

PENN GSE

Fall 2022



Fortifying
the Future
page 6

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION MAGAZINE | UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Helping Students See Themselves / page 12 One Approach Is Not Enough / page 18

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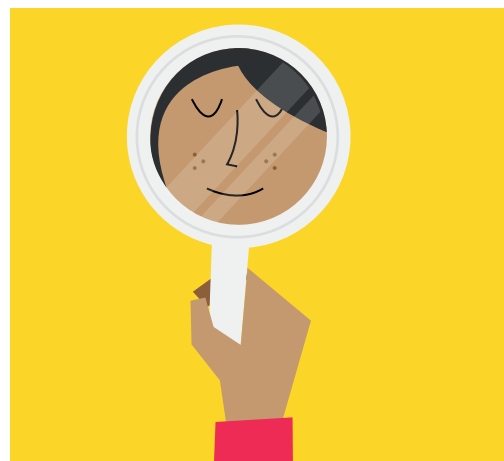
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[CONTENTS]

2 Letter from the Dean

[NEWS]

3 Faculty Bookshelf & Faculty Awards

4 News Briefs

[FEATURES]

6 **Fortifying the Future**

Amid a growing shortage, Penn GSE prepares and empowers future teachers to thrive—and persist—in the classroom.

12 **Helping Students See Themselves**

Penn GSE alumni bring diverse perspectives to their classrooms.

16 **Faces of Philanthropy**

Stories of support for Penn GSE.

18 **One Approach Is Not Enough**

Associate Professor Sharon Wolf explores educational outcomes in West Africa.

21 **A View from Campus**

Updates on a presidential visit, the new Penn GSE building expansion, and more.

22 **Creating Opportunities for Learners Worldwide**

The International Education Development Program preps students to tackle systemic issues around the globe.

[NOTEWORTHY]

26 Alumni Notes

[RECESS]

31 **Tips from the Educator's Playbook**

Keeping students present.

Cover Photo: Eric Suvar, University Communications

Editor's note: This issue of The Penn GSE Magazine went to print on December 16, 2022.

Letter from the Dean

Photo by Goldenberg Photography



Dear Alumni and Friends,

Anybody who knows me knows how deeply I care about teachers, which is why I'm thrilled that this issue's cover story (page 6) features Penn GSE's teacher education programs and the inspiring people who teach in and lead them. The story underscores the myriad rewards of the profession, while painting an honest picture of the challenges confronting teachers.

There's no question that the next generation of teachers will face stiff headwinds. The long-term effects of COVID-19 will hit education especially hard, with far too many students struggling academically and emotionally. In many states, teacher pay is not competitive with other professional salaries. And the teaching shortfall, which has been building for the past decade, is putting an extra burden on those who've chosen to remain in the classroom. Teaching and supporting students has always been complex work, and these issues are only going to make finding and preparing high-quality teachers more challenging.

Despite these obstacles, I remain optimistic about the future of teaching. I am heartened by the thoughtful and innovative work being done at Penn GSE every day to prepare and support teachers to help young people achieve their full potential. The wellspring of my optimism, though, is a core belief that I share with many readers of this magazine: *Few careers have the potential to be as intellectually challenging and emotionally rewarding—or to have as much impact on society—as teaching.*

For more teachers to reap these rewards, we as a society must rethink how we treat our children's educators. This reimagining must include thinking deeply about teachers' salaries, their working conditions, and how we view them as professionals. Just as importantly, we need to do a better job of educating policy makers and the general public on what teachers do, so they can fully appreciate the complexity of teaching.

In many sectors of our society, the pandemic encouraged us to rethink the nature of work. In healthcare, telemedicine gained traction, as we learned that providing virtual visits opened access for many patients. How can we use this current moment and the growing teaching shortages to think more expansively about the work of teachers? How do we portray teaching as the intellectually demanding and professionally rewarding work that it is? How do we reimagine how adults work with students in schools to provide more time for teachers to work together? How do we encourage the promising young people in our lives to look to teaching as a worthwhile career? And how do we ensure that those entering teaching are valued, able to earn competitive salaries, and work in professional and stimulating environments?

There's no easy answer here. But it's clear that reimagining teaching requires all of us—educators, parents, policy makers, and leaders from all sectors—to be bold in our thinking. At Penn GSE, we've been doing our part to bring more high-quality teachers into the profession by growing our teacher education programs, offering more scholarships, and investing in research on teacher learning. You'll read about some of these efforts, and the work of our dedicated students and alumni, in this issue. I hope their stories will inspire you to find your own way to support the teachers in your community. Because educators—and the students they serve—deserve better.

With deep appreciation for all educators,

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

FACULTY BOOKSHELF

• ***A Focus on Fractions: Bringing Mathematics Education Research to the Classroom, Third Edition***

by Marjorie M. Petit, Robert E. Laird,
Caroline B. Ebby, Edwin L. Marsden

Published July 2022
by Routledge

• ***Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools, Second Edition***

By Jonathan Zimmerman

Published August 2022
by University of Chicago Press

• ***English for Young Learners in Asia: Challenges and Directions for Teacher Education***

Edited by Subhan Zein,
Yuko Goto Butler

Published July 2022
by Routledge

• ***InnovateHERS: Why Purpose-Driven Entrepreneurial Women Rise to the Top***

by Barbara Kurshan and Kathy Hurley

Published April 2022
by InnovateHERS Press



★ FACULTY AWARDS & HONORS ★

Brooks Bowden (1) received the Early Career Award from the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE) for her research on strategies to overcome obstacles that prevent children from getting the most out of school. **Yuko Goto Butler (2)** is co-recipient of a Spencer Foundation Small Research Grant for a study of professional development for teachers who teach English to speakers of other languages at a community college in the United States. **Gerald Campano (3)** and a research team are part of a national conversation to develop principles for fostering interracial and cross-institutional scholarly work, Advancing Equity in Research-Practice Partnerships, supported by the William T. Grant and Spencer Foundations. **Pam Grossman (4)** received an honorary doctorate in education from the University of Oslo. As an international leader on teacher quality, her research has been critical to the University of Oslo's QUINT Centre, which stands for Quality in Nordic Teaching; she was awarded the doctorate in 2020, but the ceremonial conference was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Zachary Herrmann (5)** and a team received a Penn Environmental Innovations Initiative Research Community Grant to develop an internationally recognized hub for project-based environmental education work. In addition, Herrmann and the Penn GSE Center for Professional Learning provided a host site with a project-based learning design sprint for the NASA International Space Apps Challenge. **Sharon Wolf (6)** was named a fellow of LEAP (Leveraging Evidence for Action to Promote Change), an initiative by the Jacobs Foundation and MIT Solve to bring researchers to support organizations whose innovations bridge learning gaps for underserved children two to twelve years old. **Jenny Zapf (7)** was nominated for 2022–23 to head the Philadelphia Regional Education Entrepreneurship Consortium, which works to better connect college students with the region's entrepreneurial community and its resources. **Jonathan Zimmerman (8)** and cartoonist Signe Wilkinson received a gold prize in the Political & Current Events category of the 34th annual Independent Book Publishers Association Benjamin Franklin Award program for their book, *Free Speech and Why You Should Give a Damn*.





Penn GSE Welcomes Six New Faculty

This past summer, Penn GSE welcomed six new faculty members. “They have remarkably diverse disciplinary backgrounds and research interests, yet a throughline of their work is an equity-oriented commitment to expanding the reach of education,” says Dean Pam Grossman. “I am excited for the impact that their teaching and research will have on the field—and on society—in the coming years.”

Sade Bonilla (1), assistant professor in policy, organizations, leadership, and systems, focuses on K–12 education policy with a particular emphasis on high school-to-college transitions and career and technical education. Previously, she was an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst College of Education.

Bodong Chen (2), associate professor in teaching, learning, and leadership, is a learning scientist and educational technologist who strives to make learning a meaningful part of one’s social participation, with assistance from nascent technological advancements and justice-minded pedagogical innovations. Chen comes to Penn GSE from the University of Minnesota, where he was an associate professor in the College of Education and Human Development and codirector of the Learning Informatics Lab.

María Cioè-Peña (3), assistant professor in educational linguistics, centers her research on bilingual children with dis/abilities, their families, and their ability to access multilingual and inclusive learning spaces within public schools. Before coming to Penn GSE, she was an assistant professor in the College of Education and Human Services at Montclair State University.

Ericka Weathers (4), assistant professor in policy, organizations, leadership, and systems, studies the unintended consequences of K–12 education policies and how those policies may reduce or exacerbate racial and socioeconomic inequality in areas such as school segregation, finance, discipline, and academic achievement. She began her academic career at Pennsylvania State University, where she was an assistant professor in the Department of Education Policy Studies.

Damani White-Lewis (5), assistant professor in policy, organizations, leadership, and systems, develops evidence-based interventions that address racial inequity in the faculty workforce, including in faculty hiring, promotion and tenure, mentorship, and retention. Previously, he was a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Julie E. Wollman (6), professor of practice in policy, organizations, leadership, and systems, and president emerita of Widener University, is a nationally recognized innovator in higher education strategy development and leadership. In addition to serving as president of two universities in the past decade, Wollman brings to Penn GSE the knowledge gained from her experience as a provost and vice president for academic affairs, dean, doctoral program director, and tenured full professor in public and private higher education institutions.

Penn GSE and McGraw Family Foundation Award 2022 Prizes

The Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Family Foundation and Penn GSE announced the 2022 winners of the prestigious Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education and honored them in a live celebration on November 3 at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York City. The winners are innovative schools superintendent **Cheryl Logan, GRD’17 (2022 McGraw Prize in PreK–12 Education)**; access-focused university president **Barry Dunn (2022 McGraw Prize in Higher Education)**; and innovative researcher and program creator **Roy Pea (2022 McGraw Prize in Learning Science Research)**. Since 1988, the McGraw Prize has celebrated innovation in education by recognizing outstanding individuals who have dedicated themselves to improving education and whose accomplishments are making a significant impact. Learn more at www.mcgrawprize.com.

Milken-Penn GSE Education Business Plan Competition Announces Winners



The 2022 Milken-Penn GSE Education Business Plan Competition (EBPC) held its virtual finals on October 12. **Words Liive** captured the Michael & Lori Milken Family Foundation’s Grand Prize of \$40,000; **HeyKiddo** won the \$25,000 Globant, Inc. Prize; **Arbol** earned the

\$10,000 Cascade Communications Prize; and **Clarifi** collected the \$5,000 Osage Venture Partners Audience Choice Prize. All finalists received Amazon Web Services credits, a Padcaster video production system, grant consulting from TurboSBIR, and \$1,000 and an iPad from Catalyst @ Penn GSE. Considered the most prestigious and well-funded competition of its kind, the EBPC attracts innovative education ventures from around the world.



