

PENN GSE

Spring 2020

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION MAGAZINE | UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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PENN GSE

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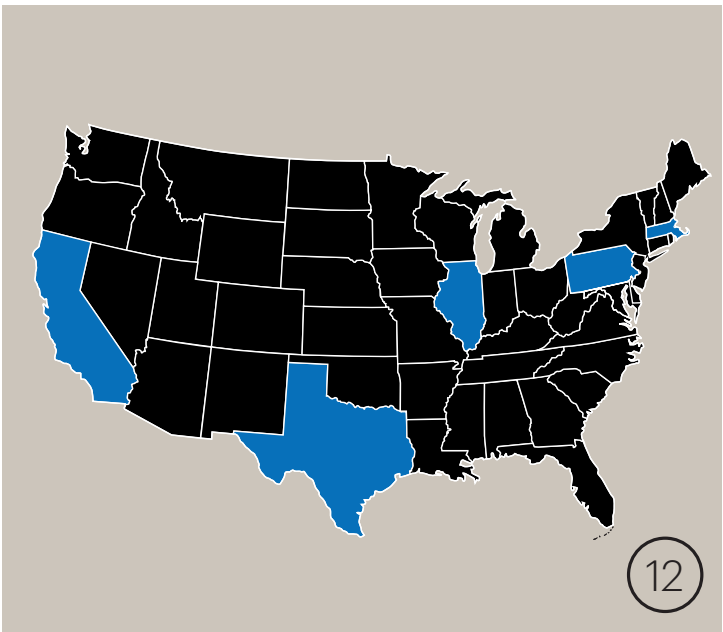
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On the cover: Parts Per Million © 2019 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Benjamin Volta, Southern High School, 2101 South Broad Street. Photo by Steve Weinik. **Below:** Penn GSE faculty member Caroline B. Ebby, GR'97 (center), leads the Responsive Math Teaching Project, which is building a national model to improve the lives of underserved children.



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Letter from the Dean

Dear Alumni and Friends,

As I write, we are concluding a semester unlike any other. Since the University's transition in March to virtual teaching and learning due to COVID-19, Penn GSE

students have been continuing their studies off campus. Many of them faced the disruption of moving, in some cases across the world. Our faculty and staff have adjusted to working and teaching remotely. I'm sure that you are navigating unanticipated circumstances that impact your work, home, and family life. Across our nation and around the globe, it is a time of tremendous uncertainty and challenges.

In the face of enormous changes, however, the strength of the Penn GSE community has remained unchanged. If this time has taught me anything, it is that our community is a resilient and generous one. Across the School, people have jumped in to develop resources for working and teaching remotely and to provide training. Faculty have redesigned their syllabi and offered advice (featured on page 18) to help educators and parents adapt. Staff have helped each other stay in touch and maintain our operations. Students have met virtually to support one another. Although distance divides us, we are united as a community.

Much of this issue of *The Penn GSE Magazine* captures the on-campus portion of our spring semester. I hope you will find in it a source of inspiration, and a reminder of the daily rhythms we long to resume in brighter times ahead. In February we were delighted to mark the launch of an exciting new partnership with the prestigious Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education, as you will read on page 25, and to offer the first programming of our new Center for Professional Learning, featured on page 20.

This issue brings a particular focus to Penn GSE's strengths in urban education. In the cover story on page 6, you will learn how the School is working in Philadelphia to build national models of instruction and data use to improve underserved children's lives. Our alumni feature on page 12 highlights an array of graduates working in cities across the country as leaders and educators. As we look at the present and future of urban education, it is a devastating fact that the COVID-19 crisis has complicated an already challenging landscape. Urban schools have struggled to provide education to students lacking internet access at home. The economic impact of the crisis is exacerbating the risks outside of school—poverty, hunger, homelessness, and more—faced by underserved children. These troubling shifts make our work as educators more important than ever.

The faculty, students, and alumni featured in this issue have gone on to adapt to the “new normal” of remote and virtual work, and it is clear that they have tremendous dedication and expertise to offer in these challenging times. Educators and leaders are being called upon for courage and innovation to help their organizations address the crisis, and we look forward to sharing how our alumni have contributed. Please share your stories with us at www.gse.upenn.edu/alumni.

We also want to help you stay connected and continue learning, during the crisis and beyond. I hope you will explore our new platform for alumni, Penn GSE Connects, at penngseconnects.gse.upenn.edu, and visit our events calendar at www.gse.upenn.edu/event to find our online learning opportunities for educators and leaders.

I could not be prouder of all our community has accomplished, during familiar and unfamiliar times, and I thank you, our alumni and friends, for your part in our extraordinary impact.

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

FACULTY BOOKSHELF



Photo by CreativeMarket.com/MacTrunk

Bookshelf Spotlight

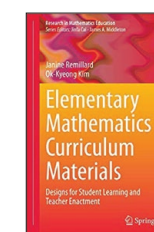


Rand Quinn

Class Action: Desegregation and Diversity in San Francisco Schools
By Rand Quinn

Published January 2020 by University of Minnesota Press

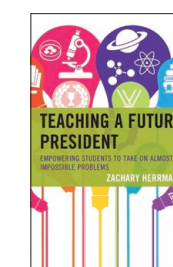
This book chronicles the history of school desegregation and activism in San Francisco following the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*. The book explores the relationships between law and community-based activism, and between multiracial politics and urban education reform. Dr. Quinn is an associate professor at Penn GSE primarily affiliated with the Teaching, Learning, and Leadership division.



Elementary Mathematics Curriculum Materials: Designs for Student Learning and Teacher Enactment

By Janine Remillard

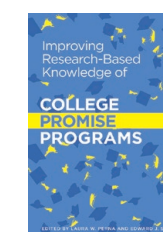
Published March 2020
by Springer



Teaching a Future President: Empowering Students to Take on Almost Impossible Problems

By Zachary Herrmann

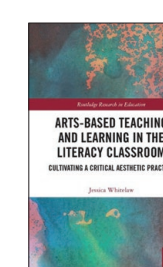
Published December 2019
by Rowman & Littlefield



Improving Research-Based Knowledge of College Promise Programs

Edited by Laura Perna
and Edward Smith

Published January 2020
by AERA



Arts-Based Teaching and Learning in the Literacy Classroom: Cultivating a Critical Aesthetic Practice

By Jessica Whitelaw

Published May 2019
by Routledge

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

FACULTY AWARDS & HONORS

Michelle Neuman (1) was a guest coeditor of *Early Years: An International Research Journal*, Volume 39, Issue 3, a special issue about early childhood policy in low- and middle-income countries. **Sharon M. Ravitch** (2) was named a Fulbright Specialist to work with Dr. BMN College of Home Science in Mumbai, India, on creating the conditions for protective pluralism for scheduled tribe and scheduled caste first-generation female college students. Dr. Ravitch also recently served as a scholar-in-residence at St. George's University in Grenada, West Indies. **Howard C. Stevenson** (3) was awarded Brandeis University's 2020 Joseph B. and Toby Gittler Prize, which recognizes outstanding and lasting scholarly contributions to racial, ethnic and/or religious relations. **Sharon Wolf** (4) received the Best Paper Award of 2019 from the *Journal of Research in Educational Effectiveness* for the article “Experimental Impacts of the ‘Quality Preschool for Ghana’ Interventions on Teacher Professional Well-being, Classroom Quality, and Children’s School Readiness.” **Jenny Zapf** (5) served as a panelist and a finalist judge at the 2019 Reimagine Education Conference and Awards in London, England, in December and spoke at a forum of the European EdTech Network in Oulu, Finland, in February.



Faculty headshots
on pages 3 to 5
courtesy of Goldenberg
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News Briefs

RANKED

#2

by US NEWS & WORLD REPORT

Penn GSE Again #2 in U.S. News & World Report Rankings

Penn GSE has retained its #2 position in *U.S. News & World Report's* 2021 rankings for graduate schools of education. The ranking marks the fifth consecutive year Penn GSE has been ranked in the top 5.

U.S. News & World Report highlighted Penn GSE's strength across a variety of disciplines. For thirteen years running, Penn GSE's leadership in the world of education policy has been reflected with top 10 positions—the Education Policy division was ranked #7 nationally, and the Higher Education division moved up to #6. Penn GSE's teacher education programs were also recognized among the nation's best.

Programs preparing elementary education and secondary education teachers both made their debuts. The School's excellence in preparing students to build creativity in the classroom was recognized for the second year in a row with a ranking in Curriculum and Instruction. In addition, for the third straight year, Penn GSE's Education Administration programs were highlighted.

Professor Perna Testifies Before Pennsylvania Higher Education Funding Commission

GSE Centennial Presidential Professor of Education **Laura W. Perna (2)** testified at a January 8 hearing of the Pennsylvania Higher Education Funding Commission at West Chester University. Dr. Perna, chair of Penn GSE's Higher Education division, is an expert in higher education access, affordability, and student success. State leaders concerned about Pennsylvania's higher education affordability crisis, which limits opportunities for students, families, businesses, and colleges themselves, called upon Perna for her insight. Perna recommended ways to expand college access and support for minorities, low-income students, and adult learners; lower barriers to transferring between institutions; and make it easier for families to understand the cost of college.

Perna has been appointed vice provost for faculty at Penn, effective July 1, 2020.

Penn GSE Scholars Appear on *Education Week's* List of Influencers in Education

Six researchers from Penn GSE, plus another faculty member with a secondary appointment at GSE, made *Education Week's* 2020 Edu-Scholar Public Influence Rankings list, which recognizes scholars whose work shapes public discussion around education. Featured Penn GSE professors are William T. Carter Professor of Child Development and Education **Vivian L. Gadsden (3)**, Dean **Pam Grossman (4)**, Board of Overseers Chair Professor of Education **Richard M. Ingersoll (5)**, GSE Centennial Presidential Professor of Education **Laura W. Perna (2)**, Constance Clayton Professor of Urban Education **Howard C. Stevenson (6)**, and Professor of History of Education **Jonathan Zimmerman (7)**. Angela Duckworth, a professor of psychology with a secondary appointment at Penn GSE, was also recognized at number 10.

West Philly's Lea School Receives Surprise Donation via President Gutmann

On December 7, Penn President Amy Gutmann was awarded the Pennsylvania Society Gold Medal for Distinguished Achievement, a prestigious award that traditionally comes with a \$50,000 philanthropic gift to an organization of the recipient's choice. President Gutmann, who has a secondary faculty appointment to GSE, chose West Philadelphia's Henry C. Lea School to receive the gift. Dr. Gutmann also surprised the Pennsylvania Society attendees by announcing that Penn would be building on that gift with a matching \$50,000 to the K–8 public school.

