

Ed.

HARVARD ED. MAGAZINE



The Battle Over Charter Schools

HOW DID THINGS BECOME SO POLARIZED?



SUMMER 2017 □ ISSUE Nº 157

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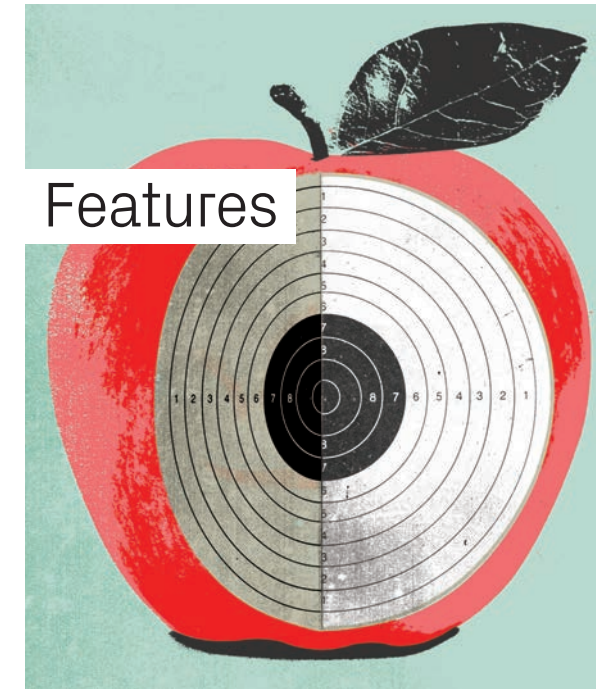
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The Battle Over Charters

Charter schools once had wide bipartisan support from educators, parents, and others. What happened?

STORY BY ZACHARY JASON



A School of Their Own

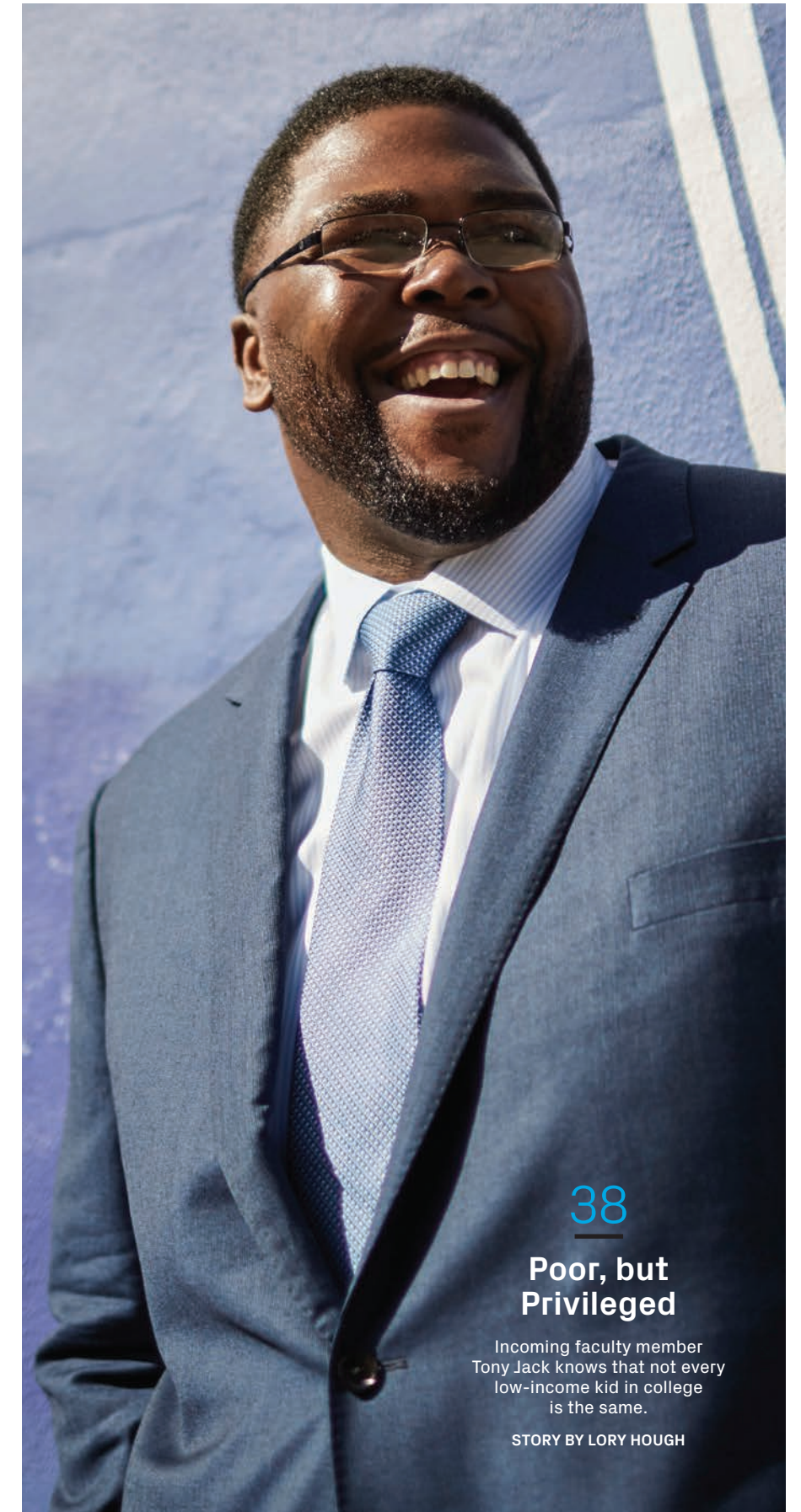
One alum in North Carolina is giving homeschooled kids the structure of a traditional school.