Mural Helps Unite a School

A new mural at Central Montco Technical High School (CMTHS) is the product of a hands-on learning experience—and a way to unite the community, promote mental health, and foster connections between students and faculty during the pandemic. Philadelphia artist Symone Salib created the 13x14-foot mural in partnership with the school’s faculty; a group of students, the CMTHS Student Equity Crew, who work to promote equity and inclusion; and the Penn Consortium for Mental Health and Optimal Development at Penn GSE.

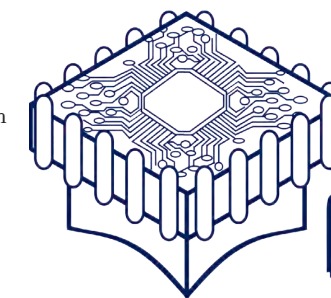
As students returned to classrooms last fall after long periods of COVID-disrupted learning, they sought a sense of normalcy. At CMTHS, the mural offered an opportunity for students and staff to reunite and reconnect. Students worked with Salib, who is also an educator, to plan and design the mural. The artwork features an inspirational message, student faces, and assorted icons that represent the school’s training programs, such as a saw, hammer, globe, and spatula. The process built students’ leadership skills, supported social and emotional learning, promoted school culture, and fostered meaningful connections, according to Debora Broderick, a lecturer at Penn GSE who helped bring the project to fruition as part of her involvement with Penn’s Consortium.

The finished mural (featured above), which hangs in a lobby stairwell at Central Montco Technical High School, incorporates faces of several current students, including (from left to right) Cosmetology senior Tais Sanabia, Auto Collision junior Chosen Onyejiaka, Cosmetology sophomore Olivia Scheidler, Auto Collision junior Mekhi Crawford, and Teacher Academy senior Sudan Wray. The mural was made possible in part by a grant from the Central Montco Education Foundation.



Penn GSE Launches New Online Master’s Programs

Learning Analytics and Global Higher Education are the subjects of two new fully online Penn GSE master’s programs. The **Learning Analytics master’s program** will empower students to leverage data to drive high-quality decisions within the educational context. The program will prepare data scientists to build highly functional and ethically sound ways to perform measurement, analysis, and predictive modeling and to identify algorithmic bias. Students will emerge understanding when and why to use different methods for a range of applications to make a real-world impact. The **Global Higher Education master’s program** will equip individuals for the challenges of leading universities in a complex and changing world. An executive-format program, it is designed for working professionals who have at least five years of work experience in universities and education-related organizations and agencies. The program aims to develop an international cadre of university leaders who are committed to improving and enhancing universities. **The priority deadline for both programs is February 1, 2023. Visit www.gse.upenn.edu/academics to learn more and apply.**



2022 Commencement



Penn GSE celebrated Commencement in person at the Palestra on May 14, 2022. **Sarita Brown**, cofounder and president of *Excelencia in Education*, delivered the keynote address. The 2022 recipients of annual awards from Penn GSE were announced this spring. Penn GSE conferred 778 degrees for 2021–22.

The William E. Arnold Award for Outstanding Contributions by a Student
Leland McGee, GED’18, GRD’22

The Laurie Wagman Award for Visual and Performing Arts in Education
Jin Yang, GED’21

The Penn GSE Excellence in Teaching Award
Ed Brockenbrough

Faculty Recognition of Service Awards
Amalia Daché
Suzanne Fegley
Nelson Flores

Staff Recognition of Service Awards
Charles Washington
Diana Johnson
Lauren Scicluna

Student Recognition of Service Awards
Alexis Ditaway, GED’22
Chenelle Boatswain, GRD’22
Christopher Rogers, GED’13
Sarah Gudenkauf, GRD’22

Penn GSE Excellence in Promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Saryu Sanghani, GED’22
Saida Harpi
Andre Zarate, GED’13

FORTIFYING the FUTURE

Amid a growing shortage, Penn GSE prepares and empowers future teachers to thrive—and persist—in the classroom.

by Karen Brooks



It is one of the most challenging paradoxes of our time: Teachers are a critical component of student success, yet rampant teacher shortages are creating difficulties for school districts across the United States, frustrating school boards, administrators, parents, and students, alike.

Research shows that teachers' effect on long-term student performance goes beyond students' academic achievement, influencing not just how far they go in school but also the eventual wages they earn once working. (One large study, for example, found that students assigned to particularly effective teachers in a single year were more likely to attend college, earn higher salaries, and were less likely to have children as teenagers.) But in order for students to benefit from good teachers, those teachers must be recruited, prepared, developed, and retained. And at a time when the United States has at least 36,000 unfilled teacher vacancies, it is challenging to do all four.

Penn GSE is committed to changing that. This year, its teacher education programs are preparing more than 150 future educators to enter the field via three programs. For decades, the School has offered these preparation programs to give teachers the tools and knowledge they need to succeed in the classroom. Today, two of its teacher education programs, the Urban Teacher Apprenticeship Program (UTAP) and Urban Teaching Residency (UTR) program, prepare teachers to work in urban environments, where schools—and students—are hit particularly hard by teacher turnover. A third program, the Independent School Teaching Residency (ISTR) program, partners directly with the day schools and boarding schools in which their students teach.

"Every year K-12 schools have about 200,000 vacant positions to fill. But the work of teacher education isn't just about maintaining a pipeline of educators or making sure that there are enough people prepared to enter the profession," said Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman. "It's about the deep work of developing quality educators, making sure these new teachers are adequately prepared for the classrooms they will lead, and offering support for the challenges they will face."

The goal of the School's three programs, says Dean Grossman, is to ensure that students, particularly those with the greatest need, can have the benefit of learning from seasoned professionals.

"We need to support teachers in knowing how best to teach, especially in their early years, so they can do their best job and also stay in the classroom—because for kids, the difference between having a first-year teacher versus a teacher with eight or ten years under their belts is significant," says Dean Grossman.

The Struggle is Real

While teacher shortages are not new, the COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented strain on the nation's education system, driving more than half a million primary and secondary educators out of the profession since the beginning of 2020, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Penn GSE Professor of Education and Sociology Richard Ingersoll, who has devoted his career to analyzing national teacher survey statistics, says that relatively low pay, insufficient classroom resources, a lack of appreciation—real or perceived—from their students and from professionals in other fields, and a lack of teacher autonomy cause as many as half of all teachers to quit within their first five years.

According to Ingersoll, "a significant factor is micromanagement, where there's a scripted curriculum and every class has to be on the same chapter in the same week, teaching to the same test. Teachers rarely have the discretion to say, 'I know my students, and their needs are different, so I need some leeway here.'"

School environments in which teachers have more voice have better teacher retention. But, Ingersoll says, this issue particularly affects teachers of color, who are more likely to staff schools in low-income and Black and Brown communities, which have high turnover rates—a concern given that Black students who have even one Black teacher during elementary school are more likely to complete high school and apply to college.

Senior Associate Director and Coordinator of Fieldwork and Coaching for UTAP Jasmine Marshall-Butler studies the experiences of minority teachers. She agrees with Ingersoll that the challenges of working in under-resourced environments hastens burnout.

Ready to Serve

Although universities can't change K-12 teachers' salaries or working conditions, they can prepare their graduates to succeed in the environments where they aim to teach—a primary objective at Penn GSE.

"Teachers are not making automobiles; they are making adults out of kids. And kids vary. There is no one-size-fits-all model for how you build a teacher who can teach anywhere really well," Ingersoll says. "Schools of education are often criticized for being stodgy and overly traditional—but we have innovative models here at Penn, because jobs are very different in different places, and different jobs take different kinds of preparation."

Penn GSE's three master's programs in teacher education are designed to meet the needs of those who enroll, as well as the students they will teach. Executive Director Patrick Sexton oversees the three programs—UTAP, UTR, and ISTR—and views his role as far more than supervisory.

"I'm looking to amplify Penn's stamp on the world when it comes to teacher preparation," Sexton says. "Our programs are laboratories, and we can leverage what we're learning inside them to impact the research faculty does and policies at the state and national levels."

UTR and UTAP partner directly with Philadelphia schools, but they serve learners in different ways. Often unable to pursue higher education without a steady income, UTR students complete their master's degree and certification while teaching full-time independently. Instead of serving as a lead teacher, UTAP students earn their credentials while spending a year apprenticing under an experienced teacher.

As a former teacher at under-resourced schools and the person who coordinates partner-school placements for UTAP students, Marshall-Butler knows firsthand the value of preparing teachers for the specific demands of urban schools, which she says requires knowledge beyond grade-level subject matter.

"We make our teachers aware of the issues plaguing their students—poverty, food deserts, gun violence—that students in suburban or rural schools might not encounter,"

"These teachers feel an immense responsibility to take care of their students, not just in the classroom, but after they leave and before they get there in the morning," Marshall-Butler explains. "Teachers, in general, don't have enough resources, and teachers in these cases really don't have enough resources."

A former English teacher, Marshall-Butler adds that, since teachers of color often work in urban settings, they confront more community violence than white teachers, compounding other stressors. She is researching how Black teachers respond when their students are victims of gun violence—a study inspired by the murders of three of her students during the five years she taught at a Chicago high school.

"I wanted to know if other teachers were pushed right back into the classroom right after getting the news, like I was, without having time to process their own feelings," she says. "Nobody had time for me to be upset, because I needed to support my other students through their grief, even though I couldn't support myself."

Through her interviews with teachers in similar situations, Marshall-Butler has discovered an almost universal struggle to cope.



Jasmine Marshall-Butler



Richard Ingersoll

she says. “Some programs won’t even touch on these things, but our teachers know what baggage their students are bringing to the classroom, and I don’t mean their backpacks. We give them skills to ensure their students feel safe, heard, and valued.”

Just as importantly, she notes, UTAP students are also pushed to reject the “deficit thinking” they may have espoused before entering the program.

“We immerse them in neighborhoods across the city to learn about and experience the joy their students encounter each day. They are introduced to key community members to learn the rich history of their school and dive into ways to positively impact their students, school, and larger community,” she says.

“

Teachers are not making automobiles; they are making adults out of kids. And kids vary. There is no one-size-fits-all model for how you build a teacher who can teach anywhere really well.

—Professor Richard Ingersoll

”

Aspiring teacher Maria Cetrone chose UTAP because its emphasis on educational equity aligned with her commitment to working at an urban public school.

“Everything we do in [UTAP] is grounded in equity and social justice,” says Cetrone, an apprentice in a third-grade classroom at Philadelphia’s George W. Nebinger Elementary School. “Every strategy we learn, every discussion we have, and every bit of research we take part in is focused on how to best serve our students, especially those who have been traditionally overlooked and oppressed by our current system.”

The ISTR program serves learners with different career goals by collaborating directly with an established group of partner schools. Early career teachers from those schools earn their master’s degrees through a two-year fellowship, taking classes during extended quarterly gatherings and online. A focus on equity, diversity, and educational justice runs throughout.