Penn and GSE have a long relationship with the Lea School, where eighteen organizations across Penn—including GSE and the Netter Center for Community Partnerships—operate some forty different school-day and after-school programs. The gifts, totaling \$100,000, will be used to purchase sixty laptops for staff with accompanying accessories, and will also be used to purchase additional Chromebooks and Tech Tubs for students to use during classes.

■ Associate Professor **Ryan S. Baker (8)**, along with colleagues at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Penn's Online Learning Initiative, was awarded a \$1.4 million grant from the National Science Foundation's Cyberinfrastructure for Sustained Scientific Innovation program to develop an infrastructure to support the integra-

tion of richer problem-solving into massive open online courses (MOOCs), as well as a research infrastructure to study learning content in both K–12 and MOOCs.

■ Associate Professor **Manuel S. González Canché (9)**, Professor of Practice **Joni Finney (10)**, GSE Centennial Presidential Professor of Education **Laura W. Perna (2)**, and colleagues from Research for Action, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association were awarded a grant from the American Education Research Association. The grant will fund the first national research conference on performance- and outcomes-based funding in higher education, called, "Performance Funding in Higher Education: Connecting Forty Years of Policy, Research, and Practice," along with the first edited book on the topic.

■ Assistant Professor **Abby Reisman (11)** received a \$2.46 million grant from the James S. McDonnell Foundation to study the development of novice teachers' role-identities as discussion facilitators in social studies classrooms. In addition, Dr. Reisman was awarded \$49,994 by the University Research Foundation to investigate a virtual instructional coaching model for Philadelphia history teachers.

■ Senior Lecturer **Marsha Richardson (12)**, in collaboration with Bloomsburg University's McDowell Institute, received a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to become trained as a youth mental health first aid trainer in order to certify early career educators and pre-service students in youth mental health first aid.

■ Associate Professor **Amy Stornaiuolo (13)**, was awarded a grant of \$2.49 million from the James S. McDonnell Foundation to explore digital discourse in online education, with a focus on how teachers can lead better conversations online.

Photo by Ryan Collier



The McGraw Prize Partners with Penn GSE to Celebrate Education Changemakers

The Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Family Foundation and Penn GSE have established a new three-year, \$3 million partnership to enhance and expand the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education, one of the most prestigious honors in the field. At a February 13 event on campus at Perry World House, the McGraw family and Penn President Amy Gutmann, Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman, and Catalyst @ Penn GSE's Michael Golden announced Penn GSE as the new home of the prize. Named after the former chairman and CEO of McGraw-Hill, the prize has honored innovators who are transforming teaching and learning since 1988.

The announcement was followed by a panel discussion featuring four past prize winners—the beginning of a series of events, webinars, and publications that will help educators and policy-makers around the globe tap into the wealth of knowledge of past and future winners.

In partnership with Penn GSE, three McGraw Prizes recognizing achievement in preK–12 education, higher education, and learning science research will be awarded on October 21 in New York City. Pictured (1) from left to right are past McGraw Prize in Education winners Sarita Brown, Alberto Carvalho, Christine Cunningham, and Chris Lehmann, C'93, in conversation with Dean Grossman. See page 25 to learn more about the partnership.



In the Media

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

“Will Coronavirus Close Your College for Good?” | *The Chronicle of Higher Education* | March 26, 2020
For 20 percent of institutions, this may be an existential moment, says **Robert Zemsky**.

“Is It Fair to Award Scholarships Based on the SAT?” | *The Wall Street Journal* | February 2, 2020
Laura Perna says exams increase inequality when used to provide access to aid.

“America's Schools Are More Diverse Than Ever. But the Teachers Are Still Mostly White” | *The Washington Post* | December 27, 2019
Richard Ingersoll discusses the lack of diversity in teaching, emphasizing the importance of teacher retention.

“‘Set Your Price for a Slave,’ a Fifth-Grade Work Sheet Read. It Landed the Teacher on Leave” | *The Washington Post* | December 10, 2019
Ebony Elizabeth Thomas speaks about best practices for, and common missteps in, discussing slavery in the classroom.

“Teaching Impeaching: History Comes to Life in School as Teachers Seize on This Historic Moment. Here's What Some Are Doing—and How” | *The Washington Post* | November 15, 2019
Sigal Ben-Porath offers advice on addressing impeachment in the classroom.

“Effects of Harsh and Violent Discipline on Child Behavioural Outcomes” | Ghana News Agency | October 8, 2019
Sharon Wolf's research on the harmful effects of harsh and violent discipline on Ghanaian preschoolers is discussed.

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

Visit www.gse.upenn.edu/news/archive or follow @PennGSE on Twitter to stay up to date on Penn GSE in the media.

↓ A Penn GSE team is fostering a new approach to instruction and building a national model through a three-year professional development program for math teachers in West Philadelphia schools. Photo by Lisa Godfrey



Partnering to Shape

Urban Education

Penn GSE Builds National Models and Practitioner Communities

by Juliana Rosati

↓ Penn GSE’s longstanding work with The School District of Philadelphia comprises more than four hundred programs in 250 schools. Pictured: Parts Per Million © 2019 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Benjamin Volta, Southern High School, 2101 South Broad Street. Photo by Steve Weinik



“Philadelphia is at the heart of national conversations about education reform,” says Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman. “At Penn GSE, we’re committed to putting our research to work to develop teachers, leaders, and resources in ways that can help unlock opportunities for children in Philadelphia and across the nation.”

“Are we going to do the fun math?” The question, asked by a fifth grade student, greeted Brittany Hess in a classroom when she arrived to coach teachers. To Hess, a member of a Penn GSE team that is building a national model for math instruction through a partnership with thirteen public elementary schools in West Philadelphia, the question was an endearing sign of success.

“We’re doing really challenging problems that some people would look at and say, ‘Are you really going to do that with students of that age?’” says Hess. “But the students are so engaged, and they love learning in that way.”

Funded by a four-year, \$2.9 million grant from the National Science Foundation and led by Penn GSE faculty member Caroline B. Ebby, GR’97, the project is researching and developing instructional leadership in schools, creating professional development with the potential to be replicated on a broad scale. Called the Responsive Math Teaching (RMT) project, it helps math teachers in kindergarten through eighth grade shift away from traditional instruction in which the teacher demonstrates how to solve problems. Instead, teachers put students’ thinking at the forefront.

“Current research in math education says that students should be actively involved in meaning-making and engaged in solving problems during class,” says Dr. Ebby. “At its heart, the project is about being responsive to student thinking throughout a math lesson.”

By cultivating best practices in a network of public schools that includes some of the lowest-resourced and lowest-performing schools in the city, the RMT project reflects Penn GSE’s longstanding commitment to underserved students and urban education. The School’s work with The School District of Philadelphia, comprising more than four hundred programs in 250 schools, represents a national model of partnership between a university and an urban district.

Begun in person and continued virtually due to COVID-19, the RMT project is one of several groundbreaking initiatives led by Penn GSE in Philadelphia, the poorest major city in the United States. By creating learning communities for practitioners, the projects highlighted on the pages ahead are establishing national models—and improving children’s lives both in and outside of school.



Math

↑ The Responsive Math Teaching project emphasizes an active role for students and leadership among teachers. Photo by Lisa Godfrey

Putting Students’ Thinking at the Center of Math Class

Through a three-year training program, Ebby and her team are preparing math teachers not only to put students in an active role, but also to lead professional development for their peers.

Under the new teaching approach, class time is often spent on one math problem, which the whole class solves. Problems are constructed to have multiple solutions, and students are encouraged to attempt an approach and explain their thinking to the class. For example, one problem asks how 36 crackers can be shared equally between friends. Rather than provide a given number of friends, it prompts students to think about all the different ways to share the crackers equally—and discover a mathematical operation (division) in the process.

“You can use the problem and get to different mathematical goals that are standards-based,” says Ebby. Guiding such a lesson without solving the problem for the students is a complex task. “It requires a whole new set of skills for teachers around questioning, representing student thinking, and facilitating discussions,” she says.

To address that challenge from the ground up, the first year of the professional development program, “Experience,” puts teachers in the role of learners experiencing the approach for the first time. “We need to help teachers shift their understanding of what mathematics is,” says Ph.D. student Lindsay Goldsmith-Markey, who has led the development and facilitation of the Experience year.

Mary Ellen Stevens, a fifth- and sixth-grade math teacher at Middle Years Alternative School, is currently in the Experience year. “One of the most amazing things to me is that it brought back that feeling of struggle in math class,” she says. She recalls being confronted with a complex problem during a session. “I had a pep

talk with myself and said, ‘If you are telling children every day to persevere, then you have to do this.’”

The members of Ebby’s team draw on their own considerable teaching experience to lead and organize the sessions. Along with Hess and Goldsmith-Markey, the members include Joy Anderson Davis, C’96, GRD’17; research coordinator Lizzy Pecora; and Ed.D. student Jennifer Valerio.

The program’s second year, “Teach,” moves participants from the role of learner to teacher. In addition to meeting for group sessions with Goldsmith-Markey, participants receive one-on-one mentoring from Valerio, Hess, and Davis.

“We’ve spent time in their classrooms,” says Dr. Davis. “We sometimes co-teach. We support and facilitate teachers’ planning, observe, provide feedback, and intentionally connect teachers who can learn with and from each other.”

In the process, teachers may confront their own doubts about whether students in low-performing schools can handle the open-ended approach, according to Penn GSE Senior Lecturer Caroline Watts, director of school and community engagement and co-leader of the RMT project.

“Letting the students do the math is often the hardest part,” says Dr. Watts. “A lot of committed teachers aren’t sure their students will be able to learn in this way until they see it.”

Goldsmith-Markey recalls that one teacher asked her to demonstrate the new method in her classroom before attempting it herself. “It was a big turning point for her to see it happen with her own students,” says Goldsmith-Markey. “She said, ‘I get it now. They can do it.’”

As the teachers bring the approach to their students, they share their experiences with each other at the training sessions.

“Sometimes they say they wish they had done something differently, or that they were really proud of how they handled a particular moment,” says Valerio. “Both are worthwhile to discuss.”

The third year, “Lead,” focuses on how participants can become responsive math leaders in their schools. Ebby and her team have developed a range of options to meet teachers’ needs, understanding that while some will have the time to lead professional development sessions or mentor colleagues, others will find it more feasible to invite colleagues to observe their classrooms. The goal is for teachers to maintain and grow the training in their schools after completing the RMT program—and for the model to be adopted by other schools.

“The idea of working alongside a university to build up skilled practitioners and then transition those teachers to become leaders in their buildings is a unique model, in my experience,” says Melissa Gude, the District’s professional learning specialist for the West Philadelphia network, who also spent years working in Chicago and Nashville schools. “It’s a huge potential win, not only for our network, but for other schools if the model is replicated.”

