACA has shortcomings. As a policy that was not passed through legislation, it is susceptible to presidential and legal challenges. As a policy that provides real membership to its beneficiaries and their families, it underscores the need for a much more enduring and impactful policy that provides this population with increased access.

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MULTIPLE PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE
Penn GSE Prepares Teachers to Transform Lives
by Karen Don Bowman

The work of teachers could not be more urgent as the nation’s children grapple with the pandemic’s disruptions to their learning and lives. At Penn GSE, teacher education has a distinguished history, and today the School’s programs are stronger than ever, offering multiple pathways to excellence through distinctive blends of coursework and practical experience.

“Teachers represent the most important school-based factor impacting student success,” says Penn GSE Dean Dan Grossman. A leading expert on teacher education, Dean Grossman is at the forefront of rethinking how teachers are prepared for their careers.

“At a time when other universities are backing away from their commitment to teacher education, Penn GSE is proud to be building and innovating around this crucial component of its mission,” says Dr. Grossman. “As a former teacher myself, one of my greatest passions is to ensure that educators have the support and tools to transform the lives of their students.”

The School’s three master’s programs in teacher education—the Urban Teaching Residency (UTR), the Independent School Teaching Residency (ISTR), and the Urban Teaching Apprenticeship Program (UTAP)—are designed to meet the needs of different career paths and school settings. Under Grossman’s leadership, Penn GSE has reconceptualized the programs, placed them under the oversight of Executive Director Patrick Sexton, and housed them alongside the Collaboratory for Teacher Education at Penn GSE, a hub for learning and research in the field. The programs welcomed newly appointed directors, all of whom are Penn GSE alumni, in the summer of 2021: Nicole Mittenfelner Carl, GED’08, GRD’17; Charlotte Jacobs, GR’17; and Christopher Pupik Dean, GED’09, GR’12.

“IT is absolutely wonderful that these three accomplished teachers, teacher educators, and scholars will lead our work preparing highly capable, anti-racist preK–12 teachers for Philadelphia, other urban settings, and our partner independent schools,” says Sexton.

Representing all three programs, the recent graduates featured here are putting their learning into practice as teachers of mathematics, English, and science who are deeply committed to their students’ futures.

MOVING FROM the Sidelines to the Classroom

For Barry Wilkins, GED’21, the national climate on race and social justice served as a call to action. Determined to make a difference in his hometown of Philadelphia, Wilkins left behind a fifteen-year career in investment banking and wealth management, ready to explore new ways to enrich others’ lives.

“I realized that eliminating institutional racism requires folks to get off the sidelines and take action,” says Wilkins, who began a path to a new career in 2017, serving a one-year post as director of industry partnerships for the City of Philadelphia. Drawing inspiration from his parents, he decided that “all roads point to education” when it comes to eliminating generational poverty. “My mother and father escaped poverty in the rural, segregated South through self-determination and a strong work ethic that provided greater access to opportunity,” he says.

In 2019, Wilkins enrolled in Penn GSE’s Urban Teaching Residency (UTR) program and joined the faculty of Strawberry Mansion High School, where he teaches algebra, geometry, and personal finance. “When it became clear to me that education was my calling, I knew it was important to get credentialed and ground myself in cutting-edge pedagogy and research-based practices to have a meaningful impact in the classroom,” Wilkins says.

With an executive-format schedule of evening and weekend classes, the UTR program is designed to allow full-time educators to continue in their roles while earning a master’s degree and Pennsylvania teacher certification. Taught by faculty who are experienced urban educators and researchers, the program aims to support educators in underserved schools who are deeply committed to ending educational inequity. One of the program’s greatest strengths is its direct impact on urban schools, according to UTR program director Nicole Mittenfelner Carl, GED’08, GRD’17.

“UTR students live out the mission of Penn GSE on a daily basis,” Dr. Carl says. “They directly implement what they learn in their courses through their practices as teachers. Combined, UTR students impact thousands of pre-K–12 students in Philadelphia and the surrounding areas each year.”