“When we talk about history and social context in ISTR, we’re asking, ‘What is your school’s mission, and what does that mean for kids of color in your community? Who are you going to be in this society?’” Sexton says. “There is a significant amount of power, privilege, and resources under the roofs of those schools, so there’s a different question about the relationship to educational justice.”

ISTR student Luis Rivera has explored similar questions in his classroom at Trinity School in New York City. He learned that a student wanted to do a research project about the Stonewall uprising, the historic six-day clash between police and LGBTQ+ activists in 1969, but had selected a different topic because she was afraid her conservative mother would disapprove. Rivera convinced her to follow her interests. The student and her group delivered a stellar presentation on Stonewall, and, at the end of the year, she sent Rivera an email saying his class was unforgettable and that he had expanded her love of history.

“During this experience, I realized that, as a teacher, I have a responsibility and the authority to make a positive impact on my students’ lives,” Rivera says.

Creating Connections

Some teachers find that honesty and vulnerability can help them connect with their students.

During a 2021 discussion about Tim O’Brien’s acclaimed book *The Things They Carried*, Mackenzi Turgeon prompted her ninth-grade class at Riverdale Country School in the Bronx, New York, to share some of the burdens they carried. Overcoming the butterflies in her stomach, she broke the ice by describing her anxiety about being a brand-new teacher and the challenges she faces as a Black woman in America.

To her delight, students responded by opening up in kind, revealing their own fears, traumas, and insecurities.

“My sharing sparked a conversation where it was clear that students were really connecting with their classmates,” recalls Turgeon, who expects to complete a master’s from ISTR in the spring of 2023. “My mentor told me I was building community through my vulnerability, and that stuck with me.”

A former high school English teacher, Dean Grossman knows rewarding experiences like Turgeon’s are key to keeping teachers energized by their jobs—a goal she says is more important than ever as fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates teacher shortages.

Widely recognized for her expertise in teacher learning and professional education, Grossman strives to position Penn GSE as a leader in preparing aspiring teachers for success, as well as identifying ways to support established educators and keep them invigorated. Initiatives like the School’s recently recast teacher education programs and its growing emphasis on research into teachers as learners can help counter high turnover rates among K–12 teachers locally, as well as nationally, Grossman says.

“One of the hallmarks of any profession is an agreement about what proper preparation and high-quality practices look like, and we haven’t codified that in teaching,” she says. “But teachers are the largest in-school factor that matters most to student achievement, so we should be investing in them however we can.”

An Evidence Base

At Penn GSE, efforts to prepare new teachers to enter the workforce are matched by efforts to keep them there—and a robust research program bolsters this mission, says Dean Grossman, who draws attention to three current studies funded by a James S. McDonnell Foundation program that supports research into how teachers learn.

A better understanding of how teachers learn is critical in the improvement of effective professional development, which has been shown to help districts support and retain its teachers.

“We’re excited to have these McDonnell grants, because the foundation has made the biggest investment there has been in teacher learning in a long time,” she says. “This program focuses on classroom discourse—a practice that is ubiquitous but very complex. It is very hard, but very important, to know how best to prepare teachers to engage students in rich dialogic discussion.”

One of the McDonnell grants was awarded to Penn GSE Associate Professor Sarah Schneider Kavanagh, in conjunction with faculty members at three other universities. Kavanagh believes professional development for teachers falls behind that of other fields, contributing to chronic shortages in US schools.

“Teachers often don’t have access to high-quality learning opportunities that allow them to continue to grow and better

teachers away from the context of their work in order to teach them about the context of their work?”

“We’re seeing if learning experiences that are relevant to the work teachers do every day improve their learning and their students’ learning, and, if, ultimately, these experiences show teachers that we take their learning seriously so maybe they don’t leave,” she says.

Penn GSE Associate Professor Abby Reisman, along with peers at Temple University, is leading a McDonnell Foundation–supported study into the facilitation of classroom discussion among novice social studies teachers in Philadelphia.

“We’re pushing to invert the stereotypical boring history class, where the teacher just lectures at the students,” Reisman says. “We want students to pose questions, engage with evidence, and come up with their own arguments about the past. Our question is, ‘How do teachers develop with regard to facilitating discussion? What motivates them, and what constrains them?’”

Reisman and her team are video-recording preservice and newly certified teachers as they lead classroom discussions. They then ask the teachers to watch themselves on video and analyze their decision-making processes and their students’ engagement.

“Social studies classrooms have the responsibility of citizenship



(From left) Associate Professors Sarah Schneider Kavanagh, Abby Reisman, and Amy Stornaiuolo were each awarded James S. McDonnell grants this year to support their research into how teachers learn. Photo credits: Ryan Collard (Kavanagh) and Lora Reehling Photography.

the profession,” she says. “The design of schools almost never includes a design for teacher learning, and then we wonder why teachers leave after two, three, four, five years.”

For their study, Kavanagh and her co-investigators crafted classroom learning experiences for literature and math teachers who meet as a group, collaborate to plan a discussion-based lesson, then lead that lesson together with students. They subsequently debrief and use student feedback to hone the lesson before trying it again in another classroom.

“The current model is generally to do workshops where we take teachers out of classrooms, away from kids, and teach them about teaching and kids,” Kavanagh says. “Why do we take

preparation, and if we can’t get kids to talk with one another and engage across differences, then we are in bad shape,” says Reisman, a former history teacher. “When teaching goes well, and students engage and connect, it feels amazing. When it’s not like that, the job can feel demoralizing and lonely. So we need a deeper understanding of how to develop those lively conversations, so students learn to engage in deliberative conversations and teachers continue to love their jobs.”

The third McDonnell Foundation grant went to Penn GSE Associate Professor Amy Stornaiuolo, a digital literacy specialist who is exploring ways teachers can lead meaningful discussions online—a particularly timely topic, thanks to the coronavirus

pandemic.

Stornaiuolo's project is a collaboration with the National Writing Project—the country's largest professional development network for teachers. The project began with two groups of English language arts teachers with expertise in digital applications. These experts mapped the most successful strategies they used in their own classrooms to build a framework for digital discourse that is now being shared with novice teachers interested in facilitating more profound literature discussions online. Stornaiuolo will evaluate how the participants' approaches shift over time, as they implement the methods developed in the first part of the study.

"This really matters in literature, because a discussion about a concrete concept in math or science is very different from a discussion around fiction, which often brings up ideas about things that are difficult to talk about in mediated spaces, like identity and culture," she explains. "What kinds of facilitation moves do we need to make in order to create safe spaces for students to have those deeper conversations?"

Students Today, Teachers Tomorrow

While, as executive director of teacher education at Penn GSE, Sexton acknowledges the struggles today's teachers face, he expresses an abundance of hope for the new generations preparing to enter the classroom.

"If I weren't hopeful, I wouldn't be doing this job," he says. "I do this work because I believe we are preparing novice teachers to go out and not only thrive in their schools but contribute to making them, and the profession as a whole, better. Penn GSE has all of these pieces—the right programs, the right faculty members, and the right students, who are this incredibly intelligent, caring group of people—to amplify some of the best thinking about the knotty problems of teaching and learning today."

Dean Grossman shares that optimism, pointing out that the School's use of practice-based education ensures that aspiring teachers have boundless opportunities to try different styles and strategies—and to receive abundant support while doing so—before they enter the field as professionals. The better prepared they are, the less susceptible to burnout they will be and the longer they will stay in the profession.

And Penn GSE's movement to expand research into teacher learning, she adds, will give faculty at universities nationwide a better understanding of what teachers need, during their preparation and far beyond.

"As many challenges as there are, I always tell people who choose teaching that they are coming into the most important profession in the world—one where you never have to worry about whether you are making a difference," Grossman says. "If you're a teacher, you wake up every morning knowing that there are young people depending on you. And teachers need to be able to depend on us."



— “
As many challenges as there are, I always tell people who choose teaching that they are coming into the most important profession in the world—one where you never have to worry about whether you are making a difference.

—Dean Pam Grossman



Photo credit: Quinn Brown

Penn GSE doesn't just graduate future teachers and enroll working teachers as degree students; the School supports the teaching workforce by providing ongoing professional development opportunities through other formats, including:

- 🏛️ **The Philadelphia Writing Project**, a Penn GSE-based site of the National Writing Project, which prepares teachers to use writing to advance learning;
- 🏛️ **The Penn Literacy Network**, which provides continuing education courses, workshops, and instructional and leadership coaching programs to strengthen preK-12 educators' skills; and
- 🏛️ **The Center for Professional Learning**, which offers virtual institutes, certificate programs, and various webinars and workshops for teachers, school administrators, and community organizations.

A Landmark Gift to Penn GSE



At an event honoring the 2022 winners of the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education in New York City in November, Penn GSE announced the largest gift in the School's history—a \$16.25 million commitment from the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Family Foundation, which will create a new center for educational leadership and continue its annual prize.

Pictured: the McGraw siblings (from left) Robert, Suzanne, and Harold III (Terry)
Photo credit: Steve Belkowitz

The transformational gift will direct \$10 million to create the McGraw Center for Educational Leadership to prepare innovative and responsive leaders who can lead change. An additional \$6.25 million will expand existing support for the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education, which honors those who are transforming teaching and learning with three annual \$50,000 awards in preK-12 education, higher education, and lifelong learning. Penn GSE has been home to the prize since 2020.

The McGraw Center for Educational Leadership, slated to launch in the fall of 2023, will bring together leaders from across the education landscape, convening current and aspiring superintendents and principals, chief learning officers, and college leaders to cultivate a mindset for multisector collaboration and innovation.

"More and more, society needs educators who are well prepared to respond to the accelerated rate of change in the educational landscape, to turn challenges into opportunities, and to develop pioneering solutions to complex problems. Building on Penn GSE's outstanding legacy of preparing leaders in preK-12, higher education, and workplace learning, the new center will champion innovation across thought and practice," said Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman. "The McGraw Center will have a multiplier effect, impacting schools, districts, colleges, universities, and workplaces on a vast scale."

The center will be located in Penn GSE's ambitious building expansion, which is currently underway and will feature twenty-first-century instructional spaces and support the School's portfolio of innovation, education, and leadership programs in the heart of the Penn campus. Participants will include students and alumni from four of the School's leadership programs: the School Leadership Program, the Mid-Career Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership, the Executive Doctorate in Higher Education Management, and the Penn Chief Learning Officer Program, benefitting students across the School.

"We all know that leadership matters, and few things matter more to our society than cultivating leaders who can navigate change and are devoted to educating people at every stage of their lives," said Penn President Liz Magill. "With the launch of the McGraw Center, those dedicated to teaching and learning will be able to devise more effective responses to the rapidly changing needs of learners today. We are deeply grateful to the McGraw family for their exceptional generosity."