As the COVID-19 crisis developed this spring, Ebby’s team continued working online with partner schools, devising strategies to provide virtual professional development sessions and coaching.

According to participants, the project is already making a difference. Tiffany Moyer, a school-based teacher leader at Overbrook Elementary School, reports, “Students take more ownership of their learning. New things that they learn are more meaningful because they’ve discovered them on their own.” Now in the Lead year of the program, Moyer has taken on a number of leadership roles—helping participants in the Teach year, mentoring a teacher at her school, and planning schoolwide professional development.

Chris Powers, a math coach at Powel Elementary School who is

in the Teach year, says of the program, “I absolutely love it. I’m excited to be part of a project that helps teachers, and in turn, students, to think about math more deeply.” The best part, he says, is that problem solving equips students for much more than math class. “This is not just a test-taking strategy. This is a life strategy,” he says. “Every day in our lives we have to consider information we have and use it to solve problems.”

Inviting Students to Make Sense of Literature

Teaching is often a solitary task, as each educator strives behind closed doors to reach a classroom of students. But for reading and social studies teacher James Lindberg, several times a year it became a team effort. After a morning of planning together, he and several of his colleagues at the Andrew Jackson School in The School District of Philadelphia, along with Penn GSE Assistant Professor Sarah Schneider Kavanagh and her researchers, proceeded to a classroom full of students to teach together.

“We’d have it structured so that each teacher had their own specific parts to do,” says Lindberg. Taking turns, the teachers passed the chalk to each other—and even sometimes called a “time out” to discuss their next steps. But their goal was to do as little of the talking as possible as they strove to put students in fourth through eighth grade in charge of analyzing literary texts.

“One of the things we’re trying to combat with this work is the fact that classrooms can be places where teachers talk and students listen,” says Dr. Kavanagh. Her work with the school represents one site of The Labs Project, which is funded at four institutions by a \$2.5 million grant from the James S. McDonnell Foundation. “We want students to be the ones who are doing most of the cognitive lift and wrestling through ideas,” she says.

Literacy

↓ Penn GSE researchers are helping teachers put students in charge of analyzing literary texts. Photo by Ryan Collier



Like Caroline Ebby and the Responsive Math Teaching team, Kavanagh aims to give teachers the support they need to adopt a student-centered approach that may feel unfamiliar. Rather than explain the meaning of a text, the teachers are meant to prompt the students to make sense of the material aloud in discussion.

“We know from research that students learn best and retain the most information when they’re able to engage in discussion and teach each other,” says Kelly Espinosa, principal of the Jackson School, who partnered with Kavanagh’s team as part of her school-wide goal of improved literacy instruction.

Lessons are tied to standards such as those set forth in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, which emphasize critical thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills.

“This is really about students making connections between the literature and their lives and giving them the agency to make sense of it together. We talk a lot about there not being right and wrong answers,” says Liz Gotwalt, who along with Chenelle Boatwain is one of two Penn GSE Ed.D. students working as research assistants on the project.

The texts that Kavanagh and the teachers have discussed with students address another goal of the project—to help teachers bring more literature by authors of color, and about racial identity, into the curriculum. It is an aim that fits Espinosa’s vision for Jackson. “We have over twenty world heritages represented in our school,” she says. “It’s really important to me to let students see themselves in the books we’re reading.”

That goal adds another layer to the teachers’ learning. “It can be daunting to talk about race openly in classrooms,” says Kavanagh. “Our teachers are committed to doing that together, and in ways that will nurture and empower their students.”

Discussions of works such as “My Name” by Sandra Cisneros have brought students into contact with protagonists who are sorting out questions of their own cultural identities. In the story, a Mexican-American girl around the students’ age reflects on her name, Esperanza, and what it means to her. Clues in the story suggest that Esperanza has a complex relationship with her name.

“We’ve had really interesting discussions about how the character feels about her name,” says Gotwalt. “The students almost always will say at first that she doesn’t like it. But then, as they build on each other’s ideas and the teacher asks questions, it becomes more complicated.”

Key to the project is the learning community it creates for teachers. “Student-centered teaching is a difficult thing to learn,” Kavanagh says. “Having other teachers around you who are trying to do the same thing can help you feel safe enough to keep going.” Having conducted approximately two years of the classroom work prior to the COVID-19 crisis this spring, Kavanagh is looking to the project’s next phase. She and the leaders of The Labs Project’s other sites, which are addressing other subject areas, ultimately aim to have participants from across the country facilitate learning experiences for other teachers.

For Lindberg, the team teaching approach has made a difference. “When I take it back to my own classroom, I see the lesson run even smoother than it did the first time,” he says. He reports a transformation of discussions in his classroom, where he and the students

would pass around a “talking piece” (a squishy ball) to take turns speaking. Video taken at the beginning of the school year shows students frequently sending the ball back to him. A later video tells a different story. “Students were throwing it to each other, and seven or eight students were speaking before it made its way back to me,” he says. That shift, he says, means power is residing in students’ hands. “It sets them up to take on leadership roles in their lives.”

Improving Children’s Lives Through Data

How can limited funding for prekindergarten be invested to help the children who need it most? How can case workers better assess the risks facing children? States, cities, and counties across the country are able to use information about children’s lives in and outside of school to answer questions like these, thanks to integrated data systems made possible by the pioneering work of Penn GSE’s Dr. John W. Fantuzzo, Albert M. Greenfield Professor of Human Relations, and Penn Social Policy & Practice’s Dennis P. Culhane, Dana and Andrew Stone Chair in Social Policy.

“We want to be serving the most vulnerable citizens with what we affectionately call ‘real and ready’ research,” says Fantuzzo, also director of the Penn Child Research Center. “Real means that it’s evidence-based. Ready means that it can be used in real time to help people.”

While the use of “big data” has transformed business, allowing companies to analyze vast quantities of information about customers, government agencies have typically maintained separate databases for education, housing, juvenile justice, mental health, and other areas. During the past two decades, Fantuzzo and Culhane have established best practices for overcoming the legal and operational challenges to integrating such data and putting it to practical use while vigilantly protecting privacy.

The two cofounded KIDS, one of the nation’s first integrated data systems, in Philadelphia in 2000 and went on to expand the approach nationally, establishing the Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) initiative in 2008 and developing it with funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Their book, *Actionable Intelligence: Using Integrated Data Systems to Achieve a More Effective, Efficient, and Ethical Government*, published in 2015, sets forth their approach to partnering with school systems, cities, municipal governments, and states to improve social services.

AISP expanded its reach dramatically thanks to grants from the MacArthur Foundation, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, the federal Social Innovation Fund, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. These made it possible to create a national, eighteen-month training and technical assistance program for state and local governmental staff. The program has grown the network from an original eight states and municipalities to a current total of thirty-one, with a reach covering nearly 55 percent of the U.S. population.

“It’s exponential growth in terms of training people to have the capacity for integrated data in their state or county,” says Della Jenkins, executive director of AISP. “We’ve become a much larger network of communities that get together to talk through what’s happening on the ground.”

AISP sites have used integrated data to address a range of problems.



↑ Using integrated data, Penn GSE researchers are working with the City of Philadelphia to expand access to high-quality prekindergarten. Aerial illustration of the Philadelphia region by iStock.com/FrankRamspott

For instance, Los Angeles County, California, has developed recommendations to better address the needs of homeless adults. South Carolina has improved the delivery of mental health services to citizens in rural areas. Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, has created a screening tool so that child welfare investigations can better assess children’s risk and safety.

In Philadelphia, Fantuzzo and Katie Barghaus, GR’12, senior research investigator for AISP and executive director of Penn Child Research Center, worked with colleagues to address an urgent need for expanded prekindergarten. With a childhood poverty rate of 37 percent, Philadelphia is home to a young population that is vulnerable to a number of risks—such as low birth weight, homelessness, and maltreatment. “Research has revealed the power of early childhood education to offset the effects of such risks,” says Dr. Barghaus.

When Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney appointed a commission to expand prekindergarten access, the group turned to the Penn Child Research Center to help them make the most effective investment of an initial \$60 million. They worked with the city’s Data Management Office to create a map indicating the geographic distribution of three- and four-year-old children facing multiple risks. Information from the city’s integrated data system, now known as CARES, made the task possible.

The team overlaid the map with another showing the locations of high-quality prekindergarten slots across the city—and extracted a final map of the areas with the highest risk for children and the least

access to high-quality prekindergarten. The city went on to invest in those areas, known as prekindergarten “deserts,” increasing the available slots by 113 percent.

Now, as the city moves to expand the initiative, with an ultimate goal of universal prekindergarten, Fantuzzo and Culhane, along with other colleagues from Penn GSE, Penn Social Policy & Practice, and Penn Nursing, are continuing to work with the city, with support from the William Penn Foundation and Penn Futures Project, the latter a partnership between the three schools.

With a new grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, AISP will better document the national landscape of integrated data and improve the use of data to support economic mobility. Fantuzzo envisions that the future will bring increased collaboration across sites to address issues like early childhood education access. “What we want to do now is to create learning communities based on shared high-priority social problems and generate models for the nation,” he says.

Ultimately, integrated data is about people, not numbers. “We’re measuring what’s working and how we can do better for people,” says Jenkins. “This work is really about making sure that people are at the center of decision making when it comes to policy and programs.”

And whether through integrated data or student-centered learning, Penn GSE is dedicated to enriching children’s lives. ■

Urban Impact

PENN GSE ALUMNI LEAD AND INNOVATE by Lini S. Kadaba

Educators and students in urban settings face many challenges. Limited resources, leadership turnover, achievement gaps, and factors that affect students outside of school, such as poverty, often pose significant hurdles to teaching and learning. At Penn GSE, budding educators learn best practices for tackling such problems and gain hands-on experience through the School's longstanding partnership with The School District of Philadelphia. Here, five alumni making an impact on K–12 and higher education in cities across the country share their stories. While the COVID-19 crisis has dramatically altered the educational landscape since these interviews were conducted, the dedication and successes of these alumni remain inspiring.



Photo by Chestnut Hill Studios

Rachel Skerritt, C'99, GED'99

“To read about how subjective and arbitrary the path to educational success is, based on your ZIP code or your parents’ education, was very compelling to me.”

BUILDING TRUST TO BOLSTER STUDENTS

In a freshman sociology class at Penn, **Rachel Skerritt, C'99, GED'99**, read Jonathan Kozol's 1991 *Savage Inequalities*, a book about the educational neglect of urban students. That experience, along with volunteering at a school, led her to begin her master's study in education as an undergraduate by submatriculating at Penn GSE.