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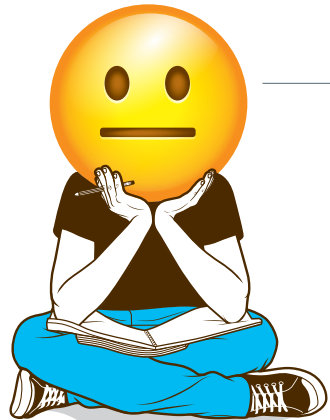
Poor, but Privileged

Incoming faculty member Tony Jack knows that not every low-income kid in college is the same.

STORY BY LORY HOUGH

Convo.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION: SEND YOUR COMMENTS TO LETTERS@GSE.HARVARD.EDU



1 Turns out our readers were not bored by our story, “Bored Out of Their Minds,” from the winter 2017 issue. In fact, metrics show that it reached nearly a million people on Facebook alone. One thread that generated a number of comments had to do with dramatically increasing project-based learning as a way to keep students engaged. This prompted Serena Richardson to write how much she disliked group projects when she was a student and how she still disliked group work as a nurse. Parents also got into the discussion. One mentioned that at her daughter’s school, group work is common but has an interesting twist: Team members can be “fired” at any point if they aren’t carrying their weight. Another parent wrote that he was impressed with all the projects his fourth-grader was taking part in at school, including one that combined literature and social studies and ended with the students running a mock presidential campaign. “There have been relatively few worksheets,” he wrote, “and I’ve never seen him so excited to go to school every day.” **ANDREW FRISHMAN, ED.L.D.’14**, wrote that he appreciated some of the points in the story but “was struck by the near complete absence of any mention of leveraging students’ talents/passions and bringing them into school,” as well as the lack of discussion on engaging students in authentic, out-of-school learning experiences such as interest-based internships. (Note: There was a related sidebar to the story by Associate Professor Jal Mehta that included some information on the importance of extracurriculars and electives.) Another reader, a former English teacher, suggested that the key, in addition to engagement, was empowerment. Students who are empowered, he wrote, truly own their learning.



2 Another feature from the winter 2017 issue, “No More Sink the Sub,” about the unique concept for finding and using substitute teachers created by Parachute Teachers, generated not just comments from readers, but also outside media coverage. In mid-February, for example, the *Atlantic* ran a Q&A with Parachute founder and current Ed.L.D. student **SARAH CHERRY RICE**, who talked about the VCR cart being wheeled out every time a substitute came to her school in Arkansas, where she grew up. That same month, *Education Next* looked at the story the *Atlantic* had written, calling Parachute a company “attempting to disrupt the market for substitute teachers.” Just a week earlier, an *Education Week Teacher* blog ran a short story about our story and the work. And in January, *Smithsonian.com* also did a Q&A with the headline, “Forget Substitute Teachers. Parachute Teachers May Be the Future.”

WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN

In our winter issue, Dean Ryan’s Twitter username was incorrectly given at the bottom of page 2. His correct username is [@DeanJimRyan](https://twitter.com/DeanJimRyan).

Past Tense

With this issue’s cover story focused on the charter school battle, we wondered when *Ed.* magazine first wrote about charters. It looks like the initial piece was from December 1996, in a theme issue on innovation that looked at what happens when people experiment in education. One of the features profiled Boston-based City on a Hill, an early charter in Massachusetts that opened its doors in September 1995, just three years after the nation’s first charter opened. The school, then located in a few rooms on the second floor of a YMCA, was the brainchild of Sarah Kass. A former teacher who took a leave of absence from the Ed School’s doctoral program, Kass was serving as the school’s principal. In the article, she mentions that despite community support for the school — including teacher buy-in, with 360 teachers vying that first year for four teaching positions — there was also pressure to show that what they were trying to do mattered. As the story noted:









“The intense scrutiny of City on a Hill and of other charters means that there has been pressure from the beginning to produce and document results. Asked to assess the school’s progress, Kass responded that ‘the evidence is everywhere.’