For Wilkins, the experience of teaching while earning his degree during the pandemic was transformative. Educational inequities across the nation and at his own school became even clearer to him as he witnessed Strawberry Mansion High School and its families pivot to online learning despite limited resources. At the same time, the period strengthened his resolve and the admiration he has for his students. “Never underestimate the resiliency of children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds,” Wilkins says. “That experience creates a certain type of grit, and if children can survive those challenges, they can be an asset wherever they go.”

The UTR program takes pride in building a network of graduates who, like Wilkins, are dedicated to urban schools. “UTR has developed a strong alumni base of teachers, school leaders, policy makers, and district officials all committed to social justice and equity,” says Carl, who is a UTR graduate and former Philadelphia public school teacher.

For Wilkins, the road ahead is challenging and purposeful. “To me, being a good teacher means liberating the minds of the young people I serve and revealing their brilliance in the process,” he says. “To do that, I have to keep it real, have a vision for the future, and have the courage to demand better for young people.”

“Never underestimate the resiliency of children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. That experience creates a certain type of grit, and if children can survive those challenges, they can be an asset wherever they go.”
EMBRACING a Culture of Education

An internship at Salisbury Summer School in Connecticut enlightened Anna Kim, GED’21, on the idea of “education beyond the classroom.” The experience, which took place the summer before her senior year at Williams College, showed her how the environment of an independent school could offer a cohesive learning experience across academics, extracurriculars, and campus life for students in middle and high school.

“I came to witness the power of the incredible bonds that develop between students and teachers in these shared spaces that ultimately constitute an entire culture of education,” Kim wrote in a blog post for Williams. The experience sparked her interest in independent school teaching. After graduating from Williams, she enrolled in Penn GSE’s Independent School Teaching (ISTR) program, which allows early-career teachers to earn a master’s degree while completing an intensive teaching apprenticeship in a Philadelphia public school as an apprentice to an experienced classroom teacher. During the eight hundred hours—an amount of student teaching that exceeds the typical requirement of a teacher education program—UTAP students learn not only from classroom teachers but also from the program’s instructional coaches and mentors, who demonstrate teaching approaches and help to connect theory to practice.

“The apprenticeship is an opportunity to practice the student-centered pedagogical strategies that are being taught in Penn GSE courses,” says UTAP director Christopher Pupik Dean, GED’09, GR’12. “This allows a much closer alignment between university coursework and field placement than what is available in programs elsewhere.”

Through the combination of coursework, fieldwork, and professional support, UTAP students prepare to facilitate learning that puts students’ ideas and curiosity at the center of classroom discussion and assessment. “I came out of her classes with a new way of designing classroom experiences to be a journey of discovery for students. That was empowering.”

Anna Kim, GED’21

A first-year science teacher at Eliza R. Kirkbride School in Philadelphia, Charlie (Rachel) Porter, GED’21, creates opportunities for students in sixth through eighth grade to take an active role in learning science—from exploring the earth’s formation to understanding the characteristics that define living things. As a graduate of Penn GSE’s Urban Teaching Apprenticeship Program (UTAP), Porter is well prepared to use innovative teaching tools and strategies. “I always came out of her classes with a new way of designing classroom experiences to be a journey of discovery for students. That was empowering.”

“Being able to provide academic and social-emotional mentorship feels very much like coming home to family and serving an important role,” says Kim. “I would talk with students about their experiences each week and gain context on their lives outside of academics.” That kind of insight is part of what the ISTR program aims to create through the fellowships, which are made possible by partnerships with some of the nation’s leading boarding schools and day schools.

“We have developed a robust program with twenty partner schools representing different geographical regions, school missions, and orientations to education,” says ISTR program director Charlotte Jacobs, GR’17. “Our program thinks deeply about what novice teachers need to know as they first start out in the classroom, and also provides students with a hands-on experience of other aspects of school life such as coaching, residential living, and advising.”