Dean Grossman adds, "We have deeply valued our ongoing partnership with the McGraw Family Foundation over the past several years and look forward to taking this next transformational step together."



LEARN MORE in the Spring 2022 issue about Penn GSE's legacy of cultivating the leaders of the future:
penn.gse/leaders

Helping Students See Themselves

PENN GSE ALUMNI BRING DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES TO THEIR CLASSROOMS AND MAKE DEI A PRIORITY FOR THEIR STUDENTS.

by Lini S. Kadaba

For more than a century, Penn GSE has developed teachers who are driven not just to prepare their students for success, but to transform and advance education itself. Today, Penn GSE programs are helping to evolve and support preK-12 education by offering a mix of the theoretical and practical, combined with a critical focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Here, four alumni—a mathematics education scholar and practitioner, an English-learners teacher, a STEM education professor, and a school-based teacher leader—share what motivates them to stay in the game at a time of recruitment and retention hurdles. They also discuss the ways they are creating more equitable learning opportunities for all students.



CREATING CULTURALLY RELEVANT CONTEXT



Natasha Murray
GRD'05

Natasha Murray likes to throw a curveball to teachers. As a district administrator in the New York State Education Department, she facilitates workshops for math and science Master Teachers, and she often incorporates a fifth-grade-

level math problem that involves the sport of cricket.

She finds that most of the American-born educators are stumped, unable to solve the simple problem given their unfamiliarity with the bat-and-ball game with English roots. The exercise, she says, nicely illustrates her point: context matters.

“For students to really solidify concepts they’ve learned, they need to build upon existing knowledge,” says Murray, the coordinator of math and data at a large, suburban, public school district and an adjunct professor at the State University of New York College at Old Westbury on Long Island.

Often, curricula fail to take context into account, she says. One state assessment used a football scenario to test student knowledge of parabolas, Murray says, not accounting for those from immigrant families who might associate “football” with soccer and become confused.

“Through these workshops,” she says, “the participants redesigned the math curriculum for their schools, and we ensured diversity and representation within the curriculum. That impacted thousands of students across the state.”

Murray has a longstanding commitment to creating opportunities for young people from historically marginalized groups. Early on, she noticed the disparities in education, first among fellow college students, where family wealth seemed to determine preparation, and then at her first job at a low-income school in Brooklyn, New York, where teacher training and resources were slim.

Murray earned a master’s in education from Queens College-CUNY. At Penn GSE, she pursued a doctorate with a focus on mathematics education, delving into “how society, culture, and policies impact educational systems and vice versa,” she says.

“My mission was to really enhance my expertise, so I could go back into the school district and really provide educational opportunities for a diverse population,” she says.

Murray also has a graduate certificate in advanced education leadership from Harvard University. In 2017, she was the recipient of the Ethel and Allen “Buddy” Carruth Sustained Leadership in Education Award from Penn GSE.

The key to educational success, Murray argues, is for students to have preparation, whether formal or informal; access, which includes both the knowledge of the possibilities and a practical means to gain entry to educational institutions and professions; and resources, both financial as well as mentoring support.

Those three key learning pillars come from teachers, she

says. But teachers must be properly trained to provide them, which is why Murray focuses on teacher education in her day job and in her role as a faculty member in the Penn Literacy Network, an evidence-based preK-12 professional development program housed at Penn GSE, and through professional organizations such as the National Network of State Teachers of the Year and Phi Delta Kappa, whose Educators Rising program supports diverse youth interested in teaching careers.

“The greatest impact on a child’s education is within the actual classroom,” she says. “If we don’t change and improve classroom practice, all the rest of our efforts will be moot.”



The teaching strategy is to get to know your students, so they can see aspects of themselves and learn about themselves.

—Kimberly Hee Stock, GED'05

LETTING STUDENTS LEAD THE WAY



Kimberly Hee Stock
GED'05

Education trends may come and go, but Kimberly Hee Stock holds fast to the one truth she says any good teacher knows:

“You really try to get out of the way of students as much as

possible,” says the 2021 Delaware Teacher of the Year, who lives in Wilmington. “When students are creating and taking charge of learning in the classroom, that’s true learning.”

Stock learned that lesson early, when she became a high school English teacher after graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1996 with a bachelor’s in secondary education. A veteran teacher introduced her to the Socratic seminar, in which students read thought-provoking material and prepare questions and comments that they genuinely care about. Those questions and comments are then used to lead discussion.

Since discovering this approach, Stock has refined the method, fostering “genuine learning” by building trust and creating a safe space for self-reflection and goal setting, she says.

After a few years in the classroom, Stock enrolled in the

Photo credit: James Perroni, Delaware Dept. of Education

Education Policy program at Penn GSE to earn her master's, specializing in recruitment and retention and DEI, then left teaching to focus on her family for several years. In 2014, she joined the Claymont Community Center, where, she says, she helped establish the area's first adult education program. She credits Penn for giving her the confidence to believe in herself and "think big."

In 2016, Stock returned to the classroom as an English-learners (EL) and language arts teacher at the high-needs McKean High School in Wilmington, Delaware, where she works mostly with Spanish-speaking students seeking to gain proficiency in English. Stock again thought big, she says, proposing a more rigorous, inclusive curriculum for EL students.

For one unit, Stock taught *The Book of Unknown Americans* by Delaware native Cristina Henríquez that includes the story of two teenagers with immigrant roots coming of age. Students Zoomed with the author, asking questions in Spanish.

"You're talking about kids who have been marginalized," she says. "For them to see themselves in characters that look like them, that's so powerful. That's DEI."

Stock's diversity work resonates with her experiences growing up as an adoptee and Korean American in Nebraska, where, she says, she "didn't see herself. I know how that feels. I want different for my students."

The focus on prescribed curriculum makes individualizing lessons challenging, but Stock says she's committed. In 2020, she earned a master's from the University of Delaware in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Last year, Stock was elected to the Brandywine School District Board of Education on a DEI platform.

"It's a constant, 'How can I make what's going on in my classroom more genuine?'" she says. "The teaching strategy is to get to know your students, so they can see aspects of themselves and learn about themselves."



While at Penn GSE, Walker helped pilot a program at the Franklin Institute that uses biology as a medium for designing pigments, sensors, and vitamins, using curriculum developed by Yasmin Kafai, Lori and Michael Milken President's Distinguished Professor. Photo credit: Greg Benson Photography

BUILDING DEI INTO STEM LEARNING



Justice Toshiba Walker
GEN'12, GR'19

Justice Toshiba Walker, a learning scientist, assistant professor of STEM education at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), and principal investigator of the ABC Learning Lab, designs spaces where nontraditional approaches to science are encouraged and implicit

biases are broken down.

"Much of my work is about disrupting structures that exclude or privilege dominant ways of learning and doing," he says, "and creating learning experiences that are accessible and culturally relevant to learners."

After graduating from the University of Miami (FL) in 2005 with bachelor's degrees in biology and English literature, Walker worked as a science teacher for nearly a decade. One of his go-to lab activities involved gel electrophoresis, a technique used to separate DNA fragments by size. Rather than focus on abstract biology, Walker used a step-wise, hands-on approach, in which high school students conducted gel electrophoresis on a sample of their own DNA.

"For kids to have done it themselves, to see their genetic material touch the gel is powerful—and legitimate practice," he says. The activity added depth to the biology curriculum, serving as a springboard to talk about DNA fingerprinting, crime scene investigations, and other popular topics.

Such activities, Walker says, are central to his teaching philosophy: "Give learners an experience that helps them feel a sense of self-efficacy. I feel it's sometimes more important to have a good experience than meet a benchmark. If a person believes in themselves, that's a game changer."

Three years after earning his master's in engineering biotechnology from the School of Engineering and Applied Science at Penn, Walker returned in 2015 for his doctorate in teaching, learning, and teacher education from Penn GSE. His thesis focused on developing a biomaking curriculum, in which students create genetically modified organisms (GMO), explore the emerging field of synthetic biology, and then design, bake, and market snacks that incorporate the GMO. FirstHand, a Philadelphia-based program of the University City Science Center that supplements STEM learning for middle and high school students, adopted the hands-on, student-driven curriculum.

At UTEP, Walker is researching culturally relevant curriculum design to engage learners. In "Coding Like a Data Miner," a demonstration project funded by the National Science Foundation, underrepresented high schoolers will use cutting-edge techniques to scrape data from Twitter and analyze public sentiment around hashtags of personal interest. "This is data science," he says. "Here, we say, 'Pick your pursuit.' Typical data science curriculum doesn't do that."

Ultimately, Walker says, new technologies must consider DEI at "the forefront, rather than as an afterthought."

"If we're to make any changes in disrupting the inequities that happen in the economies that develop under these technologies," Walker says, "we have to be intentional early on, and it has to be multipronged, not only at the level of teacher practice, but also in the research that we're carrying out and the design we're using. Imperatively, we have to begin with learners, meet them where they are and pay close attention to—and value—what matters to them."

“

I feel it's more important to have a good experience than meet a benchmark. If a person believes in themselves, that's a game changer.

—Justice Toshiba Walker, GEN'12, GR'19

USING DATA TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

Alexis Zhao
GED'13, GED'22



Growing up and going to school in Philadelphia, Alexis (née Schmidt) Zhao, saw firsthand the highs and lows that education can afford. Zhao says she received a rich education with many hands-on learning

activities, graduating from the university preparatory magnet Central High School in Philadelphia before heading to Drexel University to study psychology. But her siblings, she says, attended neighborhood schools with little exploratory education, and eventually "dropped out and got into not-positive things . . . I saw the inequities in Philadelphia schools."

Witnessing such bifurcated opportunities instilled in Zhao a passion for equitable education.

Today, Zhao is a school-based teacher leader at the K–8 Chester A. Arthur School in South Philadelphia. A two-time Penn GSE graduate, she says she strives to create equitable education experiences through a focus on relationship building and hands-on projects that engage all students.

"I believe so much in the ability of our kids in the city," says the former math and science teacher and current math coach who lives in Northeast Philadelphia. But, too often, she says, that ability is stifled by a shortsighted, testing-heavy teaching approach.

"Teachers are constantly asked to prove student achievement with data," she says. "Kids take tests and tests. But the data isn't being looked at to plan for instruction."

Zhao began her teaching career in Northwest Philadelphia at K–8 Roosevelt Elementary School through Teach for America, earning a master's in secondary education from Penn GSE at the same time. In 2021, Zhao returned to Penn GSE, completing a master's from the School Leadership Program (SLP) in 2022.

As part of SLP, students complete a yearlong practitioner research project. Seeking to put data to use on behalf of students, Zhao's project focused on the effect of teacher collaboration on practice when informed by standardized test data.