“‘How about 97 percent attendance every day?’ she asked for

starters. And 97 percent is the low end. ...‘Today I saw a group of kids of all colors doing complex algebra with complete confidence,’ she continued. ‘I saw a freshman reading *The Odyssey* and discussing it, kids writing papers on Tennyson poems and Shakespearean sonnets, kids using the computer with ease. I saw two of my students address an audience of 200 at Harvard. You tell me where that happens in an inner-city school.’

“As for the question of balkanization, Kass responded that there is already a two-tiered system in Boston (regular public and exam schools) and charters can make the situation better, not worse, by giving students more choices. ...‘Our goal should be to make every public school a school we should be excited to send our own children to.’”

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FROM TOP: TODD DETWILER; JONATHAN KOZOWYK

Behind the Story

Lory Hough, Editor in Chief



Last year, way before the November election, it was impossible to read through my Facebook feed without there being at least one or two posts from friends every day urging others to vote no on 2, a ballot question in Massachusetts that would have lifted the cap on charter schools. Some of the comments highlighted the belief that charters cherry pick only the best and brightest or that funding for charters “siphons” money from traditional public schools. I remember not quite knowing how to react. For years working here at the Ed School, I had written about Ed School alums who worked in charters or who had started them and were doing incredible, creative work — work that showed how having options for teachers, parents, and students was making a huge difference, especially in urban districts. Why, I wondered, were my Facebook friends not seeing this? How had charters become the enemy? I decided that this polarization in thinking had to be addressed in *Ed.*, in what became our cover story, “The Battle Over Charter Schools.”

 WATCH AN ASKWITH DEBATE ON THE MASSACHUSETTS CHARTER CAP: [GSE.HARVARD.EDU/ED/EXTRAS](https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ed/extras)

Intro.

NEWS + NOTES FROM APPIAN WAY



Two Rabbits and a Hand-Crank MP3

STUDENTS HELP CHILDEN FORMALLY LEARN IN THE FOREST

STORY BY LORY HOUGH

It was one of those ideas that happened by chance. A couple of years ago, [SARAH STRADER, ED.M.'17](#), was in Cameroon, conducting research on education among the Baka, a group of nomadic hunter-gatherers living in the eastern forests of the country. Strader learned that Baka children rarely attend formal schooling, especially in the early years, in part because of their nomadic lifestyle, but also because of language barriers — the Baka speak Baka while in most schools in the region, lessons are in French and Bantu. But Strader also learned that families wanted — and needed — their children to learn more.

“While the Baka have a perfect mastery of the forest, it is threatened by logging, mining, and poaching,” she says. “Children need to know not only how to thrive in the forest, but also how to protect it and engage with outsiders on an empowered footing.”

But how? Beyond the nomadic lifestyle, there are other barriers to formal learning: No electricity and the shady forest provides little opportunity for solar power. There are no books because the Baka don’t have a written language.

By chance one day, Strader noticed a couple of Baka kids listening to Bible stories on a Saber MP3 machine — a small hand-crank device that was left behind a decade earlier by missionaries.

“Parents and I came to realize the potential of this tool for education, especially given their nomadic lifestyle,” she says. “From there, I developed the idea into a project model, in collaboration with our incredible local partner ASTRADHE, to create the project that is being implemented now.” Even the

name of the project — originally Chasing Two Rabbits, now just Two Rabbits — came from the Baka themselves when a father initially discussed the fact that having his children learn the local forest knowledge and pursue formal education was like trying to chase two rabbits at once: If you try, you will lose them both.

Now, using a research-based curriculum that Strader co-created with Baka parents, local Baka members (whom Strader communicates with in French) record music, songs, and educational stories onto the hand-crank MP3 in their language to teach preliteracy skills. All references are of local things that the children know from the forest and their lives. During a recent NPR interview, Strader likened the lessons to how *Sesame Street* uses songs to teach turning letters sounds into words.

Two years into the pilot, Two Rabbits has served 150 children in two villages with four Baka lesson facilitators, and now, in addition to Strader, there is a small team of other Ed.M.'17 students involved, including [MARY PHAM](#), who worked as a peace educator in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar; [KARA HOWARD](#), who served as a language teacher in Lesotho with the Peace Corps; and [MATT OWENS](#), who taught in Spain. Howard says they all met during the two-week preorientation program for the International Education Policy Program.