“To read about how subjective and arbitrary the path to educational success is, based on your ZIP code or your parents’ education, was very compelling to me,” says Skerritt, headmaster of Boston Latin School in Massachusetts. The nation's oldest public school, Boston Latin is Skerritt's alma mater and the place where she began her career, as an English teacher, after graduating in 1999. By 2010, she was relaunching the under-performing Eastern Senior High School in Washington, DC.

Eastern had thirteen principals in a dozen years before her arrival, Skerritt says, along with dismal academic proficiency scores. Many students faced neighborhood gun violence. Under her leadership, the school prioritized safety, adopted the rigorous International Baccalaureate program, and improved graduation rates.

“Leadership is such a critical element to school successes,” she says. “You have to get the right people on the bus, those who are willing to drive the extra mile.” Skerritt hired new

teachers and staff and immersed herself in the school, living two blocks away and regularly attending school events.

Rather than assuming an African American principal who grew up poor in Boston could easily connect to low-income African American students, Skerritt focused on earning trust. It was a lesson she learned at Penn GSE as a student teacher working with a high schooler named Steven. Despite being a student at an Ivy League university, Skerritt figured she would naturally understand him. “He very quickly educated me on how little we had in common,” she says. “He was not naïve about our educational divide.”

In 2017, Skerritt became the first person of color to lead Boston Latin, a top-rated public magnet school with a diverse student body in grades seven to twelve. But even at a school with resources and a reputation for academic excellence, challenges remain.

“There is an urgency for students still struggling to perform to their potential,” Skerritt says. She recently changed the school's open house format to focus on parent-teacher conferences specifically for families of struggling students. Skerritt emphasizes the students' ability to succeed.

The initiative is rooted in the calling Skerritt found at Penn. “We always need to look at what we provide for students through the lens of equity,” she says.

Photo by Joanna Brownson



FOSTERING
HOPE AMONG
STUDENTS AND
TEACHERS

Elizabeth Humphries, GED'09

tion to address inequalities in the educational system. Teach for America and its partnership with Penn GSE allowed her to pursue a master's degree as a history teacher at John Bartram High School in Philadelphia. There she gained valuable experience in navigating a complex cultural environment.

Humphries reports that Penn GSE coursework on issues of race and unconscious bias guided her efforts to build trust with her students in a school context with many white teachers, including herself, and a largely African American student body. Her studies also inspired her to address issues of race in the curriculum.

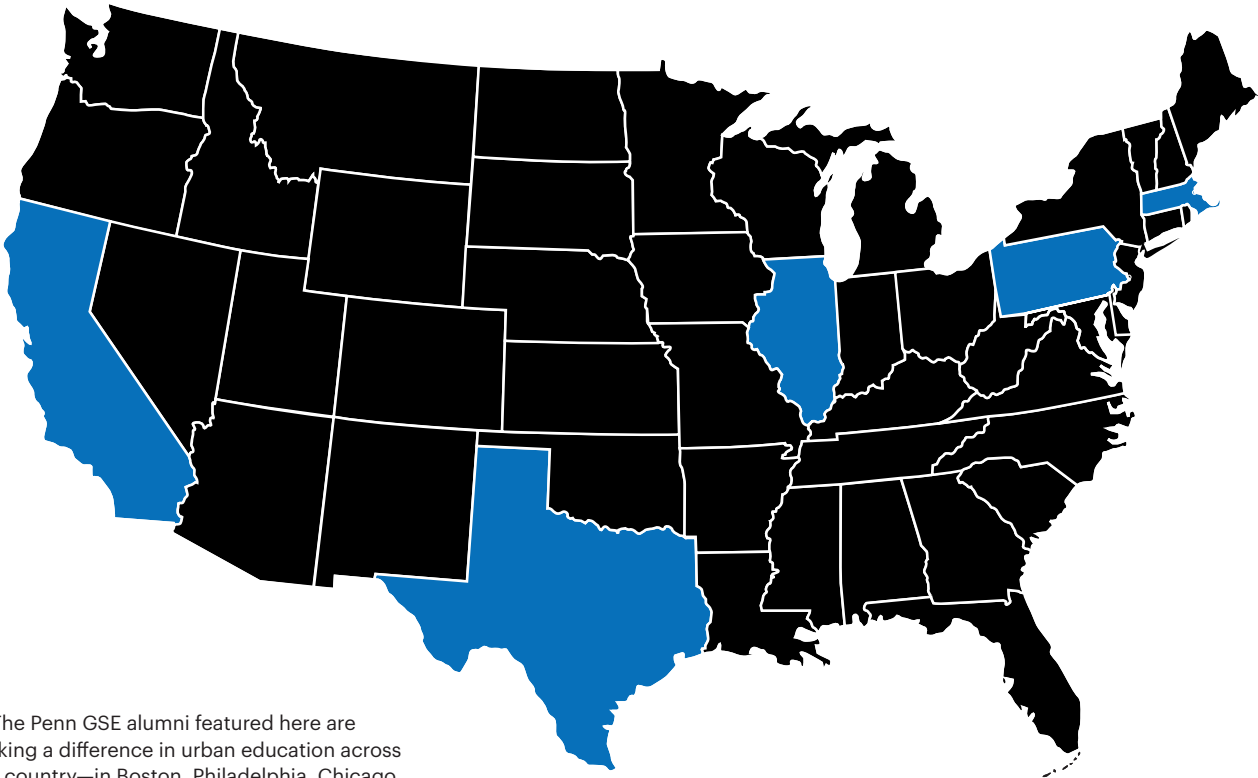
"My intent was to not shy away from the hard truths of history," says Humphries. Now a history specialist for the Oakland Unified School District in California, Humphries began at Bartram by teaching units about global inequality.

"I had hoped this would prompt students to ask lots of good questions about how we ended up in this situation," she says. Instead, Humphries saw that the units were deflating students' sense of hope. So she refined her approach to focus on resistance movements from the Civil War through the Civil Rights era.

"I learned that students already feel the weight of how unjust the world is," she says. "As a teacher, while I needed to help them understand how historical events shaped inequality, I also needed to provide them with examples of how people have tried to carve out a way forward."

In 2011, Humphries joined a diverse middle school in Oakland as a teacher, and after three years took on her current role as a teacher coach, continuing to draw upon her Penn GSE experience to support those she instructs. Like so many urban districts, Oakland has faced budget cuts, and for Humphries these have meant working with teachers one-on-one rather than convening district-wide professional development. She relies on the teacher inquiry approach she learned at Penn GSE, in which instructors are asked to study their own practices and determine what works and what doesn't.

"In an environment where we have no resources," she says, "what we do have is the chance to build relationships that make teachers feel that they are valued experts."



↑ The Penn GSE alumni featured here are making a difference in urban education across the country—in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Dallas, and Oakland.



Anthony Andre Zarate, C'12, GED'13

CULTIVATING
COMMUNITY
AND RAISING
THE BAR

At Penn GSE, **Anthony Andre Zarate, C'12, GED'13**, spent a lot of time discussing not only pedagogy

and curricula, but also the importance of building relationships with students and their families.

"We talked a lot about investing in more than just academics," says Zarate, an instructional coach for fourth through eighth grade at Acero Brighton Park Elementary School, a charter school in Chicago, Illinois.

Zarate, who changed his undergraduate major at Penn from nursing to urban studies before submatriculating at Penn GSE, has ridden that philosophy to impressive success. After graduation, he entered Teach for America and became a founding fifth-grade general education instructor at Acero Brighton, where he won the school's Teacher of the Year Award. In 2016, as the seventh and eighth grade English language arts teacher, he was a finalist for Illinois Teacher of the Year.

Zarate attributes the recognition to relationships he built with the school's largely Latinx student population, in which many students, like Zarate, come from immigrant families. "I connected with them culturally," says the Filipino American, "and empathized with what parents want for their children."

Zarate motivated his students, many of whom lagged behind in reading, with the catchphrase "fight for your spot"—meaning these students of color deserved a seat at the table among decision makers. "It helped them understand they could be leaders and make change," he says.

Perhaps more important, Zarate set high expectations. "When students are struggling, you might think you have to scale down the work," he says. "No. They want to feel challenged, and when you challenge them, they always meet the bar."

With background context, his sixth graders could discuss a sophisticated novel like *Lord of the Flies*. He stayed with his students through eighth grade, exposing them to *The Great Gatsby*, Shakespeare, and Gabriel García Márquez. On standardized tests, the percentage of his students at or above the national average in reading jumped dramatically over the course of four years, he says. In 2019, Zarate assumed his current role, in which he focuses on bringing best practices to teachers. While conscious that charters draw away funds

"When students are struggling, you might think you have to scale down the work. No. They want to feel challenged, and when you challenge them, they always meet the bar."

from public schools—a major challenge for many urban districts—Zarate believes in school choice. He recently obtained a fellowship to design a new charter school model. If it is approved, Zarate will head the school and once again focus on rigorous academics and building relationships with students and parents.

"You basically have to work as a team," he says. "The students, the parents, the community plus you equals the best."

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
FOR STUDENTS AND
EDUCATORS



Meredith Mehra, GED'07

As she studied for MCATs in her senior year of college, **Meredith Mehra, GED'07**, had "a quarter-life crisis." She realized she didn't want to go to medical school. After a volunteer stint opened her to the joys of teaching, she entered Penn GSE via the School's partnership with

Teach for America, working as a math teacher at Philadelphia's Thomas FitzSimons High School.

Mehra, now deputy chief of teaching and learning for The School District of Philadelphia, says she realized her career change depended upon options that many of her students did not have. "That was the big 'aha' for me," she says. "We should all be afforded options when we change our mind." To that end, Mehra made it her mission to create choice for students.

At FitzSimons, she developed a job-shadowing program for juniors, exposing them to professionals such as doctors, real estate agents, and water department workers.

"I had a responsibility to ensure that my students got to know a variety of professionals so they could make an informed decision as to what it is they wanted to do," she says.

After four years, Mehra reluctantly left the public school system for a KIPP charter school, a place with the resources to help her gain leadership skills. Over five years, she advanced to principal. She then returned in 2014 to The School District of Philadelphia as director of teacher coaches and rose to her current position. Today she oversees teacher professional development for the District—the kind she was unable to find in her early years as a teacher.

“Urban educators and leaders are constantly driving forward with a sense of urgency,” she says. “I want to give them an opportunity to process and reflect on what they are experiencing in their work, as I was able to do at Penn GSE.”

Team professional days and quarterly progress-monitoring meetings are opportunities for her staff to think about what works, analyze data, and adjust their approach. School-based teacher leaders get monthly professional development and coaching to refine their skills and build leadership qualities. New hire orientation was revamped from a day of mostly turning in paperwork to a five-day professional learning experience that addresses equity, classroom management, and instruction.