While enrolled, Zhao's commitment to proactive data application continued as she held a principal-training internship and was an interventionist with math teachers during the 2021–22 school year. In one instance, she helped a fourth-grade teacher group struggling students by skill set by analyzing data and diagnostics from STAR and i-Ready, two computer-adaptive tests that gauge reading and math skills to help educators assess students' strengths and weaknesses and inform instruction. Zhao and the teacher co-taught and worked together to develop a plan based on those learnings. Reflection, she says, led to "switching the groups up if we saw different needs or strengths, or re-evaluating how to teach the skills." This school year, Zhao plans to do similar work with all of Arthur's teachers.

Now, Zhao is pursuing a certificate in project-based learning from the School's Center for Professional Learning.

And as passionate as she is about using data to guide lesson planning, Zhao has also strived at each stop in her teaching career to promote equity through her teaching.

At Chester A. Arthur, Zhao co-taught a fourth-grade unit on the environment in which students collected water samples from their homes and school water fountains and bathrooms. They tested for lead and other contaminants, and analyzed data. They then wrote letters to the City Council, advocating for clean water in schools and in homes across the city.

She also helped implement a restorative justice program and positive-behavior system for seventh graders that, she says, decreased out-of-school suspensions.

"In the morning meeting, we taught kids how to express themselves in words," she says. "We did lots of one-to-one mentoring and relationship mending."

Her time at Penn GSE, she says, reinforced her commitment to equity in education and "to be the change you want to see, to really just double down on the importance of relationships and grounding yourself in the research and always being a learner." ■

FACES of Philanthropy

by Karen Doss Bowman

Penn GSE is bringing hope and opportunity to a new era. In keeping with Dean Pam Grossman’s vision of access and inclusion, practical knowledge, powerful partnerships, and innovation for impact, Penn GSE is unleashing the power of possibility through education—building a diverse pipeline of the educators and leaders the world needs. The School is grateful to the generous donors who are investing in this work. Here are three stories of support for Penn GSE’s mission.

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION



David M. Brush, C’82, spent much of his professional life volunteering with International Justice Mission, a global organization that protects people in poverty from violence and works to combat human trafficking and slavery, violence against women and children, and police abuse of power. Through his work, Brush met many people fleeing places, such as India, Somalia, and Syria. The experience revealed to him the hardships and suffering that refugees endure around the globe.

“I met people with enormous talent—literary and musical talent, for example,” says Brush, who lived in England and Spain for 25 years until retiring this year and returning to the United States. “They just were caught in the wrong place at the wrong time and made a decision to leave their country to protect the lives of their families.”

Brush and his wife, Karen Clark Brush, W’82, have demonstrated continuing concern and support for international students, educational access, and global citizenship through their philanthropy. Their Brush Family Foundation recently contributed to the Penn GSE Dean’s Discretionary Fund, enabling the School to provide critical support to four female students from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

“Their plight struck a chord with us,” Brush says. “We’ve always had an interest in helping people who were trying to escape unsafe situations, and our giving has always had a social justice element.”

The son of two teachers, Brush believes in the transformative power of education. Learning should be a lifelong pursuit, he says.

“For me, Penn just opened up so many avenues and opportunities and equipped me to take advantage of them,” Brush says. “Education doesn’t end when you leave the university. I’m constantly trying to learn new things and be open to new ideas.”

The Brush family hopes their support will make a significant difference in the lives of those four students. In turn, they hope the Penn GSE experience will inspire the students to pursue careers that will make a difference for others.

“For us to have the opportunity to marry our international inclination with the social justice element, giving others the opportunity to attend Penn the way we had—it just all fits together,” says Brush, adding that he and Karen both received scholarships and grants to support their undergraduate experiences.

“Hopefully, these students will someday have opportunities to do great things, or to continue that same ethos of supporting others who are maybe not as fortunate.”

FLYING FORWARD



John Henry, an infrastructure attorney and founder of Grace3 Technologies LLC, remembers what it was like being the only person of color in professional spaces after graduating from Washington and Lee University School of Law in 1998 and during the early years of his career. He wants to change that trajectory for today’s Black youth.

“Education played such a critical role in my development and growth, and it gave me confidence and instilled a strong work ethic,” says Henry, a first-generation college and law

school graduate who grew up in Center City Philadelphia. “I am exposed to next-generation technologies every day, and it’s imperative that African American students are exposed to the same best-in-class technologies.”

The growing ubiquity of drones is a key component of Henry’s vision. He envisions these small aircraft as tools to empower children—especially Black children and those from low-wealth communities—through greater exposure to STEM.

Henry spearheaded a partnership that brought the Drone Cadets—an education program accredited by STEM.org—to Penn GSE’s Office of School and Community Engagement’s (OSCE) summer program. OSCE facilitates and supports partnerships with Philadelphia schools and communities to improve children’s education outcomes and overall wellbeing.

For six weeks this past summer, about forty West Philadelphia middle schoolers worked with GSE students, learning to code and fly drones within spacious classrooms at Hamilton Elementary and the Penn Alexander School. Henry was excited about the kids’ response to the program, and the promise these

machines hold for the future. The opportunity was co-funded by Henry’s company, Grace3 Technologies, and the National Black Empowerment Council.

There’s a huge demand for commercial drone pilots, says Henry. He hopes the students who participate in the drone programs will pursue Remote Pilot Certificates from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Eligibility for licensure begins at age sixteen. That can lead to internships and open future job opportunities.

A lifelong learner, Henry was inspired by the students’ enthusiasm to pursue his own drone pilot license. He hopes to complete the requirements by the end of this year.

“Hopefully, I can inspire these young students to reach beyond their grasp, get educated in STEM fields, and link up with opportunities that will allow them to be productive members of our communities,” Henry says. “There’s a lot of talent in these low-wealth communities. I’m trying to mine that talent and illuminate it.”

FUELING EDUCATION ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In January, Penn GSE launched a new, multi-faceted partnership with the Zurich-based Jacobs Foundation to support innovation in education and cultivate a network of education entrepreneurs.



The Jacobs Foundation’s Jerie introduced the new partnership to GSE students in August.

The Jacobs Education Impact Fellows initiative, a three-year pathway for education venture development, acceleration, and ecosystem engagement, is at the core of the partnership. Penn GSE’s inaugural cohort of six Jacobs Fellows will join a community of fellows from institutions worldwide. They were recruited in October from Penn GSE’s Education Entrepreneurship program that, in addition to offering a master’s in education, offers a dual-degree track for students to earn an MBA from the Wharton Business School. They represent some of the best and brightest minds globally, all with an interest in leveraging innovation to improve the quality, reach, and effectiveness of education.

The venture acceleration program includes six to eight months of mentoring, skills building, innovation modeling, coaching, and networking. Next spring, the fellows will compete for a \$25,000 Impact Prize and smaller funding awards to use as seed money to launch their innovations.

“We’re quite keen on cultivating a professional network of entrepreneurial leaders and change makers in education,” says

Cathrin Jerie, program manager at the Jacobs Foundation. “This initiative is not just about what kind of venture these entrepreneurs are creating, but also about their long-term vision for the education sector. The Jacobs Foundation is committed to reaching change at the systems level, because we believe the education system needs to change profoundly.”

Penn GSE’s first cohort of Jacobs Fellows has taken on a wide range of projects, from homeschooling and establishing a new primary school model for Saudi Arabia to supporting schooling for homeless children.

Founded in 1989 by entrepreneur Klaus J. Jacobs, the Jacobs Foundation invests in the future of children, providing educational and learning opportunities to help them thrive. The organization’s efforts typically focus directly on evidence-based education solutions for teaching children.

“We envision establishing an ed tech ecosystem focused on change leaders and evidence-based transformations in education,” Jerie says. “We share these values with Penn GSE and look forward to the innovative solutions that come out of this initiative.” ■

Learn More



about Penn GSE’s giving priorities, visit penn.gse/priorities or contact us at 215.573.6623 or alumni@gse.upenn.edu

ONE APPROACH Is Not Enough

PENN GSE'S SHARON WOLF EXPLORES THE COMPLEXITIES OF CHILD LABOR AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN WEST AFRICA.

by Megan Goff



Photo by Ryan Collier

As an applied developmental psychologist, Associate Professor Sharon Wolf's career has focused on examining the links between poverty, social policies, education, and child development, most recently in West Africa. Never has the convergence of these issues been more apparent than in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which profoundly affected educational systems worldwide, especially in the developing nations where Wolf has been conducting research.

Now, Wolf is partnering on two critical studies with Innovations for Poverty Action, an international nonprofit, and the ministries of education in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. One explores the role of parental involvement in their child's education, and the other examines the interplay between household economic hardship and school quality in shaping children's development. Both seek to address the same underlying issue: how children's early educational experience affects their learning and development, and how policies, programs, and other interventions can improve these experiences.

We spoke with Wolf about the potential implications of her Jacobs Foundation-funded work, the evolving role of parents and families in the educational experience, and her take on what we can all learn from today's changing educational landscape.

Q Your work looks at the many factors, including parental involvement and the COVID-19 pandemic, that impact child learning outcomes. How has that research continued or evolved through your recent work with the Jacobs Foundation?

A Prior to this study, I had been doing some work on parent engagement in early childhood education, and we got some puzzling findings where engaging parents actually made things worse for kids. It opened our eyes to the fact that we need to think about what parents' preferences are. When we think about engaging them and designing interventions for them, we need to think, "What are the different barriers to engagement they're facing in their day-to-day lives?"

When schools were closed during the pandemic, parents became responsible for engaging students through remote learning. So, we adapted a text-message-based intervention we used in Côte d'Ivoire that was designed to support parent engagement.

We found that the results were largely reliant on the education level of the parents. For parents who had some years of formal schooling, we recorded improvements to engagement and to children's social and emotional development. For those parents who had no formal schooling, engagement and self-efficacy declined. Those parents felt they were being told they weren't doing the right things. It reduced confidence and engagement because they didn't feel like they could help their children. Now, we're hoping to take what we've learned and engage directly with parents to understand from them what they feel they are doing well and how they see their role in their child's education.

Q And what did you learn from your research in Côte d'Ivoire?

A This project is examining the role that child labor plays in education. Côte d'Ivoire is home to many rural cocoa farming communities, and, for these farmers, it's a family affair. Everyone helps harvest the beans, which means kids are balancing farm work with attending school.

We have developed a project with the Ministry of Education where we bring in two different approaches: the first approach being direct cash transfers to families, and the second being educational quality improvement through Teaching at the Right Level in schools, an instruction method designed to help children develop basic reading and mathematics skills by dividing them into groups based on learning needs, rather than age or grade. It's an ambitious study; there haven't been any studies which have looked at the multiple approaches together to address the root cause of child labor and poor learning outcomes.



Photos taken by Wolf's team show assessors working with students to collect data that will help assess the quality of preschool education in Ghana as part of Wolf's research. This work has found strong ties between parental levels of education and how engaged they are in the education of their children.