The network of partner schools not only strengthens individual ISTR students’ experiences, but also enriches the program as a whole. “It is amazing to be a part of a program where we have opportunities to exchange ideas about teaching, learning, and teacher education across such a broad network of schools,” says Dr. Jacobs.

“I would talk with students about their experiences each week and gain context on their lives outside of academics.”

During her time at Penn GSE, Kim valued the support of classmates and professors. She especially appreciated learning about systemic and historical inequities in education through courses taught by Associate Professor and Calvin Bland Fellow Ed Brockenbrough. “Connecting these classes with my firsthand experiences in my school both reinforced and nuanced my understanding of the equity fault lines in independent schools,” says Kim.

In August, Kim began her first year as an English teacher for Portland State University and discovered a love of teaching during her senior year. After three years abroad as an ESL teacher, she came to UTAP at Penn GSE to move into U.S. public education as a science teacher. The full-time master’s program gave her the opportunity to undertake Penn GSE coursework while gaining more than eight hundred hours of field experience in a Philadelphia public school as an apprentice to an experienced classroom teacher. During the eight hundred hours—an amount of student teaching that exceeds the typical requirement of a teacher education program—UTAP students learn not only from classroom teachers but also from the program’s instructional coaches and mentors, who demonstrate teaching approaches and help to connect theory to practice.

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Looking back on her experiences, Porter particularly appreciates the mentorship she received from UTAP’s instructional coach for science, Shubha Saxode. “She imparted so much wisdom over the course of my year at UTAP,” says Porter, who completed her field placement at Kensington Creative and Performing Arts High School in Philadelphia. “I always came out of her classes with a new way of designing classroom experiences to be a journey of discovery for students. That was empowering.”

As she embarks on a new chapter of her teaching career as a Penn GSE graduate, Porter feels like she learns something new every day. “I love that I get to learn alongside my students,” she says. “Every day, I find ways to improve my own teaching. I’m always growing, and I find joy in teaching.”

Charlie (Rachel) Porter, GED’21

MAKING LEARNING into a Journey of Discovery

“I always came out of her classes with a new way of designing classroom experiences to be a journey of discovery for students. That was empowering.”

Photo by Paloma Torres Blanc

“Always coming out of her classes with a new way of designing classroom experiences to be a journey of discovery for students. That was empowering.”

Photo by Greg Benson Photography

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Photo by Tony Wang Photography
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.

Find The Penn GSE Magazine Online

Visit http://www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/resources/gse-magazine to find our issue archive.

1970s

Myrna Agnis, CW'63, GED'73, GRD'79 associate vice president at Morgan Stanley, is helping her clients’ young children and grandchildren learn about financial planning and investing.

Barbara Bry, CW'71, GED'71, left the San Diego City Council and returned to the tech world. She writes a business column for the San Diego Union-Tribune and enjoys spending time with her seven grandchildren.

John Claus, C'74, GED'74, is aunts professor in education at Hiram College. He and his wife, Judy Hyman, CW'73, recently created film series based on London’s Martin Eden and On the Divide, a documentary that premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Paul Harrison, C'77, GED'78, retired from Middlessex School in Concord, MA, after forty-four years as a teacher, coach, dean, department head, and development officer. He appreciates the practical instruction he received from extraordinary faculty at Penn GSE.

1980s

Janel Henke Carroll, GED'87, GR'89, recently received certification as a health/wellness life coach and co-authored a book for young boys going through puberty, How Do I Fight Gert In My Threat? She lives with her family in Connecticut.

James Day, GR'87, was appointed distinguished alumni mentor in human development and psychology at Harvard University and elected to the Belgian Commission of Psychologists.

1990s

Deirdre Morris Abrahamsson, C'93, GED'94, works in social media and communications at the Wallingford-Swarthmore School District in Wallingford, PA, and is available to consult with schools and districts. She founded the Strath Haven High School ultimate frisbee team.