“We’ve changed the expectation around professional development,” she says. “We’ve shown it should model high-quality teaching practices that folks can take and apply in their classrooms.”

ESTABLISHING A NEW
MODEL FOR URBAN HIGHER
EDUCATION



Michael J. Sorrell, GRD'15

When Michael J. Sorrell, GRD'15, assumed the presidency of historically black Paul Quinn College in Dallas, Texas, in 2007, he faced a mismanaged school, plummeting enrollment, and the potential loss of accreditation. Sorrell applied his varied professional

background—lawyer, Clinton White House advisor on race, communications and crisis-management strategist—to transform the private, faith-based liberal arts school. Today, it is providing new solutions to college affordability as the nation's first urban work college.

“I had a background that allowed me to see opportunity where others might only see problems,” he says.

“Urban educators and leaders are constantly driving forward with a sense of urgency. I want to give them an opportunity to process and reflect on what they are experiencing in their work, as I was able to do at Penn GSE.”

Early on, Sorrell addressed the food desert surrounding the campus and larger community by ending the football program and turning the playing field into an organic farm that students maintain. Since then, he has transformed the college into a more vibrant campus that has nearly tripled its enrollment to 550 black and Latino students with more than 80 percent on Federal Pell Grants for low-income students. His ambitious goal: eradicate intergenerational poverty.

“What Paul Quinn believes under my leadership is that higher education has a responsibility to turn itself outward and address the needs of the day in a very plainspoken and honest fashion,” he says. For Sorrell, that means tackling national problems such as college affordability.

Enter the urban work college model that distinguishes Paul Quinn. As one of eight work colleges in the United States, and the only one in an urban environment, Paul Quinn receives federal support and requires students to work either on- or off-campus all four years as a way to reduce the cost of their education while gaining résumé-worthy experience. The college also slashed its tuition to \$16,000, an amount that can be covered by Pell Grants and income from students' jobs. “Most students go to school for far less than they would anywhere else,” Sorrell says.

Sorrell enrolled in Penn GSE's Executive Doctorate in Higher Education Management program while president and used his dissertation to explore in depth how a work college model could be adapted for an urban environment. “The dissertation made me an expert,” he says. “Penn GSE is an amazing school of education. It gave me access to some of the very best minds in the field.”

Sorrell aims to spread his model on a national scale, even as he continues to seek new solutions to poverty.

“The mistake a lot of people make is that they believe that problems are solved,” he says. “No problem is ever solved. You've temporarily found a way to beat back an inevitable tide. Problems morph. They require you to morph and your solution to morph.” ■



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Education and COVID-19

Penn GSE Faculty Weigh In



Adjusting to Online Teaching

RYAN S. BAKER

Associate Professor
Director, Penn Center for Learning Analytics

Consider adaptive learning for your students.

Adaptive learning resources help educators create scenarios that can meet the needs of individual learners. Programs can use algorithms to help educators better understand what learners know, what they don't, and what they can work on.

To me—if a district and students have the resources to make it work—the best thing you could do in this situation is to switch to adaptive learning wherever you can. Kids can work on problems, teachers can monitor it, and teachers can have one-on-one meetings with kids. There are resources, like ASSISTments, that will allow teachers to create assignments with their curriculum. Google Classroom is another good tool. So is Khan Academy, though that can't be personalized as much.

Adaptive learning isn't going to be possible in every district. You can also send workbook packets home and have kids send in a picture of their completed assignment through email or text. Teachers can then follow up with phone calls. A lot of homes have smartphones, even if they don't have a computer or high-speed internet.

Don't expect the standard school day.

I don't think it makes sense to think about a school day under these circumstances. I would think in terms of assignments, project work, and meetings. For middle and high schoolers, who might have seven to nine teachers in a day, maybe every kid gets a meeting with every teacher for ten minutes every two or three days. The teacher just isn't going to be able to have time to meet individually or in small groups with every student every day.

And don't overlook games. The Field Day Lab out of the University of Wisconsin has a lot of fun, educational games that can occupy kids for a little while. My kids really enjoyed games from Florida State's Physics Playground.



Moving Secondary Teaching Online

BETTY CHANDY

Director for Online Learning,
Catalyst @ Penn GSE

Keep it simple.

In this time of crisis, your goal should be to find the simplest way to deliver lessons while giving your students the support they need. Even though online learning has an amazing potential to improve how kids learn and collaborate, now isn't the time to transform your practice. But keep notes on what you are learning. After this crisis passes, think about how you can incorporate technology tools in your classroom teaching.

Scale down lectures and provide more support.

You probably won't be able to meet with your entire class for your full period every day. Even if you can, you probably shouldn't. Aim for a 30–60 minute live session with all students present early in the week, and perhaps a shorter session at the end of the week. Students, even those who like to play it cool, will want that connection with a teacher. You'll provide an important touchstone to the “normal world.” Use the time you aren't lecturing to provide more personalized supports, especially for students who need it most.

- Establish virtual office hours and schedule check-in calls with individual students once or twice a week.
- Create live video meetings to help students who are struggling with similar skills. Try to keep these groups to under ten students.
- Make videos that specifically address some of your students' most frequently asked questions.

As the COVID-19 crisis brought dramatic changes to the education landscape this spring, Penn GSE faculty shared their perspectives on online teaching, as well as parenting, to help educators and families adapt to the new environment. Below are excerpts of their advice, drawn from the Penn GSE Newsroom and the newsletter *The Educator's Playbook*.



Moving College Courses Online

ZACHARY HERRMANN

Executive Director,
Center for Professional Learning

Make student thinking visible.

Create a “virtual whiteboard” that allows every student to respond to questions or prompts. If your discussion software allows you to create polls or surveys, use them often.

Encourage students to react and respond to each other's ideas. They don't all have to talk out loud to do this. Try chat functions or even a Google document with a table. Your students might already be well versed at chatting during a video call, so don't be afraid to ask them to engage in multiple ways.

Ensure that all students participate.

This might seem like the most daunting aspect of remote teaching. But virtual learning platforms actually give you more ways to encourage and monitor participation.

Have someone monitor questions coming in from the chat feature. As a class, determine how students should signal that they would like to speak. Consider asking students to type HAND in the chat box, give a visual cue in the video frame, or add their name to a speaking queue.

And monitor your students' internet connections. Poor connections can keep people from participating as much as good connections can allow others to dominate. Be clear with students about what they should do if they get disconnected.

In addition to polls and chats, start conversations in the session that can be continued later on in discussion boards.



Talking to Your Kids About the Coronavirus

CAROLINE L. WATTS

Director of School and Community Engagement
Licensed Psychologist

Be direct and reassuring.

Start by saying that you have done your homework on the virus and are going to do everything to keep your child safe. Offer correct, but limited, information, and say that you will keep them updated as you learn more.

Then connect the virus with events and experiences that kids can relate to. While the coronavirus is not the flu, the similarities make it a good point of reference. Parents can talk about when they had the flu, or remind their child of a time when the child had the flu. And as with the flu, the vast majority of coronavirus cases are moderate to mild, especially for young people. You could say something like, “If you do get sick, you might feel crummy for a while, but you will get better.”

It's also a good idea to turn off the TV or radio when the news comes on. Kids, especially anxious kids, don't need constant updates on infection counts or death tolls.

Model good behavior, and find some fun.

If you want your kids to wash their hands with soap and water for the CDC's recommended twenty seconds, they need to see you doing it. And not just during a demonstration, but every day. Same goes for coughing into your elbow.

But life can't be all lectures. When you're at the store, ask your kid what type of soap they like. The pink one that smells like cotton candy? Great. When you get home, have your child put it by the sink so that it's ready for use.

Want to read more?

Browse the Penn GSE Newsroom: www.gse.upenn.edu/news

Read *The Educator's Playbook* and subscribe: www.gse.upenn.edu/news/educators-playbook

Successful Learning



← Dr. Zachary Herrmann is producing learning opportunities for a variety of professionals through Penn GSE's new Center for Professional Learning.

Photo by Ryan Collard

→ Penn GSE students design human habitats for Mars, exploring techniques of project-based learning in a workshop offered by the Center. Photo by Ginger Fox Photography

The Center for PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Penn GSE Brings Knowledge to a Wide Audience

by Juliana Rosati

“The Center will focus on leveraging the incredible expertise in our school to develop and support professional learning opportunities for a wide audience of scholars and practitioners,” says Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman. “It is a result of recommendations by faculty and staff regarding how best to grow the School’s impact and share more broadly relevant research and knowledge.”



2020 Virtual Summer Institutes

June

Collaboration and Conflict: Leading Highly Effective Teams with Dr. Zachary Herrmann

July

New School Models Design Lab with Dr. Tyler Thigpen

August

Teaching Document-Based History with Dr. Abby Reisman

Teaching Math Responsively: Number Talks and Math

Routines with Dr. Caroline Ebby and Dr. Janine Remillard

Visit www.gse.upenn.edu/academics/professional-learning or contact professionallearning@gse.upenn.edu to learn more.

One Friday this February in Penn’s Houston Hall, five teams of Penn GSE students discussed roles, responsibilities, and geometric forms as they prepared for life 34 million miles away on Mars. But the program they were launching wasn’t a space travel initiative—it was a series of professional development workshops for Penn GSE students, produced by the School’s new Center for Professional Learning. The first workshop gave students the opportunity to learn about the teaching approach of project-based learning. By working together to design human habitats for Mars, participants prepared to guide their own students through similar projects that draw upon real-world problems to impart skills in teamwork, collaboration, design, mathematics, and other areas.

The Center is poised to bring the School’s groundbreaking research and practice to the world on a larger scale. Its dynamic new offerings will allow working professionals—alumni, educators, leaders, scholars, policy makers, entrepreneurs, and others—to deepen their knowledge, build their professional networks, and grow their careers. The Center’s upcoming series of Virtual Summer Institutes (*see above*) and a slate of online courses to be released later this year are all geared to the needs of nondegree students, or “learners.”

Penn GSE has long offered professional development for educators and leaders who want to expand their skill sets and apply best practices in their schools, institutions, and organizations but may not have the time or resources to enroll in a degree program. For decades, the Center for School Study Councils, the Philadelphia Writing Project, and the Penn Literacy Network have provided learning opportunities for working educators. In recent years, the School has established nondegree programs to address emerging needs in the field of education—education innovation, virtual online teaching, applied computational thinking, and project-based learning. Now, the Center is undertaking a bold expansion of this work.

“One of our goals is to make learning opportunities through Penn more accessible,” says Dr. Zachary Herrmann, inaugural executive director of the Center and director of the Project-Based Learning Certificate Program. “One way to do that is to create programs that aren’t degree programs, but still allow you to engage with Penn faculty and the Penn community in a learning experience. While Penn GSE has offered some professional learning opportunities like

these, there’s tremendous potential to do far more, reaching a much broader audience of learners both here in Philadelphia and across the globe.”