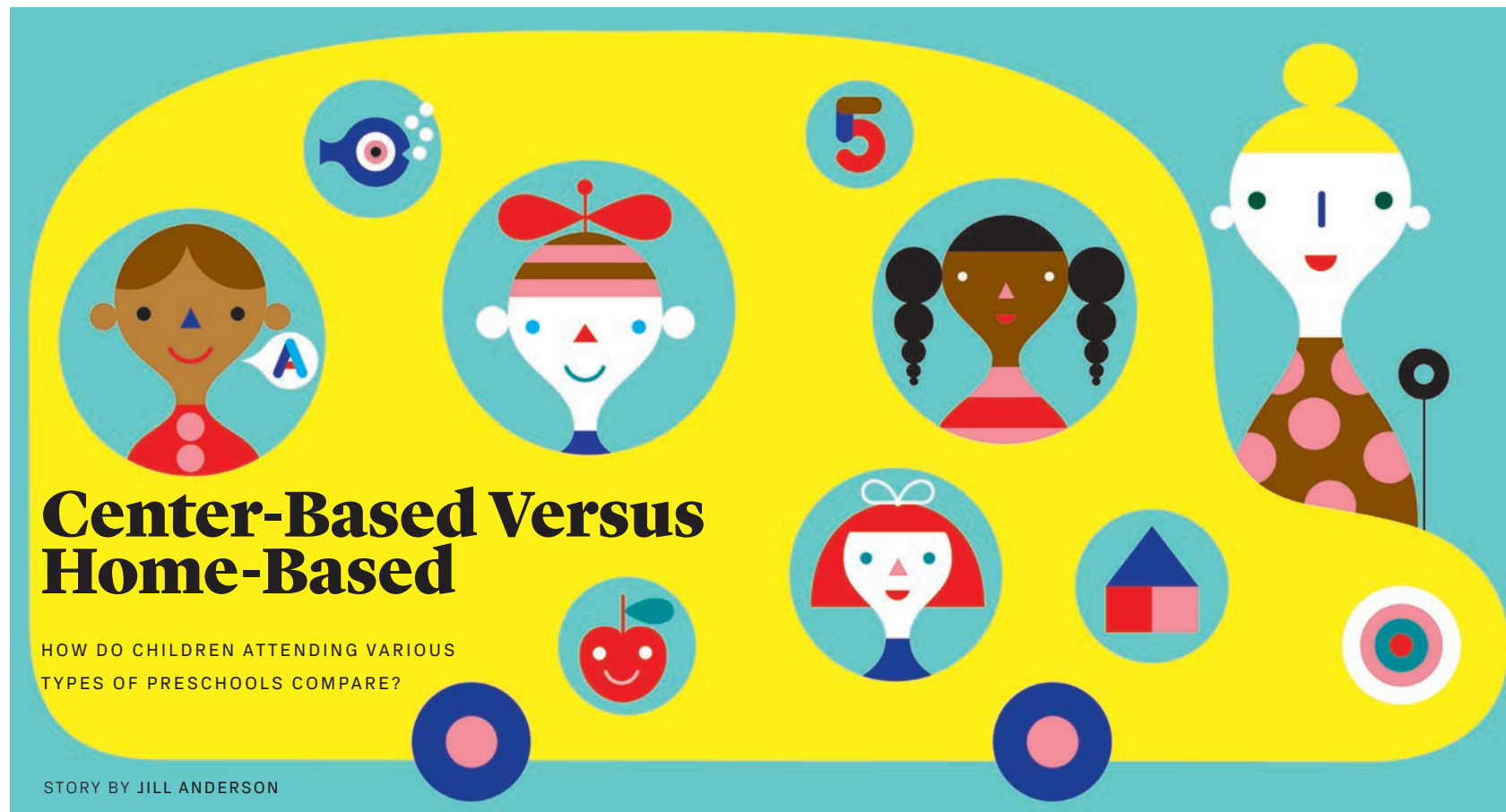
"Through our discussions both inside and outside of class," she says, "we realized that we had a combination of experiences that could help make the Two Rabbits model stronger." She says they used their time at Harvard to get feedback on how to best incorporate research-based early childhood education practices into the model. There are also plans to pilot the program in Myanmar, starting with a feasibility study in several internally displaced-persons camps.

"We believe that our model, which is low cost, mobile, and based in the local culture and language, could be salient for children that have experienced violent conflict," Howard says. "We hope to be able to adapt the Two Rabbits model to be effective within the population in Kachin State camps. Cultural adaptation is a huge component of our model."

This past March, Two Rabbits was named a finalist in the Harvard President's Innovation Challenge. And last December, the team got a boost when they won \$10,000 from GoFundMe in their *#GoBeyondGiving* Challenge — something that surprised them. "We had been raising money to fund our feasibility study in Myanmar for January and to measure the results of students who completed a year of Two Rabbits as they complete first grade in Cameroon in February," Howard says. "Both of these were possible thanks to GoFundMe and will allow us to continue honing our model and hopefully adapt it to new communities effectively."



READ MORE AT: CHASINGTWORABBITS.ORG



FOR DECADES, policymakers and researchers have focused on the question of whether publicly funded preschool, specifically Head Start, makes a difference. But new research by Assistant Professor Luke Miratrix, along with [TODD GRINDAL](#), [ED.M.'06](#), [ED.D.'13](#); [LINDSAY PAGE](#), [ED.M.'04](#), [ED.D.'11](#); and Avi Feller, broadens the perspective to consider the alternatives: What happens to the children who attend a center-based program, and what happens to children who don't?