Jon Beck, C'94, GED'96, a social studies teacher, recently completed his twenty-fifth year at New Rochelle High School in New Rochelle, NY. He is grateful to colleagues at New Rochelle and to professors McDougall and Larkin at Penn for his wonderful journey.

Lena Adams Kim, GED'97, G'99, was selected to create and implement the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s first mindfulness program, Mindful EPA, which will support public servants in protecting public health and the environment.

Ryan Pry, C'98, GED’99, opened a law practice based in Radford, VA, in July 2020. He practices in elder law, estate planning and administration, and real estate matters, covering a large area of southwestern Virginia.

Lorraine Ritacco, GED'94, launched a practice to prepare immigrants and children of immigrants for the demands of higher education and the workforce. She previously managed programs for international students entering college.

Carol Smolenski, C‘10, GED'91, completed a master’s in mental health counseling and music therapy in May 2021. She is now a board-certified music therapist working in a long-term elder care facility to support residents’ well-being through music.

2000s

James Blanton, GED'04, was named principal of Foster High School in Tulia, WI. He was previously assistant principal of Garfield High School in Seattle, WA, and completed his administration credentials through the University of Washington in 2018.

Jason Vann Hamer, GED'07, was appointed principal of Jametown Elementary School, located in Dresher, PA. He was also elected to the board of directors of Learning Forward PA.

Ronah Harris, GED'05, founder of education-tech brand PlayPattern, made learning more accessible during the pandemic with her team, translating academic programs into virtual formats and launching initiatives in educational TV and interactive technologies.


Tyrone McCombs, GRD’03, has spent thirty years in higher education. Having served as dean, associate vice president, and assistant provost, he is now a professor, a program coordinator, and executive director of the Center for Access, Success, and Equity at Rowan University.

Judy McHugh, GED'08, GRD'09, currently owns her own coaching and consulting business, Top Talent LLC.

Courtney Michener Miller, GED'04, is director of talent and development at AstraZeneca, where she focuses on leadership and development, coaching, and succession planning. An aspiring chief learning officer, she feels grounded in her foundation from Penn GSE.

LaToya Miller, GED'07, has recommitted to serving public schools with her company, Journey On, having taught in various contexts in the United States and abroad. Journey On provides support and programs in experiential education and social-emotional learning.

Frank Nia, D'07, GED'07, is chief clinical officer for North American Dental Group, which has over 450 dentists across the United States. He works to help clinicians be the best in the world technologically and improve through leadership and self-awareness training.

James Pellow, GED'06, president and CEO of CEE, joined Vice President Kamala Harris and Irish Prime Minister Michael Martin to introduce the Frederick Douglass Global Fellows, a group of high-performing college students of color chosen to study in Ireland.

Michelle Robinson, GED'06, is principal of Glenridge Elementary School in Glenside, PA, where she has focused on school climate and culture, STEM education, and balanced literacy. She is enrolled in Penn GSE’s Mid-Career Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership.

Rika Saito, GED’99, GRD’05, is the author of The Language of Feminine Duty: Articulating Gender, Culture, and Covert Policy in Modern Japan (Peter Lang Publishing, 2021). The book draws upon language policy insight from Nancy Hornberger at Penn GSE.

Carolyn Schultz, GED'04, is in her sixteenth year as an English to Speakers of Other Languages teacher in the Carmel Central School District in Putnam County, NY. She would love to reconnect with other alumni who attended Penn GSE in 2003-2004.

Austin D. Williams, GED'09, is first editor of a textbook for medical students, Surgery Morning Report: Beyond the Pearls (Elsevier, 2019). He is moving to New York City to complete a fellowship in breast surgical oncology at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

2010s

Alejandra Abusada, GED’10, joined the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion team at Chemonics International in Washington, DC. She continues to provide mental health services with the Guatemalan governmental organization Mami Linda.

Michael Aumann, GRD’13, is CEO of QualCann. He works to “turn darkness into light,” taking education to farming in underdeveloped countries through a network of cannabis farms.