Newly established within Catalyst @ Penn GSE, the School’s hub for innovation, the Center launched a series of one-day “deep dive” workshops this spring for Penn GSE students, beginning with the workshop on project-based learning. It asked participants to tackle a challenge currently being undertaken by scientists, engineers, designers, and others—how to sustain human life on the Red Planet. Having taken on roles such as quality-control specialist, project manager, and documentation specialist, team members designed three-dimensional habitat shapes and then constructed and inflated them using colorful plastic. Inflatables are currently an option on the table as scientists consider how to sustain human life on Mars with lightweight, transportable materials.

The workshop’s content was drawn from the curriculum of the School’s Project-Based Learning Certificate Program. Similarly, the Center is drawing on the knowledge of Penn GSE faculty—whose expertise spans preK–12 education, higher education, and learning in the workplace—to create new learning opportunities for an array of working professionals. For Penn GSE alumni, that will mean increased possibilities for lifelong learning through their alma mater.

“We’re creating more ways for educators to stay current with best practices and cutting-edge research, to continue to interact with the Penn community, and to gain the education they need to advance in their careers,” says Herrmann.

No matter the topic, the institutes and classes will build community among professionals as they learn how ideas can be applied on the ground for schools, colleges, businesses, nonprofits, and other settings.

“Our mission has three components,” says Herrmann. “The first is to deepen knowledge—people are coming to us to learn from the Penn community. The second is to build networks—participants will interact with other practitioners from across the country and around the world to build relationships that last well beyond their time in the program. And the third is to grow careers, so that participants will gain the skills and knowledge to take the next step in their professional trajectories.” ■

WORK IN PROGRESS

Graduate Assistantships Empower Students to Lead While Learning

by Karen Brooks

Editor’s note: Following Penn’s transition to virtual classes in March due to the COVID-19 crisis, both students featured here left campus and continued their studies and graduate assistantships virtually.

A young man beginning a new life in the United States as a freshman at Penn felt overwhelmed and out of place. The international, first-generation college student wasn’t sure where to turn for help navigating an unfamiliar environment. Then, he found Rachel O’Connell and her colleagues at PENNCAP (University of Pennsylvania College Achievement Program), which provides academic and personal support programs and services for a diverse group of undergraduates, most of whom identify as first generation, low income, or both.

“Our staff is small, and we take a genuine interest in what students say and develop a deep sense of community,” says O’Connell, a higher education master’s student who began working with PENNCAP through Penn GSE’s Graduate Assistantship program. “For this student, the PENNCAP community made the difference in deciding to continue at Penn.”

For O’Connell and fellow Penn GSE master’s students, the practical experience afforded by the Graduate Assistantship (GA) program complements their coursework and represents an important part of their career preparation. Each year students take on an array of paid, part-time GA positions at GSE, Penn, and other institutions and organizations in the Philadelphia area. Previously such positions were available only to students in the higher education master’s program, but now all M.S.Ed. students at Penn GSE may apply for them.

“These positions might be a student’s first work experience in higher education and are often their first professional experience ever,” says Higher Education Division Program Manager Ross Aikins, who oversees the GA program. “They allow students to build their résumés at the same time that they’re gaining a valuable understanding of university culture.”



← Working with PENNCAP through Penn GSE’s Graduate Assistantship program, higher education master’s student Rachel O’Connell supports a diverse group of undergraduate students, many of whom are first generation, low income, or both. Photos by Ginger Fox Photography

A Place to Call Home

O’Connell is well equipped to support first-generation and international students because she can relate to them. A first-generation student herself, she moved to New York from Pakistan at the age of seventeen and can imagine how she might have benefited from programming like PENNCAP’s while she pursued her bachelor’s degree. “We want to make sure under-represented students have all their needs met and feel PENNCAP is a place they can call home,” she says. “The students we work with are fearless in taking up space and asking questions. In my own experience being first generation, I was afraid to do that.”

As coordinator of PENNCAP’s Graduate School Mentoring Initiative, O’Connell assists undergraduate students aiming to apply to graduate school. Playing “academic matchmaker,” she pairs each undergraduate with a graduate student in their desired field who serves as a mentor throughout the year. She also hosts workshops on subjects ranging from financial aid to personal statements. Her assistantship also helps her develop her interest in international programming, since she is involved in the selection and budgeting processes for PENNCAP’s International Initiative, which funds research, internships, and service opportunities abroad.

“This position has given me space to grow, because I essentially run two programs, while checking in with colleagues when I need to,” says O’Connell. “It’s been an incredible opportunity to expand my skill set.” She also gained practical experience with staffing transitions when her original supervisor moved on from PENNCAP and a new supervisor was brought on board.

“Whenever you have any kind of reorganization in any department, you need capable staff to step up, which Rachel did immediately,” says Dr. Aikins. “PENNCAP is an important organization that serves an important population, and both PENNCAP and I were glad it was Rachel in that position.”

After she graduates this spring, O’Connell intends to pursue a doctoral degree, although she is still narrowing down her career options—some of which she began exploring only recently. She has long felt compelled to work on issues of diversity and inclusion, but both her role at PENNCAP and her coursework have introduced her to the possibilities of a job in policy, research, or data analysis. Assistant Professor Amalia Dache’s Diversity in Higher Education class was particularly influential.

“As an undergraduate literature major, I loved talking about theory and identity politics, and I thought I would have to give that up in my master’s program,” she says. “But Professor Dache used both theory and data to talk about college access, which showed me that I can marry my conceptual, theoretical interests with a different professional route.”

← Higher education master’s student Gabriel Gutiérrez-Aragón aims to have an impact on educational inequality through his graduate assistantship with Research for Action, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit research organization.



Through an Equity Lens

The youngest of four siblings whose parents emigrated from Mexico to Oregon, higher education M.S.Ed. student Gabriel Gutiérrez-Aragón also keeps diversity and equity at top of mind.

“I chose this field because education represented social mobility for me and my family,” says Gutiérrez-Aragón. “My mom and dad started working at a young age and were not able to study beyond fourth or fifth grade, and I am the only one of my siblings who completed a bachelor’s degree. To be in a master’s program now—that’s a big leap.”

Gutiérrez-Aragón attended a private urban high school that is part of the Cristo Rey network created for teenagers from low-income families. There, students attended class four days a week and worked on the fifth to offset tuition costs. Recognizing that not all young people have access to similar resources, Gutiérrez-Aragón aims to have an impact on educational inequality. This focus made him an ideal fit for his graduate assistantship with Research for Action (RFA), a Philadelphia-based nonprofit research organization working to improve educational opportunities for underserved populations.

“I came to Penn thinking I wanted to be a professor, because I only ever envisioned doing research inside of a university. Then I got paired with this GA position and started to consider what it looks like to do research outside of academia in order to impact the issues I care about,” he says.

RFA partners with various organizations and government agencies to study educational programs, services, and policies and their effects on students. For example, Gutiérrez-Aragón has examined how “wraparound services”—nonacademic support services delivered in schools to students and families—affect college enrollment



↑ The Graduate Assistantship program, available to all M.S.Ed. students at Penn GSE, provides valuable experience that complements students’ coursework and prepares them for future careers.

and graduation rates. He has also explored features and outcomes of different state college promise programs, which guarantee college funding for students meeting certain criteria.

“We have an equity lens and support underserved students by providing a complete picture of what’s happening with these programs and how they are impacting target populations,” says Gutiérrez-Aragón, who will graduate in December and subsequently plans to pursue a Ph.D. in education policy.

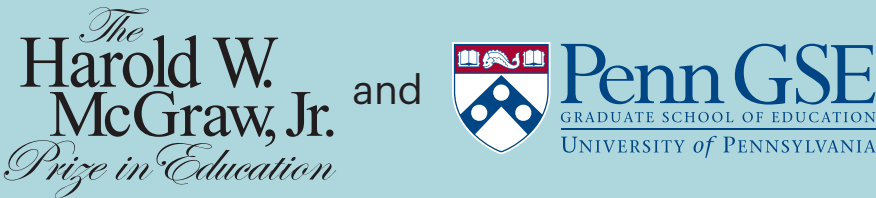
Says Aikins, “Since I first talked to Gabriel back when he was a prospective student, he made it clear that he had research ambitions and wanted to go into a doctoral program. Having a research-focused position at RFA is perfect for him because he has the opportunity to work with real data, which will position him well.”

This summer, Gutiérrez-Aragón hopes to obtain an educational research internship. He credits his RFA supervisors—Daniel Kent,

GED’16, and Shanell Hagood, GED’18, both Penn GSE higher education M.S.Ed. program graduates—with supporting his search for positions. And although he has opened his eyes to potential new career paths, he hasn’t ruled out the possibility of becoming a professor. Seeing diversity among Penn GSE’s faculty members inspires him; he cites Associate Professor Manuel González Canché as a strong role model.

“He has been so instrumental in shaping my experience, giving me opportunities to work with him on his research and to jump on research projects with Ph.D. students. I’m learning a lot of quantitative research skills, which I had none of before coming to Penn. I never imagined I would be doing any sort of coding or statistics—but I figure if I’ve made it this far, I should really challenge myself,” he says. ■

Photo by Ryan Colliard



A Dynamic Partnership to Advance Excellence in Education

The Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Family Foundation and Penn GSE have established a new three-year, \$3 million partnership to enhance and expand the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education, one of the most prestigious honors in the field. At a February 13 event on campus at Perry World House, the McGraw family and Penn President Amy Gutmann, Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman, and Catalyst @ Penn GSE’s Michael Golden announced Penn GSE as the new home of the prize.

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 huge impact. Following a public nomination process, winners are selected by an independent panel of judges who are leaders in the field.

At the event, Dean Grossman facilitated a panel discussion, “Sustaining Innovation in Education,” with four McGraw Prize winners—Sarita Brown, president of Excelencia in Education; Alberto Carvalho, the Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools; Christine Cunningham, professor of practice in education and engineering at Penn State; and Chris Lehmann, C’93, founder and CEO of Philadelphia’s Science Leadership Academy schools.

“Innovation has been central to the University of Pennsylvania’s mission since its founding more than two centuries ago and is today one of the primary tenets of the Penn Compact 2020,” says President Gutmann. “Our new partnership with the McGraw Prize, which honors the remarkable work of some of the most innovative minds in education, is a natural fit for Penn GSE, which is committed to both practical knowledge building and high-quality research to advance education. Together we will create programming that will share the innovative work of McGraw Prize winners for the benefit of educators around the globe. We are honored to be partnering with the McGraw Family Foundation to advance knowledge for good.”