In their study, the researchers compared children with access to publicly funded preschool programs like Head Start to similar children who didn't attend a center-based preschool program. Then they separated the children into two alternative groups — those who would still attend a center-based preschool program, even if not Head Start, and those who would not attend a center-based program at all but would

instead receive home-based care. As Miratrix explains, they were interested in seeing how these different groups performed.

What they found confirmed the long-understood benefits of center-based preschool, especially as compared to home-based care. Examining children's vocabulary skills, the study found strongly positive effects on children enrolled in Head Start versus those who would otherwise stay at home. The study found no evidence that Head Start offers any additional benefits in improved vocabulary over other center-based preschools, suggesting that policy conversations should focus more on moving children from home-based care into formal care, rather than on moving children from one preschool program to another.

The bottom line is that "these results suggest that getting kids into center-based care is a good idea," Miratrix says. "It is quite

possible that Head Start centers are no better than other centers, but we found that center-based care is superior to home-based care for many children."

So how can more children benefit? The study raises troubling questions about the options available to families without access to publicly funded preschool. While some families still may be able to afford a private preschool program or would find ways for their children to engage in the enriching, stimulating activities that preschools offer, other families find their options limited to home-based care.

The takeaway, the researchers suggest, is the need for more research on improving access to center-based programs, especially for low-income families, and new efforts to improve the overall quality of early education.

"We should work to improve the quality of home-based care," Grindal adds. "For many parents,

such as those who work outside of the home on weekends or during nonstandard hours, center-based care is just not an option. Other parents may prefer home-based settings because they provide opportunities for instruction in their home language. These children also need to have access to the types of stimulating interactions that are more often provided in center-based settings."

This new research should also put to rest any lingering debates over whether publicly funded preschool works, the researchers add, and allow the conversation to shift, finally, to how every child can benefit.

JILL ANDERSON IS A WRITER IN THE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE.



THIS ARTICLE ORIGINALLY APPEARED ON USABLE KNOWLEDGE: UKNOW.GSE.HARVARD.EDU

TEACH YOUR PARENTS WELL

In her new book, *Growing Each Other Up*, Professor [SARA LAWRENCE-LIGHTFOOT](#), [ED.D.'72](#), tells a story about reaching out to a friend when her then-teenaged daughter was leaving her feeling frustrated and exhausted. Hungry for advice, Lawrence-Lightfoot assumed the friend would share her own war stories and even, perhaps, rescue her. Instead, the friend said something that at first left Lawrence-Lightfoot even more frustrated: "Your daughter is living on another planet, and she has a lot to teach you about it. ...Listen to her."

As Lawrence-Lightfoot writes, "For weeks, I brooded about her take on my troubles, and finally realized that she was saying something powerful and fundamental: that these intergenerational conversations — even the hardest ones — are opportunities for parental growth and insight, and that our children are indeed our teachers."

A decade and a half later, as she was writing *Growing Each Other Up*, Lawrence-Lightfoot reflected on the times since those early battles when she was able to step back and resist the tit for tat that often happens between parents and their children.

"How do we as parents have those rare moments of revelation and epiphany?" she writes. "This

process of stepping back comes with shifting our role from teacher to learner" as parents eventually "grow out of growing our children" and the parent-child relationship flips.

What has become most intriguing to her, she writes, is the way that children become their parents' teachers when adolescence transitions into young adulthood.

"I shift the lens and landscape as I explore the 25-year developmental sweep from the ages of 15 to 35 and focus on the lessons that parents learn from their 'almost-grown' progeny — those progeny of early maturity who are still figuring out the calculus between distance and intimacy, still negotiating the balance between separation and closeness to their parents. Whether these almost-grown offspring are parents themselves, whether they are living with their parents or not, the relational and emotional bonds continue to be negotiated." **LH**



WATCH A VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH LAWRENCE-LIGHTFOOT ABOUT HER BOOK: GSE.HARVARD.EDU/ED/EXTRAS

“In my opinion advancing inclusion requires us to heighten our awareness of who we are, how we show up, and how we are received by others.”



What's Universal?

NEW DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER TACKLES HARD QUESTIONS AROUND TOPICS LIKE RACE, GENDER, AND FEELING EXCLUDED

STORY BY LORY HOUGH

NOT LONG AFTER Domonic Rollins started at the Ed School in the fall as the first diversity and inclusion officer, he held a series of get-to-know-you workshops for managers and staff. It was his way of saying hello to the community and also a way to get a pulse on what people were thinking around topics like race, gender, and inclusion — the very topics he was tasked to work on. At one of the meetings, a woman asked which constituency they should be focused on: student needs? staff concerns? faculty?