Stephen Gabriel, GED’16, graduated from Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College of Education and Human Development with an Ed.D in higher education leadership and policy in May 2021. His capstone research addressed enrollment growth strategies for liberal arts colleges.

Clare Bertrand, GED’19, was appointed to the board of directors of ConnectEED, which partners with school, district, and community leaders to challenge the status quo and equip students to succeed in college, career, and civic life.

Matthew Antonio Bosch, GRD’19, has joined Rosemont College in the inaugural dual role of associate dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies and program director of the M.Ed program in higher education and student affairs administration.

Beverly Brooks, GED’16, moved from her previous role as director of academics and college counseling at YSE Academics in Wayne, PA, to director of college counseling at St. Mary’s Episcopal School in Memphis, TN.

Jeanette Bruno, GED’12, moved into a new role as innovation adoption lead with the General Services Administration, supporting innovation and capacity building work for federal agencies. She enjoys being a mom to her young toddler.
Dacquana Carter, GED'16, is director of nondiscrimination initiatives at Wellesley College.

Erin Corbett, GRD'17, administers two college prison programs in Connecticut and was appointed to a task force to study the costs and benefits of establishing a post-secondary prison education program offered within the state’s department of correction.

Mahesh Daas, GRD'13, president of Boston Architectural College, has been elected chancellor of Distinguished Professors of the Association of College Schools of Architecture (ACSA). Membership in the college is one of the ACSA’s highest honors.

Xuanzhou Du, GED'19, a data analyst for Elsevier, reports that her experience at Penn GSE gave her great skills and friends, increasing her courage to explore her own potential.

Samuel Evans, GED'18, assistant principal of Rose Tree Media School District in Media, PA, aims to widen his department’s lens on achievement by focusing on student and teacher growth through professional learning communities, coaching, learning walks, and real-time feedback.

Jeanette Frett, GR'18, was appointed to the Transformative Leadership Institute’s Disruptive Times Advisory Council at The George Washington University School of Business. She has more than twelve years of leadership experience, with expertise in human resources and other areas.

Azad Godus, GED’17, head manager of continuous medical education at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre, Saudi Arabia, is undertaking several initiatives to support healthcare practitioners through professional education.

Kimberly Gyer, GED’05, GRD’13, is associate vice chancellor for student affairs at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. In this role, Kimberly oversees a number of areas including academic advising and serves on the campus strategic enrollment team.

Kayan Higgins, GED’14, is in her fourth year as a learning specialist at York High School in York, Maine. She assists students with executive functioning, subject-specific content, literacy skills, and social-emotional development.

Carol Kalin, GRD’17, a retired American diplomat, was among six panelists at “Twenty Years Later: The Legacy of 9/11,” an in-person event organized by the Penn Penn Middle East Center. Now, semi-retired, she has launched PinnedHeads Editing LLC.

Abby Kirchner, GED’10, cofounded the Stone Independent School, a mastery-based learning school in Lancaster, PA, with an opening enrollment of twenty students. Now in its fifth year, the school has 186 students and seventeen faculty.

Azhahn Kali-Mukhammad, GED’19, founder and CEO of Nujussee Group, developed a college preparatory program for high schools in the Commonwealth of Independent States. In its first year, it has helped over thirty low-income youth gain admission into top U.S. universities.

Vera Lee, GED’96, GRD’10, became department chair of the Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum Department at Drexel University School of Education in July 2020.

Rosa Leff, GED’12, is a hand out paper pack that whose work has been accepted by The Colored Girls Museum in Philadelphia, PA, and The Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, NM. She received a 2017 Maryland State Arts Council Independent Artist Award.

Diane Luckman, GED’11, has moved from lead teacher to math specialist at The School in Rose Valley, located in Rose Valley, PA. She specializes in growth mindset and mathematics.

Angeles Ortega Luque, GED’19, project coordinator of the Inter-American Educational Leadership Network at Penn GSE’s Mid Career Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for two years, has been admitted to a Ph.D. program in linguistics at Georgetown University.