Three McGraw Prizes—recognizing achievement in preK–12 education, higher education, and learning science research—are scheduled to be awarded October 21 in New York. Each winner will receive a \$50,000 gift. Nominations were accepted through April 15.

“For thirty years, the McGraw Prize has celebrated outstanding individuals who brought meaningful and lasting change to education. Our new partnership with Penn GSE, one of the leading educational institutions in the world, will expand the programming and impact of the Prize to a broader audience and shine a spotlight on educational leaders and innovators,” says Harold McGraw III, former chairman, president, and CEO of the McGraw-Hill Companies. “This is a major step forward in the evolution of the Prize and a fitting way to honor the legacy of my father, who dedicated his life to education and literacy.”

As part of the new partnership, Catalyst is creating a yearlong programming series, which kicked off with a February 20 webinar featuring Cunningham, to share ideas and insights from McGraw Prize winners with educators around the globe.

Learn more about the
McGraw Prize in Education:
www.mcgrawprize.com

Find upcoming McGraw Prize programming:
www.mcgrawprize.com/events

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.

1970s

Peggy Baker, CW’71, GED’75, is busy spending time with family, including her grandchildren, and traveling.

Barbara P. Barnett, GED’71, recently screened two of her French-language documentaries about France under the German occupation: *Lucie Aubrac Lumière Rayonnante de la Résistance* and *Lustiger, Le Cardinal Juif*. Attendees were retired French teachers and members of the American Association of Teachers of French.

Alice Korngold, CW’74, GED’77, is an author, professor, entrepreneur, and consultant. Her firm, Korngold Consulting LLC, assists multinational corporations in building nonprofit board training and advancing sustainability, diversity, and inclusion.

Susan Marcus, CW’71, GED’73, recently retired and moved to Israel, where she is a part-time English teacher at a diverse public school in Tel Aviv. She has spoken twice to Birthright Israel groups from Penn.

Irving Pressley McPhail, GRD’76, co-authored *Success Factors for Minorities in Engineering* (Routledge, 2019). Based on a study funded by the National Science Foundation, the book isolates success factors for underrepresented minorities in undergraduate engineering programs.

1980s

David Basile, GED’85, principal of Pine Ridge Middle School in Pine Ridge, SC, was named 2020 Principal of the Year by the South Carolina Council for Exceptional Children.

Pratiti Basu-Sarkar, GED’88, works in Kolkata, India, at an art gallery and the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP). At IICP, she helps young adults with disabilities develop animation techniques, fostering storytelling and potential career opportunities for these students.

Marylyn Calabrese, G’63, GR’87, a writing specialist, serves as a sounding board to a variety of learners as they prepare essays and personal statements for applications to college, graduate school, and other endeavors.

Margaret Mulqueen, GED’78, GR’84, runs a private psychotherapy practice and has recently published essays in NBC News *THINK*, *Psychotherapy Networker*, and *psychotherapy.net*.

Mona Weissmark, GR’86, was featured on NPR’s *Science Distilled* podcast to discuss the importance of examining diversity through a scientific lens, the topic of her upcoming book, *The Science of Diversity* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

Shelley B. Wepner, GED’73, GRD’80, cowrote *Entrepreneurial Leadership: Strategies for Creating and Sustaining Partnerships for K–12 Schools* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020) with Diane W. Gómez.

1990s

Paul T. Bole, GED’95, was advanced to chair of the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education at the University of New Orleans, effective July 1, 2019.

Barbara Caruso, GR’93, created an educational seminar, “Understanding the Impact of Suicide: A Survivor’s Story,” for businesses and educational groups. It explores multiple facets of suicide from the mind of a person who faced a near-death experience.

Kimberly Y. Erwin, GED’99, an entrepreneur, journalist, and educator, has written a children’s book, *There’s Only One RACE—the HUMAN One, Says Me!* (InterCultural Books, February 2020). She runs a media company in Hudson, NY, that seeks to help diverse voices.

Linda McKenna Gulyn, GED’86, GR’91, cowrote “Exploring Perceptions of Blame for Autism Spectrum Disorder” (*Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 2018, Volume 30, Issue 2). She completed her twenty-fifth year as a professor of psychology at Marymount University.

Kathleen Marie Pierce, GR’94, was awarded the 2019-2020 Distinguished Teaching Award from Rider University in Lawrenceville, NJ, where she is a faculty member.

Scott Riotto, C’90, GED’91, is completing his twenty-ninth year as a classroom history teacher. He teaches at a public high school in Morris County, NJ, and has been an adjunct professor at a college in the county for eighteen years.

Daniel Simpson, G’96, GED’97, is a lyricist, author, and recipient of a Fellowship in Literature from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. He coedited *More Challenges for the Delusional: Peter Murphy’s Prompts and the Writing They Inspired* (Diode Editions, 2018) with his wife, Ona Gritz.

Diane Wynne, GED’95, was promoted to clinical counselor at New Hope Treatment Center in Rock Hill, SC, a psychiatric residential treatment facility where she works with teenage boys.

2000s

Sara Allender, GED’04, was named senior technical assistance advisor for the U.S. Department of Education’s National Charter School Resource Center. She collaborates to provide technical assistance to federal charter school program grantees and other entities.

Melissa Brogdon, GED’09, has launched a consultancy, Campbell Impact, focused on fundraising solutions for mission-driven organizations, and authored an article about ethics in fundraising in the October 2019 Issue of *AFP Global*.

Deangela Burns-Wallace, GRD’09, was sworn in as Secretary of Administration for the State of Kansas and is the first African American to serve in this role. She was also appointed chief information technology officer for the Kansas Executive Branch.

Ashaki O. Charles, GED’09, is associate vice president of development at Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences, where she leads the major and leadership gifts team for the professional schools.

Debbi Clarke, GRD’00, coauthored *The Insider’s Guide to Working with Universities: Practical Insights for Board Members, Businesspeople, Entrepreneurs, Philanthropists, Alumni, Parents, and Administrators* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019).



Photos by Krista Patton Photography

Theodore Cross, GED’09, WEV’09, has joined Western Governors University as associate dean of graduate programs in the College of Business, where he oversees four degree programs and more than eleven thousand students. He aims to help scale affordable higher education via online modalities.

Malik Edwards, GR’06, was promoted to professor and appointed associate dean of academic affairs at North Carolina Central University School of Law.

Jennifer Glynn, GED’97, GR’03, has been director of research at the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation for ten years. Her recent research shows that students transferring to four-year institutions from community colleges are more likely to graduate than those entering from high school.

Michael Hooper, GED’09, and **C. Eric Bondy, GED’18**, have established Connect Counseling, a mental health counseling firm in Lancaster, PA. They strive to provide applied developmental and eco-systemic strategies that reflect their studies at Penn GSE.

Francis M. Hult, GR’07, has been appointed professor in the Department of Education at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. There he directs the Teaching English to Speakers

of Other Languages graduate program, now celebrating its 40th anniversary.

Siobhan McVay, GED’03, a science teacher at Delran High School in Delran, NJ, was named New Jersey’s 2017 science teacher recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Gregory Mena, GED’00, was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor at East Los Angeles College in Monterey Park, CA.

R. Perry Monastero, GED’97, GRD’05, started RPM Consulting Group to help a variety of organizations realize goals for capacity building and philanthropic ventures. He reports that he has been well served by the intellectual discipline, research and analysis skills, and history of education he learned at Penn GSE.

Bradley W. Moore, C0’1, GR’04, GED’05, was elected in November to a four-year term as a school director in the Radnor Township School District of Pennsylvania. An attorney for most of his career, he previously taught in Philadelphia through Teach for America.



Sharon Ravitch, GR'00, was named a Fulbright Specialist to work with Dr. BMN College of Home Science in Mumbai, India, on pluralism, equity, identity, and agency development with first-generation minoritized women.

Oswald Richards, GR'01, was promoted to professor and associate dean of faculty at Lincoln University of Pennsylvania.

Monica Rowley, GED'06, teaches English and AP Research at Brooklyn Technical High School in New York City and has consulted for the College Board. A member of the Bread Loaf Teacher Network and Saint Joseph's College Teacher Education Advisory Board, she is at work on a novel.

Karen Sibley, GRD'03, vice president for strategic initiatives at Brown University, is working with colleagues in government, industry, and higher education to engage in the innovation economy and support economic development for Providence and the State of Rhode Island.

Devon Skerritt, GED'05, is deputy director of design research at Southern New Hampshire University's Innovation Center. Previously he completed his Ed.D. and jumped into design thinking and innovation at Southern Methodist University.

Tian Song, GED'09, was selected as a member leader for the Education Abroad Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee at NAFSA: Association of International Educators, effective January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2021.

MaryBeth Curtiss Spencer, GED'06, teaches middle school and is the K-12 social-emotional learning specialist at Woodlynde School, an independent school near Philadelphia for students with learning disabilities. She works with the Penn Literacy Network to train teachers in learning disability literacy.

Alison Teaford, GED'03, has taught in Philadelphia for seventeen years while raising her son as a single mother. Her son plans to enter college in the fall to study fashion design after graduating from Harriton High School.

Jordan Tegtmeyer, GED'08, was promoted to director of operations for the Center of Career Development at Princeton University.

Karen Weaver, GRD'09, covers the intersection of college sports and higher education as a contributor to Forbes.com. She recently launched the podcast *Trustees and Presidents: Managing Intercollegiate Athletics*.

2010s

Laura Bradley, GED'18, is a research specialist in the Waisman Center Motor and Brain Development Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She coordinates a study investigating autism in young children and its impact on their daily living skills.

Thomas Bullock, GRD'10, recently married his longtime partner, Edwin Flores, and was named dean of adult education for Savannah Technical College. The college's adult education program is the third largest in the state of Georgia.

Carolyn Chernoff, GED'03, GR'13, coedited *Contested Spaces of Teaching and Learning: Practitioner Ethnographies of Adult Education in the United States* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2019), with Janise Hurtig.

Yeonhee Cho, GED'19, is pursuing his Ph.D. in information science technology at the University of Washington. He appreciates his Penn GSE education, particularly the opportunity to pursue an internship related to immersive technology.

Kendrick Davis, GEN'14, ML'17, GR'18, is vice president of policy research with The Campaign for College Opportunity in Los Angeles, CA. He was previously an education policy advisor for U.S. Senator Kamala Harris as an American Association for the Advancement of Science Congressional Science & Engineering Fellow for 2018-2019.

Alexander De Arana, GED'17, worked with the Teachers Institute of Philadelphia and the Yale National Initiative to create and publish high school social studies units, which he presented at the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies and the Celebration of Writing and Literacy at Penn GSE.