Q What inspires your work? Why is this an area you're so passionate about?

A For a long time, I focused mostly on early childhood education, driven by interests due to personal experience. We immigrated to the United States from Israel when I was three years old, and I immediately was enrolled in preschool. It was a big transition, but I was in a really wonderful environment, and it impacted everything—my adjustment, my ability to feel safe and cared for in this new country. I was really drawn to the role that teachers could play in that.

I stumbled into the work of parents because it was a priority area for the Ghanaian government, who I partnered with for several years. I was struck by what a powerful role parents can play in shaping education systems. It led me to want to learn more about the relationship between parents and teachers—and then, with the pandemic, parents became, in many cases, the sole adults shaping children's educational experiences. It got me more interested in how we can support them directly.

Wolf leads a training for assessors, who then went out in the field for a couple of months.

Q What do you want to explore next in your research?

A A lot of parenting programs are designed to try to get parents to do different things without addressing the economic and social constraints on them—just asking parents to engage more with their kids, or to talk more to their kids without taking into account that they're not home often because they're working, or those kinds of factors.

I am excited to see, when we actually let people do what they feel is best, but also try to address those constraints—like poverty—do we see changes in parenting practices? If school quality also improves, do parents see that? Without talking to parents about education, if we address those more structural issues, does their behavior change? And how does that compare to when we just try to change parenting behaviors without addressing the constraints. Taking a more systemic approach—targeting the inequalities and challenges that pose so much pressure and difficulty on families—as opposed to just working at the family level, that's another area of work I'd like to explore.



A View from Campus



MEETING THE PRESIDENT

Penn GSE was the first stop on President Liz Magill's tour of schools at Penn, during which she engaged with students and learned firsthand about the School's work and impact. This fall, President Magill also visited the Penn Alexander School and the Henry C. Lea School, two of Penn GSE's whole-school partnerships in Philadelphia.

Photo credit: Quinn Brown

PARTNERSHIPS INCREASE IMPACT

For the second year in a row, Penn GSE and the Office of School and Community Engagement partnered with the Netter Center for Community Partnerships to support summer learning in West Philadelphia. The 2022 program offered academic and mental health support to 267 students in first through eighth grades, a 20 percent increase from the 2021 program, and provided professional development to twenty-four teachers and counselors at two sites.

Photo credit: Quinn Brown



COMING SOON

Made possible by the *Extraordinary Impact* Campaign, Penn GSE's historic building expansion project is underway and on schedule. The School's footprint will expand to include new classrooms, student and collaboration spaces, and a new home for Catalyst @ Penn GSE. Construction will continue through the spring and summer, with anticipated occupancy in the fall of 2023.

Conceptual Design Image

STARTING LINE

Penn GSE's Office of Student Success, formerly the Office of Student Services, welcomed a new class this fall during the first on-campus orientation since the fall of 2019. The most diverse student population in the School's history, the 2022 incoming class includes 773 master's students, twenty-two PhD students, and sixty-four EdD students.

Photo credit: Joe Mac Creative for Penn GSE



Creating Opportunities for Learners Worldwide

Penn GSE's International Educational Development Program preps students to tackle systemic issues around the world.

By Lini S. Kadaba

When Yasameen Mohammadi interned with Save the Children in Serbia during college, she met a girl who, much like herself, had emigrated from Afghanistan to escape the war.

Unlike that girl, though, Mohammadi was able to pursue her education, thanks to her family's financial resources. She earned an undergraduate degree at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where she studied business administration and management.

"Her family couldn't afford education," Mohammadi says of the young refugee. The encounter made Mohammadi realize that she could use her own education to create opportunities for others. "I think every human being is capable and also has the potential to do great things, but, a lot of times, they're not given the opportunity."

So began her desire to work with refugees.

"The problem was that I didn't have a lot of knowledge about the field of education," she says. "I knew how it impacted me, but not all the ins and outs."

Penn GSE's International Educational Development Program (IEDP) is helping Mohammadi learn those ins and outs, and it is doing the same for many other students seeking to gain the skills and knowledge needed to advance educational opportunities in developing countries worldwide. Offered since 2010, the one-and-a-half year master's program prepares students for careers by building an understanding of the interplay of politics, economics, and culture and how these dynamics impact educational systems and contexts globally.

IEDP uses a cohort model, annually enrolling about thirty

students who hail from countries across the globe, creating a diverse range of perspectives and making for an especially diverse experience and strong professional network for graduates. The program's curriculum enables students to build an interdisciplinary mindset, examining a range of topics from early childhood education and human rights to nonprofit leadership and technology for development. In addition to foundational courses, students have access to courses across the Penn campus.

IEDP is designed to effect social change through education and is committed to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and uplifting marginalized communities around the world, including in the United States.

Bringing those lofty goals to life requires specificity, which is why the program's curriculum includes simulations to hone practical skills. One of the program's core classes, "International Educational Development Practice: Tools, Techniques, and Ethics," has a project-based assignment in which students work in groups to create mock responses to real—but expired—requests for proposals from bilateral organizations and other international organizations. They then work together to design a program, incorporating monitoring and evaluation tools—all the while learning technical skills and tackling on-the-ground realities and ethical issues.

In other classes, students develop policy briefs, help organizations create curricula, and write op-eds. "I think tangible skills are really important and a cornerstone of our program," says program director Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher.

Another feature, she says, is a twelve-week immersion

internship—available to all students in good academic standing—that provides real-world experiences with the help of more than twenty-five partner agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and major NGOs around the world. "It's absolutely vital for students to be in a country and learn from local people doing the work," Ghaffar-Kucher says. "It's a paraprofessional experience, really learning to put into practice what they're learning in the classroom."

For Mohammadi, Penn GSE's IEDP proved to be the right fit.

"Its mission aligns perfectly with what I want to achieve," says Mohammadi, who wants to design and implement education programs to help refugee populations. "My main purpose for getting into the field is to help eradicate gender and geographic constraints on freedoms, independence, and socio-economic mobility."

Ghaffar-Kucher says the surging numbers of international refugees underscore the need for IEDP graduates: There are 89.3 million people who have been displaced by war, violence, persecution, and human rights abuses, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. That figure is more than double what it was a decade ago and increased by nearly seven million in 2021 alone.

"There's a lot of work to do," Ghaffar-Kucher says. "We need creative, dedicated people to tackle those problems."

Dawn Scholastica Adrian of Miri, Malaysia, who is enrolled in IEDP with Mohammadi, interned over the summer with UNESCO's inclusion and gender team—based in Paris—and extended the experience through the fall. Adrian is building

a database that examines Indigenous language issues of small islands and developing states, such as Fiji, Cape Verde, and others, with the goal of assessing whether a mother-tongue-based, multilingual education may succeed in preserving the language, culture, and history.

"It's the most astonishing research for me," she says, noting how Indigenous people of many small islands learn English or French in school, but not Indigenous languages.

The experience is helping Adrian formulate a new approach for Indigenous education in her native Malaysia—a career goal that was the driver for her pursuit of a master's from IEDP.

"Indigenous language is a way to pass down stories, generation to generation," Adrian says. "If you move away from that, you begin to lose a little bit of your culture, of your history."

Adrian, herself, is from the Iban tribal community, where she has often been reminded of the importance of education—and the great need for access to it. She feels fortunate to have gone to school in New Zealand, where her father worked in the oil and gas industry, with stints in British and American international schools in Malaysia. Adrian studied English literature and film at the University of Exeter near London, graduating with her

"I think tangible skills are really important and a cornerstone of our program."

—Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher

Director, Penn GSE's International Educational Development Program and Senior Fellow, Literacy, Culture, and International Education





“Everything they’re teaching me at IEDP, and the encouragement of my professors, is giving me the tools to form [Indigenous education] myself.”

—Dawn Scholastica Adrian
Current Student, International Educational Development Program

Her family fled to Canada, and Mohammadi no longer envisions herself returning to work in Afghanistan, where women’s rights have been strongly curtailed by the Taliban, saying she would no longer feel safe.

Even now, Mohammadi is disheartened at times. “It’s been a year,” she says, “and not even international organizations can do anything about it.”

The current climate has only deepened her resolve to stay strong and focused on her goal of creating innovative refugee programs. “Even if I could help one or two people, that would be nice,” she says of her IRC and future work. “I want these people, these families, to have opportunity.”

With the help of IEDP, Mohammadi adds, she is doing just that. “The whole point [of IEDP] is to basically help you help other people recognize their capabilities,” she says, “and give them the tools to use those capabilities to do good, to become successful individuals.” ■



Mohammadi visited the Rocky Mountains during her time in Colorado working with the International Rescue Committee.

bachelor’s in 2019. She says she learned about her culture by talking with relatives during visits home.

Her varied educational experiences opened her eyes to the importance of education, particularly for Indigenous people. They also raised the possibility of creating a program that combines the best elements of each system. In New Zealand, for example, she saw how the Maori language and culture were incorporated into the mainstream curriculum. In Malaysia, she worked with rural and Indigenous populations, offering remedial support, she says.

“I think there is space where both of these can be combined,” she says. Adrian envisions a program where Malaysia’s Indigenous people are integrated into mainstream education, with remedial support, while they also are grouped together for lessons in their language, culture, and history.

IEDP, she says, is preparing her to make her vision a reality.

“I didn’t know how to build that space,” Adrian says. “I was hoping someone at Penn would just tell me how to start Indigenous education. I realized it was really on me. Everything they’re teaching me at IEDP, and the encouragement of my professors, is giving me the tools to form it myself.”

Mohammadi, meanwhile, is working with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), based in Denver, Colorado, for the summer and fall. As a youth enrollment specialist, she assists refugees, including many from Afghanistan, navigating the US education system by helping them enroll their children and make connections with local organizations.

The past year, however, has not been easy for Mohammadi, given America’s pullout from Afghanistan and the Taliban’s rise.

“I’m not going to lie,” she says. “In the beginning, it was very difficult for me to stay focused. I doubted myself whether education meant anything.”

Mohammadi has watched in horror as her country has fallen apart and education for women is once again restricted.

Celebration of Educators 2022 Highlights Educational Access



◀ (From left) Matt Hartley, Rachel Baker, Amalia Daché, Sarita Brown

▼ (From left) Aizhan Kul-Mukhammed, Ufuoma C. Abiola, Matt Hartley, Melissa Calvert, Robert Asante



On a day filled with celebration and meaningful conversation, Penn GSE honored six alumni and highlighted the importance of college access during Penn’s Alumni Weekend at the Penn GSE’s annual Celebration of Educators on May 14, 2022.

The program’s panel, *Voices in Education: Addressing College Access*, included discussions about how to build and support diverse and inclusive institutions, how to increase access to higher education, and how to meet the evolving needs of educators and learners. The discussion featured Sarita Brown, cofounder and president of the national nonprofit *Excelencia in Education*—which is dedicated to accelerating Latino student success—and two Penn GSE associate professors in higher education, Rachel Baker and Amalia Daché. Deputy Dean and Board of Advisors’ Chair of Education Matt Hartley moderated the panel.