Patrick Manahan, GED’12, has taken on a new role as director of advancement at The Tamali School in Washington, DE. He married Dr. Kirby Wycoff in 2018 and the couple recently started a private educational business, Key Point Consulting.

Ellen McGeoch, GED’16, was promoted to director of contracting at NeuroFlow, a digital health company in Philadelphia.

Anthony Medina, GED’17, and his wife, Marci, welcomed their second child, Santiago Thomas Medina, on April 22. The child’s grandfather, Tom Bailesy, GRD’11, joins their families in welcoming him.

Mark Miller, GED’17, is school counselor in the Wake County Public School System in Raleigh, NC, was a recipient of the National Board of Certified Counselors 2021 National Certified School Counselor Award, which recognizes extraordinary effort during the pandemic.

Mary Parker, GDR’18, began her role as vice president of enrollment management and associate provost at the University of Florida on August 2, 2021.

Adam Payne, GR’18, chair of the Penn CLO Alumni Network Board of Directors, reports that the board welcomed three new members: Carla Thomas, GRD’19, Antoinette (Tony) R. Garrett, CBI’21, and Nora Manz, GDR’20.

Jamilie Potrowicz, GED’15, was hired as assistant director of social and emotional learning for The School District of Philadelphia, where her supervisor is Abigail Gray, GED’14. Their work was recognized on CBS This Morning in March 2020.

Christina Risco, GED’14, was appointed senior director of capital projects and gift planning at The Pennington School, an independent school for grades 6–12 in Pennington, NJ. In this role, she secures philanthropic support to advance Pennington’s mission.

Abby Songmeister, GED’10, has transitioned into full-time private practice. She uses her ten years’ experience as a solo entrepreneur and psychotherapist to work with clients and help other therapists launch their own practices.

Alexis Schmidt, GED’18, a teacher in The School District of Philadelphia, is returning to Penn GSE to join the School Leadership program. She is also completing Penn GSE’s Project-Based Learning certificate program while supporting project-based approaches at her school.

Kass Schuppius, GED’13, joined the Penn Association of Alumniae first as an ambassador and most recently as a director for a three-year term.

Tomea Sippio-Smith, GED’16, K–12 education policy director for Public Citizens for Children and Youth, represented education advocates across the state and spoke at Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf’s press conference announcing the largest education funding increase in state history.

Thammika Songkao, GED’14, is designing a climate change themed escape room in Singapore, following an independent study with Penn GSE’s Mathematical, Science and Technology’s Pedagogical Project in the Penn Social Impact House. She aims to advance understanding of the climate crisis.

Maytee Sukhran, GED’13, is program head of the Bachelor of Arts in English program at Stanford International University, Bangkok. He is also a Ph.D. student at the Graduate School of Language and Communication of the National Institution of Development Administration.

David Turner III, GED’14, received his Ph.D. in social and cultural studies in education from the University of California, Los Angeles. He is also a Ph.D. candidate at the Pennsylvania State University.

Karina Gutierrez-Noriega, GED’21, has started a company, Strategic Soul, to provide alternative healing for mental health and wellness. She blends her expertise in counseling with holistic modalities such as yoga, meditation, reiki, and sound.

Tim Herd, GED’21, is attending the University of Pennsylvania, Los Angeles, pursuing his Ph.D. in higher education and organizational change.

Talal Ali Jan, GED’21, launched a self-paced SAT course in Pakistan. The studio-designed course aims to bridge gaps in the education system by reaching students in regions where such resources may not be available.

Barley Jeanneault, GED’21, accepted the roles of tenth grade dean and Advanced Placement English teacher at Abington Friends School in Abington, PA. He will be co-presenting at this year’s National Association of Independent Schools People of Color Conference.

Jasmine Blankes Jones, GR’21, curated the newly launched Ali A Afrika pod-cast series Reimagining the Future of Humans 2021. She is an invited speaker on the “Future of Education” episode, available on Spotify and Apple podcast.