It was a good question, one that Rollins knew the answer — all of the above — wasn't going to be easy to tackle. But looking back on that meeting, he says a good way to start is to ask another question: What is universal?

“By asking ‘what is universal,’ we begin to see what is shared across constituent groups,” he says. “If I ask what is universal for women at HGSE, I may learn that regardless of whether women are faculty, staff, or students, they are not represented in leadership or feel like their issues are not represented. If this were true, I would then have a focal point around a concern of inclusion for women that accounts for students, staff, and faculty.”

With people of color, he says, “if it were universal that people of color at HGSE felt like there were

not opportunities for them regardless of role, we would then work with this and explore what this means. Attending to some of the common forms of exclusion will point to the ways or spaces to do the initial work.”

Rollins, who recently finished his Ph.D. at the University of Maryland on how black male administrators navigate racism in higher education, says he also wants to help everyone better understand not only one another, but also themselves.

“So much of our focus in the academy, especially in education, is on what we can do for others,” he says. “It is not our tendency to be deeply reflective about ourselves. In my opinion advancing inclusion requires us to heighten our awareness of who we are, how we show up, and how we are received by others. This is heavy lifting for people.”

His own awareness started in high school, when he served as a student rep on the Baltimore City Board of Education.

“This experience was one that made me acutely aware of some of the educational injustices I was experiencing. I learned about how schools were funded, what college preparation curriculum was offered, and how decisions get made,” he says. “It was this experience that helped to give me the lens to see inequities and to be able to ask questions.”

He continued to ask questions when he later applied to the University of Maryland and wasn't directly admitted into the business school.

“I asked, ‘How do you expect students coming from schools like mine to be able to do those things?’ My school, Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, was a magnet high school, and I graduated in the top 10 percent of my class,” he says. “Yet the business school at the University of Maryland was a different league. And I was raising the question about expectations on the basis of my preparation suggesting that I did the best I could do with what I had. At a young age, I started asking questions about the system. Quickly, I was shifting where people would locate the problem. The problem isn't with the student, necessarily; it's with the system.”

Rollins says he “eventually managed to carve out spaces that felt like they were for me. I'm the kind of person who will go in and make it better.” It's part of his personality, for sure, but also intentional.

“I try to structure my life by doing things I love to do,” he says, including recently getting a tattoo of a tree on his shoulder. “The branches say passion, love, and purpose; the trunk, identity; and the roots, authenticity. It's what it's like for me,” he says. “I don't know life otherwise.”



AFTER SPENDING six years in the classroom and decades researching how children learn math, Professor Jon Star knows there are times when teachers just need to tell students what to do. But, he says, sometimes, especially when it comes to teaching algebra, there are two other approaches that are more effective: show them multiple ways to learn and have more class discussions.

These are the foundations of a project Star started working on this school year with middle and high school algebra 1 teachers in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, public schools. Over the next three years, teachers who volunteer to take part will be given professional development, as well as curriculum material they can weave into what they are already doing.

"This isn't 'drop everything and do this,'" Star says. "This is something you can integrate into your own practice. It's what you know works and what we know works."

Part of the project involves showing teachers ways to help students see that there's more than one way to solve algebra problems.

"Sometimes math teachers have a tendency to say do it this way, but in reality, there's always more than one way in math," Star says. "Teachers show other ways sometimes but not a lot. Maybe the text doesn't include multiple ways or maybe they're not sure how else to do it. Our material shows them there are lots of ways."

The second part of the project, which can be a little harder for teachers, especially in high school, is incorporating more discussion into the classroom, he says. Too often, math class doesn't involve discussing how someone got an answer or why something doesn't make sense.

"Teachers are used to talking more to students. We want them to engage students who are wrestling with certain points of the lesson," he says. "When students are faced with two different ways to solve a problem, that's where we want them to start a discussion."

To make doing this easier, they will provide teachers with discussion prompts and suggestions on how a discussion might follow.

Prior to working with the Chelmsford school district, Star

had recruited teachers from the Greater Boston area, across 50 districts, to pilot the project. Teachers could opt in, which, Star says, was actually helpful.

"The teachers who found this most successful didn't see this as an add-on to what they were already doing but a reimagining to what they already do, but better," he says. At times, they also had to convince teachers that these methods, which are backed up by his research and the research of others, would work.

"Sometimes teachers, when asked to show that there are multiple ways, will say, 'My students are already struggling with the one way I've shown them.'"

He tells them that maybe the students just don't understand that one way, "but if you said there are a couple of ways to do this and asked what makes the most sense, they'll be happier in your class. And discussion can be motivating for students. We have data that shows that math students like this approach — it's liberating for them to know there are choices. It's not just do it the way the teacher says."