The discussion was followed by the Education Alumni Awards, which annually recognize the extraordinary impact made by members of Penn GSE’s global community.

2022 EDUCATION ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS

Penn GSE Educator of the Year Award
Ufuoma C. Abiola, GED’12, GRD’17

Helen C. Bailey Award
Cecilia Orphan, GR’15

William B. Castetter Alumni Award of Merit
Melissa Calvert, GED’00

Ethel and Allen “Buddy” Carruth Sustained Leadership in Education Award
Kristin Clark, GRD’12

The Penn GSE Recent Alumni/Early Career Award of Merit
Aizhan Kul-Mukhammed, GED’19

The Kwame Nkrumah Distinguished Alumni Award
Robert Asante, GRD’19

We want to hear from you!



Learn more about the awards and nominate an exceptional member of the Penn GSE

community by visiting penn.gse/alumnominations. Submissions received by January 31 will be considered for the 2023 Education Alumni Awards.



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.



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1950s

Maxine Schnall-Mitnick, ED'56, has optioned three of her novels, two for a TV series and the other for a movie or TV series. The books are the Jackie Kennedy spy novels *Paris to Die For* and *Spy in a Little Black Dress*, published under the pen name Maxine Kenneth, and *Prison Camp Confidential*.

1960s

Eric White, GED'67, GRD'75, received the 2022 Leigh S. Shaffer Award from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. The annual award recognizes an article submitted to either the *NACADA Journal* or *NACADA Review* that contributed significantly to the scholarship of academic advising.

1970s

Myrna Skobel Agris, CW'63, GED'73, GRD'79, has been promoted to vice president at Morgan Stanley Wealth Management.

Paul Harrison, C'77, GED'78, retired in the spring of 2021 after a forty-four-year career at Middlesex School in Concord, MA. He spent thirty-five years teaching history and coaching soccer, and nine years as a senior advancement officer.

Juanita Martin, GED'72, a US Navy veteran, retired jazz singer, teacher, and social worker, wrote a book, *A Taste of Life—Prisms—Through a Glass Darkly*, about her ancestors in the Stroud family, early settlers of Colorado Springs, CO. The book includes the story of her late father, Kelley Dolphous Stroud, who qualified for the 1928 Olympic trials in track and field.

Evangelia Styliara-Karatza, GED'79, has spent her career teaching in private institutions and developing cultural/art education programs for children.

Sara Wenger, GED'79, has taught in public schools from Philadelphia to Allentown, PA, since graduating from Penn GSE. She currently teaches first-year writing and poetry as an adjunct professor at Arcadia University.

1980s

Ann Dapice, NU'74, GR'80, is working to publish the second edition of her book, *To Thine Own Self: Values and Ethics in a Complicated World*. Originated from her research and supported by **Charles Dwyer, HOM'71**, this edition offers insight and tools for understanding the conflicting values driving our words, thoughts, and actions.

Gwendolyn Hawkins, GED'88, is celebrating thirty-one years as an educator in public and private schools and preschools. She spent twenty-one of those years teaching in the public school system in Loudoun County, VA.

Leslie Nicholas, GED'85, a trainer at Walt Disney World, received the company's highest honor, the Walt Disney Legacy Award. Previously, he taught in the Wyoming Valley West School District in Plymouth, PA, for thirty-four years.

1990s

Deborah Bender, GED'92, has taught in Philadelphia public schools for twenty-seven years, including the past thirteen providing instruction in web design and digital media production at the Academies at Roxborough High School.

Kristi Clements, GED'97, is in her twenty-third year of teaching. She founded a FIRST Robotics team at Easton Area High School in Eaton, PA, where she teaches ninth-grade science. The Easton RoboRovers just completed their first successful season after a rocky first two years, due to the pandemic.

Alison Cook-Sather, GR'96, received the 2022 Stanford University GSE Alumni Excellence in Education Award for her Students as Learners and Teachers program, which pairs undergraduate consultants with faculty to create more equitable and anti-racist pedagogy and stems from collaboration with **Ondrea Reisinger, GED'93**. Her most recent publication is *Co-Creating Equitable Teaching and Learning: Structuring Student Voice into Higher Education* (Harvard Education Press).

Michelle Emery, GED'92, is in her thirtieth year teaching French, including eight years in Paris. For the past eighteen years, she has been teaching high school French in Pennsylvania and Vermont and has led student trips to Quebec, France, and Morocco. She also established a French exchange for her school with a lycée in Pau, France.

Greg Dubrow, GED'98, GR'03, moved from San Francisco to Lyon, France, in 2022 to take a course for the Cambridge Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. He works as a freelance English teacher, mostly in universities in Lyon.

Amy Feldman, GED'94, L'94, completed her book, *Ezra Exposed*. Intended to initiate conversations about internet safety with elementary school children, the book was published November 1 by Blackstone Publishing.

Jennifer Glynn, GED'97, GR'03, an independent consultant focusing on college access and success, was selected to participate with the 2022 National Working Group on Advanced Education, which makes policy recommendations aimed at reducing inequality of achievement for high-ability students from diverse backgrounds. Previously, she spent ten years leading research at the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

Margaret Haykal, C'87, GED'92, uses her Penn-honed skills while planning lessons for her dream job teaching adults and children how to swim and enjoy the water safely.

Tania Israel, C'88, GED'92, was appointed associate dean for diversity, equity, and inclusion for U.C. Santa Barbara's Gevirtz Graduate School of Education.

David Lawrence, GED'91, began his twentieth year in education as principal of Dover-Sherborn Middle School in Dover, MA. He taught middle-school science and math for thirteen years and served as an assistant principal for six years.

Gloria McNeal, GNU'75, GR'98, received the Pioneering Spirit Award by the American Association of Critical Care Nurses. The award recognizes significant contributions that influence progressive and critical-care nursing and relate to the association's mission, vision, and values.

Michael-Joseph Mercanti-Anthony, GED'99, GRD'12, wrote the article "Are You Wrong Like Me?" for *Educational Leadership*, a publication of ASCD, an educational nonprofit dedicated to empowering educators.

Lisa Morenoff, GED'98, was recently named the lower school special

education case manager at the charter school where she has worked for eighteen years.

Kathleen Murphey, C'87, G'91, GED'92, GR'06, has her Rainbow Tales collection of twelve sex-positive fairy tales now available in paperback from JMS Books. Her other fairy tales have appeared in *Woman's Voice*, *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, and on other platforms.

Scott Riotto, C'90, GED'91, is in his thirty-second year of teaching history in the New Jersey public school system.

William Smith, GED'91, GR'94, retired from a position in regulatory affairs in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology. He is now a part-time substitute teacher and an educational rights advocate for a foster child.

2000s

Theodore Burnes, GED'01, wrote the *Handbook of Consensual Non-Monogamy Affirming Mental Health Practice*, published in August 2022 by Roman & Littlefield.



John Craig, GRD'08, was appointed interim dean of University College at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He also is the founding editor of the *Journal of Access, Retention and Inclusion in Higher Education*, a scholarly peer-reviewed publication.

Rahshene Davis, GED'03, would like to build a Penn GSE network in the Houston, TX, area and hopes to connect with fellow alumni soon.

Malik Edwards, GR'06, was named the inaugural John D. Fassett Professor of Law at the North Carolina Central School of Law in May 2021 and was appointed interim dean in July 2022.

Tepei Hayashi, GED'07, the study-abroad coordinator for Temple University's Japan campus, coordinated the visit of nine Ukrainian students who fled their country after the Russian invasion.

Francis M. Hult, GR'07, has been elected chair of the Committee on Language and Languages for the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations.

Romilla Karnati, GED'00, GR'08, is the senior director of Early Childhood Care and Development at Save the Children, US. She provides strategic leadership to the ECCD team and technical assistance to countries in Africa and Asia and is involved with programming for children from birth to three years.

Cristina Keeton, GED'06, who teaches middle school Spanish in the Loudoun County, VA, public schools, was nominated for *The Washington Post* Teacher of the Year for 2021-22.

Esther Kim, GED'05, teaches research methodology courses and equity and inclusion at Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California.

Richard Marchini, GRD'05, has retired from public education after thirty-two years and now serves as upper school director for The Quaker School of Horsham in Horsham, PA.

Julian McNeil, GED'09, WEV'11, has been promoted to director of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion at the David Geffen School of Medicine at

UCLA. He previously served as the Anti-Racism Roadmap Program manager.

Adam Parrott-Sheffer, GED’06, with co-authors Jen Cheatham and Rodney Thomas, published *Entry Planning for Equity Focused Leaders* with Harvard Education Press in October 2022.

Joseph Petrosino, GRD’07, is chief academic officer at Educational Assurance Solutions, where he writes about the relationship between education and humor. He also consults on special education, career and tech education, trust building, and educational leadership.

Jeanine Staples, GRD’05, was promoted in May 2020 to the rank of full professor, with tenure, at Penn State University.

Jordan Tegtmeyer, GED’08, GRD’21, was appointed associate dean for finance and administration in the Office of the Dean of the Faculty at Princeton University.

Joan Torbet, GR’01, accepted a position with Pennsylvania College in Lancaster, PA, teaching clinical techniques to students seeking an associate’s of science in nursing.

James Wadley, GR’01, is director of the Sex Therapy Program at the Council for Relationships in Philadelphia, as well as professor and chair of the Counseling and Human Services Department at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. As a licensed professional counselor, he also maintains a private practice in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Elliot Weinbaum, GR’04, was recently appointed chief philanthropy officer at the William Penn Foundation, where he will oversee an annual grant budget of more than \$120 million and lead grant-making activities. Previously, he was program director for the foundation’s Great Learning program.

Austin D. Williams, GED’09, completed a fellowship in breast surgical oncology at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, NY. He will be joining the

faculty at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia as an assistant professor in the Department of Surgical Oncology.

Sally Winterton, GRD’00, professor emerita at West Chester University, has held many roles during her tenure and currently serves on the College of Education and Social Work Advisory Council and on the New Faculty Orientation Committee. A longtime educator, she previously worked as a teacher and principal, and was director of personnel in Pennsylvania public school districts.

Regina Zurbano, GED’03, CGS’04, is the new director of curriculum and instruction for middle grades at the Palmdale School District in Palmdale, CA, where she also spent her adolescence.

2010s

Alejandra Abusada, GED’19, joined Partners of the Americas in April 2022 as a senior program officer managing US Department of Labor-funded projects in Latin America in the Child Protection Unit. Her work focusing on mental health for single mothers in Peru continues.

Shade Adu, GED’11, received a doctorate in curriculum and instruction with a concentration in multicultural education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in December 2021. Her research centers on the experiences of African American women entrepreneurs who have PhDs.