Kevin Kelly, GED’21, accepted a position as assistant principal at the John Hancock Demonstration School’s Laburnum Middle Campus in The School District of Philadelphia.

Tawanna Burnous, GRD’21, founder of CoachDiversity Institute, is happy to share that her company ranked #24 on the Inc. 5000 list, an annual ranking of the nation’s fastest-growing private companies.

Abisha David, GED’21, graduated from the Counseling and Mental Health Services program with a completely virtual experience. She is now back at Penn GSE in person, pursuing advanced training in the Professional Counseling program.

Veena Vasudevan, GR’17, has been appointed assistant professor of digital media and learning at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education.

Brittany Wu, GED’19, is enrollment advisor at Noodle Partners, an organization that helps universities use technology to achieve higher engagement, capacity, and accessibility. She supports prospec- tive students throughout the application process.

Yi-Hui (Alice) Yeh, GED’13, co-founded an education consulting company, Set-Seed Education, in Taipei and Shanghai two years ago. Set-Seed aims to help students cultivate skills and become the best version of themselves so they can succeed in school and their lives.

Lilly Yu, GED’15, is founder and director of InAmerica Education, a consulting firm that has been helping students worldwide for more than ten years. The firm specializes in K–12 private school admissions as well as college planning.

2020s

Gary W. Abbambot, GRD’20, a facilitator for the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program, is a developer of a leadership course in instructional leadership for the Penn- sylvania Department of Education. The course is designed as a requirement for all newly hired principals in the state.

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Through master’s scholarships and doctoral fellowships, Penn GSE is able to attract the most talented and committed students and help make their education affordable. In return, our graduates go on to impact millions of students globally each year as educators, leaders, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and more. Support the power of possibility.

Making Change Possible

“Thanks to generous support, I was the first in my family to attend graduate school. I can attest that my academics were first-rate and that Penn GSE was the best choice I could have made. My career goal is to advance civil rights in education by helping to craft policy that is more equitable for students in the South. Thank you for helping to make my educational pursuits possible!”

—D’Andre McIntyre, GED’21, Education Policy
Penn GSE scholarship recipient

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

Kinder
garten provides the foundation for children’s educational experience, and not only through academic activities. Social and emotional learning (SEL) skills are just as important to support children’s educational growth and development. SEL skills are teachable, and every child can learn them—with your help. To foster this learning both in the classroom and at home, Drs. Katie Barghaus and Casey Henderson of the Penn Child Research Center helped create Conquering Kindergarten. Conquering Kindergarten includes a website at www.ckphilly.org with toolkits for teachers and parents that provide simple, evidence-based strategies like the ones below for helping children develop SEL skills.

Conquering Kindergarten was created in partnership with The School District of Philadelphia, the Penn Child Research Center, and Philadelphia teachers and families with support from the William Penn Foundation.

Katie Barghaus, GR’12
Casey Henderson, GR’20

Read

Books are not only key to helping children develop literacy skills; they’re also a great way to teach the importance of SEL skills. Stories can help children understand empathy and respect, which are critical SEL competencies for school and for life.

Help children develop SEL skills by asking questions that encourage them to think about the thoughts and feelings of different characters in a book: What do you think this character is feeling right now? What is this character thinking about? Simple questions like these help children begin to develop empathy and respect by looking at the world from the perspective of others. Some great books that showcase important SEL skills are available in the Conquering Kindergarten reading list. Pick one to read each week with your child and ask them questions about what the characters see, think, and feel.

*(continued on next page)*

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Celebration of Educators Recognizes Leaders and Awardees

Finding strength in the face of adversity, supporting mental health, and rallying to improve social justice were themes of Penn GSE’s virtual panel “Voices in Education: Leading in Times of Uncertainty.” The panel, moderated by Dean Pam Grossman, was part of the School’s annual Celebration of Educators, held on May 15, 2021, during Penn’s Alumni Weekend.