LEARN MORE ABOUT STAR'S MULTIPLE METHODS RESEARCH: [GSE.HARVARD.EDU/ED/EXTRAS](https://gse.harvard.edu/ed/extras)

Illustration by Melinda Beck

STUDY SKILLS

Ethan Smith, Ed.M.'17

The first time ETHAN SMITH went with a friend to a poetry group at Berklee School of Music, he wasn't sure he was going to like it. The sax was his thing and had been since the eighth grade. "I was in love with the sax," he says. "It was everything I did in high school." But listening to other students at the poetry group, he found the experience incredibly inspiring.

"It was amazing how honest everything was." Smith changed course and ended up minoring in spoken word. "It became what I devoted most of my time to."

Some of this time included helping Boston teenagers perform spoken word poetry through the 826 Writers' Room, a nonprofit youth writing and publishing organization. Smith was also working on his own writing, mostly personal pieces connected to his transitioning, including *A Letter to the Girl I Used to Be*, a powerful piece he performed this past fall at the Ed School's storytelling event, Double Take. "I was trying to figure myself out," he says, "something I encourage my students to do, too."

Now finishing his year in the Arts In Education Program, Smith says we all have unique stories to share, but we often don't think about how sharing these stories can help not just ourselves, but also people we haven't met.

"It's an extremely powerful experience to be able to share some piece of our individual truth through poetry," he says. "Equally as powerful is when someone reaches out and says that they connected with the piece in some way. It takes bravery on the part of the poet to say their piece, but what comes from that is a representation of survival that many people may share but didn't necessarily have the language to articulate. Through sharing our art in this way we can start to build a community and connect deeply with one another."

When he first started sharing his own story about transitioning, he says he didn't give his hometown community just outside Seattle enough credit for being able to understand.

"It's impossible to be compassionate about something that you've never been exposed to," he says. "But after I came out, I was really surprised how supported I was. I've had former teachers reach out to me on Facebook. And my family has been supportive." His dad even signed up for creative nonfiction writing classes to help him figure things out.

"It's been inspiring to me in my process," Smith says. "He shows me drafts. It's cool to see how he's processing this." LH



Photograph by Jonathan Kozowyk

2016-17: School Year Rewind

AN A-TO-Z REMINDER OF THE MEMORABLE EVENTS AND ISSUES FROM THE PAST ACADEMIC YEAR



A

Students and their families went **APPLE PICKING** in October at Honey Pot Hill Orchards. ▶

B

BRAVE is the word most people walked away with after listening to eight community members share their personal stories at this year's Double Take event.

C

Politics and education heated up in Massachusetts, and at a September Askwith Forum, around lifting the **CHARTER SCHOOL CAP** in the Bay State.

D

DEFINE. DEFY. DISMANTLE. These were the buzzwords worn on t-shirts at this year's Alumni of Color Conference, which was attended by more than 700 people.

E

▶ **EDUCATION AS A HUMAN RIGHT** was the focus of an Askwith Forum with **Hanan Al Hroub**, winner of the 2016 Global Teacher Prize.

F



▶ **FIERCE**, the Future Indigenous Educators Resisting Colonial Education, organized a supplies drive for Standing Rock protestors.

G

GUTMAN LIBRARY was turned into a club one night and one night only for the student holiday party.

H

The **HARVARD ALUMNI FOR EDUCATION** group, founded by several Ed School graduates, launched its podcast series.

I

During this year's J-term, Professor Howard Gardner lectured to a packed room on **"INTELLIGENCE and INTELLIGENCES."**

J

▼ **JEB BUSH**, former Florida governor, spoke at an Askwith Forum and during a Harvard EdCast about the role of the states in education policy.



K

KIND weather left us with a few unseasonably warm days in January, but snowstorms in February and March also closed Harvard.

L

Decorating the back of your **LAPTOP** became a thing this year for students.

M

MASKED superheroes, mini elephants, and many witches descended on Appian Way for the annual Halloween parade.

N

NEW FACULTY included Emmerich Davies Escobar, Irvin Scott, Claudia Costin, and Bertrand Schneider.

O



▶ In August, 714 students arrived on campus for **ORIENTATION**, including 652 Ed.M., 50 doctoral, and 12 C.A.S. The dean may or may not have hit the dance floor with them.

P

The **PRINCIPALS' CENTER** celebrated its 35th anniversary.

Q

▶ The school's version of a **QUAD** continued to be a relaxing spot for students on a warm school day. (Between classes, of course.)

R

RALLIES and marches were common this year, including the historic Women's March on Washington (and affiliated marches across the country), which included more than 100 Ed School students and alumni.

S

▼ **SWAY CALLOWAY**, music journalist and former MTV correspondent, joined a panel of speakers after the showing of *The Cycle*, a short film he produced about the relationship between police and communities.



HANAN AL HROUB / JEB BUSH AND ORIENTATION: JILL ANDERSON



QUAD: MATT WEBER/SWAY; JILL ANDERSON/DANIELLE ALLEN; LAURA ROSE/SAUL ZAENTZ FOUNDATION

T

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE on November 20 was marked at the Ed School with a powerful display of dozens of posters in front of Gutman of those who have been murdered as a result of transphobia.