Elaine Allard, GR’10, is an associate professor of educational studies at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, PA, where she was recently appointed inaugural director of the new Teaching and Learning Commons. With psychology professor Barbara Thelamour, Allard was awarded a Spencer Foundation small grant to support a mixed-method research project at an immigrant-serving high school in Philadelphia.

Tony Alleyne, GRD’16, founder and executive director of Delaware College Scholars in Wilmington, DE, was a winner of an award from the Black Voices for Black Justice Fund.

Kathryn Brossa, C’13, GED’18, is completing her first year as the director of student information and registrar at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. She participated in the University-wide Next Generation Student System implementation.

Jeannette Bruno, GED’12, earned her credential as a certified professional from the Society for Human Resource Management. She is working toward a credential in foresight through The Futures School.

Peter Cavanaugh, GRD’15, has been appointed assistant professor in technology and organizational leadership at the University of Bridgeport in Bridgeport, CT, beginning in the 2022 fall semester.

Bingbing Chen, GED’18, supports career development among Michigan State University’s Chinese alumni and students in China. She recently received the university’s Best University-Corporate Collaboration Award on behalf of MSU given by a China-based employer.

Michael Cioco, GRD’18, president of Rowan College at Burlington County in Mount Laurel, NJ, has been named a 2022–23 New Presidents Fellow by the Aspen Institute College Excellence

Program, recognizing twenty-five promising and innovative community college presidents.

Victoria Creamer, GRD’18, was selected as Durham Public Schools’ 2021–22 Principal of the Year in Durham, NC. She is one of fifty-five principals in the district, which serves about 32,000 pupils.

Aubrey Daniels, GED’15, GED’16, has accepted a position as assistant professor at Rutgers University in the Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs.

Rachel Demma, GRD’18, recently left a career in education policy to oversee the education department at Port Discovery, a children’s museum in Baltimore, MD. Research from her dissertation also was published in the *Journal of Early Childhood Research*.

Dexter D. Evans, GED’18, was named the inaugural director of donor experience at the newly opened National Museum of African American Music in Nashville, TN.

Christine Galib, GED’13, published her first novel, a Grail-quest archaeological mystery called *Etched in Stone*. The book is intended to empower individuals to form strong partnerships and teams.

Edward Gallagher, GRD’17, recently started a new position as the assistant head of school for academics at the Wilmington Friends School in Delaware.

Alounso Gilzene, GED’15, is an assistant professor at Florida State University specializing in restorative justice and school leadership. He has been featured on the *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership’s Jabber* podcast.

Margaret Hadinger, GRD’14, has joined OnlineMedEd as director, academic and student affairs, where she supports their mission of changing the approach and delivery of medical education. She also recently launched Hadinger Coaching & Consulting LLC.



Tyrah Hodge, GED’13, is the education officer at the Ministry of Education in the British Virgin Islands, assessing educational performance to certify individuals, upholding regional standards, and advancing quality in assessment matters globally.

Chimere Holmes, GED’15, launched the BIPOC Sisters’ Circle Outpatient Therapy Group at the Women’s Emotional Wellness Center of Main Line Health in Philadelphia. The BIPOC group seeks to promote diversity and inclusivity by providing a safe space for women to process mental health challenges that are often exacerbated by racial disparities and inequities.

Shannon Kane, GRD’13, joined the College of Education at the University of Maryland, College Park, as an assistant clinical professor teaching undergraduate and graduate students while researching literacy pedagogies and the influence of teacher identity on pedagogy.

Jessica Koehler, GR’18, recently cofounded the Phare Education, LLC, with two partners. The consultancy works to support the holistic thriving of teens and young adults through evaluation, professional development, curriculum, and youth coaching services for adolescents or those who support them.

Kristina Lewis, GED’12, GR’22, started as an assistant professor of TESOL and applied linguistics in the English Department at Illinois State University this fall.

Rina Madhani, GED’19, is executive director and cofounder of Start Lighthouse, which has distributed more than 21,000 multicultural books to students in Bronx, NY, since its founding in 2019. Literacy Hubs, a new, mission-driven initiative, utilizes unused space in libraries to provide resources and opportunities for students, families, and the broader community.

Christopher Nittle, GED’16, has been applying the principles learned in Penn GSE’s School Leadership Program to corporate enablement at Pega.

Alysia Patel, GED’15, GED’16, started a private counseling practice in 2020. She spent the previous four years as a counselor working with a diverse range of populations and environments in Denver, CO.

Jasmine Phillips, GED’17, is one of twenty 2022 Envestnet Scholarship recipients, a scholarship for select individuals within the financial planning profession.

Michael Roth, GRD’16, was appointed chief academic officer/deputy superintendent of the Allentown School District in Allentown, PA, and will lead its Department of Whole Student Learning. He was also elected treasurer of the Pennsylvania Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Allison Still, GED’10, has accepted a position as senior digital editor of supplemental literacy for Savvas Learning Company. She previously worked in the Philadelphia school system for fifteen years.

Joseph Sweeney, GRD’16, leads an organization moving to bring Decision Education, or the teaching and learning associated with skillful judgment formation and decision-making, to K-12 schools. Recently, the organization published a set of learning standards, launched its third national cohort of fellows, established graduate research scholarships, and began season three of the *Decision Education* podcast.

Mengchen Zhang, GED'17, moved from the private sector to cofound the Center of Activities and Academic Support at an international school in China. She intends to share her knowledge in early education, tech-immersive curriculum designs, and expertise in running businesses.



2020s

Lilian Ajayi-Ore, GRD'20, was named one of the Top 50 Learning and Development Professional Award winners by OnConferences and her peers in the field.

Keon Berry, GED'21, is the new director of parent services at Quality Care for Children, a forty-year-old company that seeks to equip families and child care providers with the knowledge and resources to support infants and young children in Georgia.

Abdulrahman Bindamnan, GED'21, is beginning a PhD program at the University of Minnesota, to study ways to achieve transformative positive change in conflict-affected environments.

Gregory D. Blake, W'76, GED'22, is pursuing dual career tracks since completing his Penn GSE program. He is a resident in counseling at a firm in Richmond, VA, and serves on the board of trustees of the Cancer Hope Network.

Jasmine Blanks Jones, GR'21, hosted four youth artists from Liberia on their first American tour of a Liberian bicentennial play, *200 Years of Returns*, in collaboration with Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's Museum Theater Department and Angels of Praise, a Baltimore dance team. The US-based artists will join the Liberian team for a closing performance of this historical drama in Liberia in December.

Ashley Bryant, GED'22, has started at Jackson-Reed High School in Washington, DC, teaching sophomores and juniors the subjects modern world and US history.

Tina Fletcher, GR'22, was named by *Arkansas Business* magazine to the Top 40 under 40 list for 2022 and appeared on the publication's May '23 cover.

Yuna Hur, GED'20, cowrote and published her first children's book, *ABCs of Positivity*, with her cousin, Christina Shim. Throughout the book, diverse characters guide readers through what positive thinking looks like in their communities.

Keith Keating, GRD'22, is chief learning officer at Archwell and founder of the Archwell Academy, where he uses learning sciences as a scientific method supporting the lifecycle of global talent. His career spans more than two decades in learning and development.

Lee Means, GED'22, is director of family equity and justice at Family Equality, an organization that advocates for LGBTQ+ families and children.

Share Your News

Fill out our Alumni Notes form at penn.gse/alumni to tell us your updates and news.



Wenzhi Pan, GED'21, GED'22, joined Vanderbilt University Counseling Center as a social justice and inclusion counselor. She works to continue providing culturally sensitive mental health care to students at a college campus.

Alaina V. Robinson, GED'21, is a policy specialist at the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration in the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy and Administration. In addition to collaborating on policy research and public service projects, she researches ways to improve student outcomes and promote college access to high school students in Delaware.

Jonathan Stark, GRD'21, was named executive director of Northwestern Mutual's Data Science Institute, in partnership with Marquette University and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He previously worked at Columbia University for seventeen years.

Jeremy Wright-Kim, GR'21, joined the faculty of the University of Michigan as an assistant professor in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education this fall. He will be teaching courses in finance and public policy.

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

TIPS FROM THE EDUCATOR'S PLAYBOOK

Keeping Students Present Four Ways to Address Absenteeism



Michael Gottfried

Absenteeism is on the rise. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, district-to-district measures of absenteeism were already inconsistent—and the situation has not improved during the past two years. Virtual learning and mandatory COVID-related quarantines have introduced complicated new layers into the quantification of being in school.

Penn GSE Professor of Education Policy Michael Gottfried has long focused on pupil absenteeism. Research, including some of his own, shows that absenteeism affects achievement, socioemotional development, and feelings of alienation. Increased absenteeism is linked to increases in student engagement in illicit activities, such as drug or alcohol use. Moreover, it affects the achievement and absenteeism rates of the students around them.

Thankfully, there are steps to take that can help. In conjunction with co-authors from Brown University, Gottfried has compiled an evidence brief that provides strategies for addressing absenteeism. Here, he shares four approaches for parents and caregivers, teachers, and schools.

(continued on next page) →

Keeping Students Present Four Ways to Address Absenteeism



Create and Maintain Routines

Research shows that morning habits can create a huge barrier to getting kids into school. Schools can confront and overcome this by creating and supporting routines that move kids in the right direction. This might include serving breakfast in school, ensuring the district doesn't cut school buses from the budget, or providing parents and caregivers with the resources they need to create structured morning routines at home. Studies across multiple fields have found that vague or nonexistent routines can create anxiety. Maintaining routines for students can be an effective way to limit anxiety at school.



Provide a More Welcoming Environment

Improving engagement and minimizing absenteeism in the classroom can sometimes be as simple as having teachers stand in the doorway as students enter and address them by name. Data show that diversity in the teacher workforce is another important factor affecting student engagement. Welcoming students and supporting a diverse teaching workforce can go a long way toward improving engagement and absenteeism without revamping the curriculum.



Provide Academic Supports

When students miss school, they miss content. What's important is to stay on top of academically remediating students—even if they've only missed a day. While this unfortunately does require more time and resources of the teacher and school, it's critical to ensuring students don't fall behind. After-school education or teaching assistants could be deeply valuable to helping students who missed school keep pace with the rest of their class.



Keep an Honest Emotional Dialogue

Students who miss or become disengaged with a significant amount of schooling can start to feel alienated and frustrated, and this can potentially lead to more conflict. Consider approaching these students with the aid of emotional resources such as counseling. Behavioral support can help keep students out of the spiral of feeling left out, missing school because of feeling left out, and then feeling even more left out because they've missed more school.



Want More Advice?

These tips are adapted from *The Educator's Playbook*, a Penn GSE newsletter that distills faculty research into useful advice for educators and parents. Visit penn.gse.upenn.edu/playbook to sign up.



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