Panel participants included school principal Nimet Eren, GED’09, GRD’20; school superintendent Wagner Marseille, GRD’09; and college president Michael Sorrell, GRD’15; as well as Penn GSE Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Matt Hartley. Dr. Sorrell, a member of Penn GSE’s Board of Advisors who was also the School’s 2021 Commencement speaker, shared his perspective as president of Paul Quinn College in Dallas, Texas. For him, the period since the start of the pandemic has highlighted “the ability of people to rally around a cause and one that they believe in, and to push themselves in ways that defy their job descriptions.” Drs. Eren, Marseille, and Hartley likewise described an array of strengths that their communities demonstrated during the COVID era.

Following the panel, Dean Grossman thanked the participants before announcing the 2021 Education Alumni Award recipients. “I’m leaving this conversation so inspired,” said Dr. Grossman. “I’m so proud of you all as alumni of Penn GSE.”

2021 Education Alumni Award Recipients

- Penn GSE Educator of the Year Award: Annette Anderson, GED’97, GR’06
- William B. Castetter Alumni Award of Merit: Jeffrey Berger, GR’91
- Ethel and Allen “Buddy” Carruth Sustained Leadership in Education Award: Ronald Whittaker, GED’11
- Helen C. Bailey Award: Katherine Clonan-Roy, GR’16
- The Penn GSE Recent Alumni/Early Career Award of Merit: Rina Madhani, GED’19
- The Kwame Nkrumah Distinguished Alumni Award: Desmond Diggs, GED’16
- The Penn GSE Distinguished Alumni Award: Ronald Wooten, GED’92

Visit www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni/get-involved/awards-nominations to learn more about the Education Alumni Awards.

Encourage

What you say and how you say it influences your child’s development of SEL skills. Providing encouragement to your child helps them feel supported even when they may not get something exactly right.

• Try praising your child’s efforts. Although it can sometimes be easy to focus on an outcome (for example, your child spelled their name correctly), show your child that effort matters even more by praising them for working hard. For example, instead of saying “You’re such a good reader,” try saying, “I’m proud of you for trying your best to read that book.”

• Give praise about specific behaviors. Instead of saying “Good job,” you can say, “I like the way you shared that ball with your brother.” This gives children more direct feedback about the behaviors you are trying to encourage. Another simple way you can encourage your child is by being enthusiastic, especially about educational experiences. Tell your child about a time when you learned something new and let them know that while learning can be a little scary, it’s also exciting. Enthusiasm is contagious, so share yours with your child.

Want more advice?

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 and parents. Visit www.gse.upenn.edu/news/educators-playbook to sign up.

Play

Play is one of the best “teachers” for young children. When children play games like Simon Says or Freeze Dance, they learn how to work hard. For example, instead of saying “You’re such a good reader,” try saying, “I’m proud of you for trying your best to read that book.”

Help your child develop interpersonal skills with a shared activity, like drawing a picture together. Brainstorm about what you are going to draw. This might involve negotiating and compromising until you both agree. Then plan who will draw the different parts. Let your child know that you both have to do your part to make the picture complete. Once you are done, hang the drawing up so your child can see the result of your teamwork.

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What you say and how you say it influences your child’s development of SEL skills. Providing encouragement to your child helps them feel supported even when they may not get something exactly right.

• Try praising your child’s efforts. Although it can sometimes be easy to focus on an outcome (for example, your child spelled their name correctly), show your child that effort matters even more by praising them for working hard. For example, instead of saying “You’re such a good reader,” try saying, “I’m proud of you for trying your best to read that book.”

• Give praise about specific behaviors. Instead of saying “Good job,” you can say, “I like the way you shared that ball with your brother.” This gives children more direct feedback about the behaviors you are trying to encourage. Another simple way you can encourage your child is by being enthusiastic, especially about educational experiences. Tell your child about a time when you learned something new and let them know that while learning can be a little scary, it’s also exciting. Enthusiasm is contagious, so share yours with your child.
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—Kelly S. Suh, GED’96, and Donald D. Suh, M’98
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