Ian Deas, GED'17, was promoted to assistant dean and director of student leadership and engagement at Princeton University.

Stephanie Fazio, GED'11, a fantasy author published by Syafant Press, is launching two new fantasy series this year: *The Fount* and *Opal Contagion*.

Sarah Fears, GED'18, began a position as assistant director of student philanthropy at Penn. She manages the Seniors for The Penn Fund campaign and committee, partners with Penn Traditions and other campus allies, and strives to inform the undergraduate student body about giving back.

Forough Ghahramani, GRD'16, co-authored a chapter of *Gender, Science, and Innovation* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020) that explores challenges facing women scientists in academia and develops effective strategies to improve gender equality.

Esther Glasgow, GED'18, works at READ 718, a literacy nonprofit in Brooklyn, NY, that provides volunteer tutors to low-income students reading below grade level. She is grateful to Penn GSE for preparing her to navigate community engagement and parent advocacy.

Margaret Hadinger, GRD'14, was appointed designated institutional official and director of graduate medical education and student programs for Lehigh Valley Health Network in Allentown, PA. She oversees the health network's medical/dental residency and fellowship programs.

Hollie Hartford-Karaban, GED'95, GED'15, founded Academy for Innovation in Education (AIE), a venture she developed in Penn GSE's Education Entrepreneurship program. AIE plans to launch programs in entrepreneurship, STEAM, and other subjects in New Jersey this summer.

Randy Hayward, GRD'11, is director and curator of the Traveling Black History Museum, which he founded in 2019. The museum educates students of all ages about Black history from the antebellum period to today.

Paul Hermans, GED'15, became director of the STEAM department for preK-12 at the Shipley School in Bryn Mawr, PA. He enjoys combining his background as an engineer with his work as an educator.

Kalyn Higgins, GED'14, is acting chair of the Reading and Writing Department at an independent school in Manhattan, NY. She supports students in grades six through ten as a one-on-one learning specialist and teaches sixth grade reading fundamentals.

Erica Hildebrand, GED'13, was selected by the U.S. Department of State for a ten-month fellowship project to train teachers and teach English in Colombo, Sri Lanka. She is one of only two hundred U.S. citizens selected for the 2019-2020 English Language Fellow Program.

Sean Homsher, GED'10, opened Blue Bell Mental Health, a private practice in Blue Bell, PA, that offers counseling in a variety of areas, including anxiety, depression, autism spectrum disorder, grief and loss, end of life, sports and artistic performance, and LGBTQIA, and practices jointly with Blue Bell Equine Assisted Therapy.

Abraham Kou, GED'15, GED'16, is providing counseling for substance abuse and trauma as lead clinician at Thrive-works. He also offers affordable supervision for aspiring professional counselors seeking licensure.

Mark Bai Li, GED'14, is pursuing his Ph.D. in the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. His research examines the learning of Manchu, a critically endangered language in China.

Xiaorui Li, GED'13, is a Ph.D. candidate in second language studies at Purdue University. She plans to graduate in May 2020.

William Liu, GED'11, is science department chair at Memorial High School in San Antonio, TX. He is proud of his students' success and to have carried his team into the decade with new technology and strategies for learning.

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



Weiran Ma, GED'13, is a user experience designer and researcher at Green-Path Financial Wellness. He lives with his wife, **Xiaorui Li, GED'13**, one-year old daughter Charlotte, and Ollie the border collie in West Lafayette, IN.

Anita Mastroieni, GGS'99, GRD'10, has been appointed associate vice provost for graduate education at Penn.

Julia McWilliams, GED'11, GR'17, is author of *Compete or Close: Traditional Neighborhood Schools Under Pressure* (Harvard Education Press, 2019).

Carolanne Mitchell, GED'11, is intake and assessment coordinator at Center for Literacy, where she has taken a lead role in helping adult learners enroll in ESL, adult basic education, and other classes. She bought a house in West Philadelphia with her husband.

NaTosha H. Murry, GED’15, began a position as senior program manager for the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity in Detroit, MI. She manages online programs and operations for faculty programs.

Deborah Olusa, GRD’14, was recognized at the United Nations as a Top 100 Human Rights Defender by The International Human Rights Commission for her Sub-Sahara Africa: Breast Cancer model. The model leverages big data while building emerging economies.

Jasmine Phillips, GED’17, was selected by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the U.S. Department of State to participate in a program in Belize to educate students about multiculturalism, civic activism, social justice, and volunteerism.

Amber Ravenscroft, GED’19, is manager of innovation at The EdVenture Group Inc. In this role, she is author and manager of entrepreneurship programs that received two federal awards from the Appalachian Regional Commission and will reach an anticipated 20,000 rural students in eight states.

Callista Regis, GED’17, is currently a Ph.D. student at Cambridge University. Her research is based on meaning-making using a range of multi-modal texts.

Ian Riccaboni, GED’10, is in his fourth year as host of the internationally syndicated Ring of Honor Wrestling, a role that has brought him to a sold-out Madison Square Garden and on tours of Europe. He is also an adjunct professor at Holy Family University.

Lior Schenk, GED’18, a teacher at Pittsburgh Environmental Charter School, was selected for Project Drawdown at Pittsburgh’s Green Building Alliance. He collaborates to shift youth mindset on climate solutions from that of defeatism to one of empowerment and action.

Namreen Syed, GED’19, appeared alongside UNESCO’s assistant director-general for education on high-level panels in Paris, France, for World



Teachers’ Day and the launch of the Global Framework for Professional Teaching Standards. She was mentioned in the acknowledgments of UNESCO’s book *Humanistic Futures of Learning: Perspectives from UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks* (2020).

Navin Valrani, W’93, GED’18, is CEO of Arcadia Education, which launched the Arcadia Global School in February as the third school under the Arcadia umbrella in Dubai, United Emirates. Expected to open in August 2021, the school will be centered around the classrooms of the future and cater to over 4,200 students at an affordable price.

Matt vandenBerg, GRD’19, vice president for advancement and external relations at Alma College, received the 2019 John Grenzebach Award for Outstanding Research in Philanthropy for Educational Advancement from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education in recognition of his doctoral dissertation.

Huabing Wang, GED’14, a counselor at Ivy Labs Education, writes, “The beauty of being an educator is having the privilege to closely observe and perceive the subtleties in humanity, and earning the chance to better them, bit by bit.”

Xiaonan Wei, GED’19, is an analyst at a pharmaceutical consulting company and also works with international students to help them achieve academic and career goals. She appreciates how her Penn GSE education enables her to embrace opportunities.

Yohana Wijaya, GED’19, is developing a literacy initiative for grades one through five at the Calvin Christian School in Jakarta, Indonesia, as well as a curriculum for potential kindergarten classes. She considers her studies at Penn GSE a blessing.

Xinye Zhang, GED’15, is studying sociolinguistics, heritage language, language variation, and language acquisition as a Ph.D. student in the Linguistics Department at the University of California, Davis. She is grateful for her Penn GSE education.

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

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TIPS FROM THE EDUCATOR’S PLAYBOOK

Calculating the Costs of College



Laura W. Perna
GSE Centennial
Presidential
Professor of
Education

When it comes time to consider which colleges they should apply to, many students and their families will turn to the Net Price Calculator (NPC), a tool that should be available on the website of every college that accepts any kind of federal aid. Intended to help students understand the real cost of attending college, NPCs ask students to enter information about themselves and are supposed to produce personalized cost estimates. Colleges are required to go beyond tuition to include other expenses like books and the cost of living. But can you trust NPCs? Dr. Laura W. Perna, GSE Centennial Presidential Professor of Education, recently examined the accuracy of these tools and found that many are confusing or, worse, misleading. Here are five questions she suggests families focus on when navigating an NPC:

What does “net price” mean?

Net price is the total cost of attending an institution, minus any grants or scholarships a student receives. An NPC should provide complete, up-to-date, and usable information on the total estimated cost of attendance for a particular student at a particular institution.

What specific costs are included in the net price?

The listed cost of attendance should include tuition and fees, room and board, books, supplies, transportation, and other personal expenses. Colleges and universities are supposed to estimate these costs as part of the process of determining financial aid awards. Be aware that some schools’ NPCs present these costs in ways that can be misleading. A good NPC will include all costs, without asking students to estimate their own expenditures. How would a high school senior realistically guess how much they might spend on books, for example? It is also important to check the year used for the NPC estimates. Estimates that are not for the current year will likely underestimate the actual costs of attendance.



(continued on next page) →



Photo by Greg Benson Photography

Want more advice for educators?

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

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



University of
Pennsylvania
Graduate School
of Education

What is the difference between grants and loans?

Some NPCs do not distinguish between grants and loans. It's important to recognize the difference. Loans need to be paid back, while grant aid does not. Loans require repayment to the government or a private lender and are available for both students and parents. Loans may accrue interest over the course of a student's enrollment and, importantly, they are an optional source of financial assistance. Grants can come from an institution or the state or federal government. They do not need to be repaid, but they may have some eligibility or maintenance requirements, like a minimum GPA.

Does the cost estimate reflect my circumstances?

NPC outputs should reflect a student's individual circumstances and choices, including citizenship, enrollment status, intended major or degree, and room and board selections. If an NPC does not ask personalized questions, or if estimated cost outputs seem to rely on assumptions in any of those areas, it will likely have lower accuracy and offer less decision-making value to students and families. Be wary.

Who can I ask for help or clarification?

To make good college-related decisions, students and families need to have clear and accurate information about the costs of college. If a calculator or its outputs are hard to understand or appear to be misleading, contact the college's financial aid office and request more complete and useful information. ■

Penn GSE Facilitates a Conversation on Learning and Character at Homecoming



Penn GSE hosted a dialogue between two education experts for alumni and friends during Penn's Homecoming Weekend on November 9. Angela Duckworth, Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of Psychology at Penn Arts & Sciences and secondary faculty at Penn GSE, joined Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman, George and Diane Weiss Professor of Education, for a discussion entitled "A Conversation on Education." Dr. Duckworth is author of New York Times bestseller *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* and founder and CEO of the nonprofit Character Lab.

Held in Stiteler Hall, the event began with an introduction by Dr. Grossman, who noted the reach and remarkable impact of Penn GSE's growing alumni base and highlighted the School's planned building expansion, part of the *Extraordinary Impact Campaign*. Duckworth and Grossman, both of whom attended Ivy League schools and became teachers despite pressure to enter other fields, discussed topics including character development for young people and the benefits of project-based learning. Following the conversation, alumni and friends gathered for a reception.

Read more and watch the conversation in the Penn GSE Newsroom: www.gse.upenn.edu/news

Save the Date

Homecoming 2020 at Penn GSE
November 14, 2020

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Photo by Lisa Godfrey

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