U

▼ **UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR** was a title given to the Ed School's **Danielle Allen** — Harvard's highest faculty honor (see page 19).



V

VOTING REFORM was just one of the topics that the Reverend Jesse Jackson spoke about in February as part of an HGSE Black Student Union event.

W

WHERE do we come from? At orientation, students shared where they come from by placing a pin on a world map in Gutman. (Turns out, we have students from 50 countries.)



X

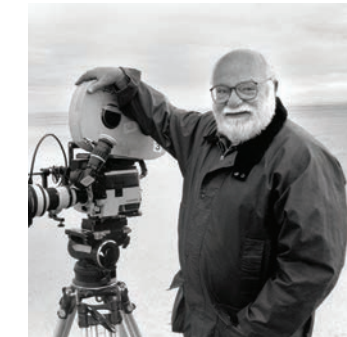
XQ: The Super School Project announced its \$10 million winners, which included five projects connected to the Ed School.

Y

▼ **YALE**, to the dismay of many, beat Harvard for the first time in 10 years in the annual Harvard-Yale football game. It did not affect Ed School student tailgating, as our intern, Bobby Dorigo Jones, Ed.M.'17, showed his dad, Bob.

Z

▼ The **SAUL ZAENTZ FOUNDATION** awarded the single largest donation ever in the Ed School's history, for the study of early education.





The Kids Art All Right

AIE STUDENT GIVES YOUTH IN NEPAL THE CHANCE TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES

STORY BY BOBBY DORIGO JONES, ED.M.'17

DOZENS OF thick, inky letters overlap each other across the canvas — a cascade of teal, then yellow and orange, over a black backdrop. A small crowd shelters **SNEHA SHRESTHA, ED.M.'17**, founder of the Children's Art Museum of Nepal (CAM), from the chilling December air coming through the open door of a live art show in Harvard Square.

"All the words say, 'You can imagine too!'" says Shrestha, who goes by the name "Imagine" in the art world. Nepal's first female graffiti artist and a student in the Arts in Education (AIE) Program, Shrestha paints the calligraphy of the Nepali alphabet into mesmerizing fractal arrangements. "My culture is very close to my heart. The script is centuries old. It deserves more appreciation for its aesthetics."

Shrestha first began painting on the walls of her bedroom as a kid. She only really enjoyed art at home because, in her experience, Nepali schools encourage academic skills over creative enterprises. "In Nepal in general, creativity is not allowed

in schools," she says. Like other students, Shrestha was subtly and systematically nudged away from expressing her creative self, a realization she came to after deciding on an arts major at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania. While there, she decided "there needs to be a place where kids can just be kids, where they can do what they want and express themselves the way that makes sense to them," she says.

A few years later, while living in Boston, Shrestha applied for a grant to build her dream, launched a crowdfunding campaign, and moved home to Nepal. Within months, she founded CAM in Kathmandu, with the mission of being the first sustainable art space for Nepali youth.

Shrestha quickly learned that the growing museum's needs outweighed her own understanding of how to run an organization. "All the strategizing I was doing was just me," she says. A mentor, **CALEB NEELON, ED.M.'04**, suggested the AIE Program.

She applied and was accepted in early 2015, but a couple months

later, disaster struck. A massive 7.8 magnitude earthquake tore through Nepal in April of that year, upending many communities and lives. The CAM quickly reorganized and raised money to send its staff out into affected communities. Shrestha postponed her admission to Harvard, opting to remain at home and help youth start healing from the traumatic event. Over three months, CAM worked with UNICEF to reach more than 5,000 affected children through art.

"The museum's role has evolved into a support system for our children experiencing trauma from the earthquake. Our staff have been trained by art therapists now. We used to have a lot of kids visit us; now we go to the schools," Shrestha says. "Because of the earthquake, many schools think there's even less of a reason to do things like the arts when, in reality, this is when [children] need it the most."

BOBBY DORIGO JONES IS A NEW GRADUATE OF THE EDUCATION POLICY AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AND AN INTERN WITH *ED*.

Shrestha's graffiti mural painted on a wall in Worcester, Massachusetts, for the annual POW WOW art festival.



LEARN MORE ABOUT SHRESTHA AND CAM AT IMAGINE876.COM AND NEPALCAM.COM/#CAM

SNEHA SHRESTHA

YOU ALREADY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES

BY **ELISE FOSTER, ED.M.'06**, **ERIK BURMEISTER**, AND **ALYSSA GALLAGHER**

In today's education climate, it's a constant battle to figure out how to do more with less. Funding structures aside, administrators meticulously evaluate each dollar spent looking for the greatest return on investment. What becomes possible when administrators extend return-on-investment thinking to people inside their buildings, knowing that everyone is brilliant at something?

Multiplier leaders, as described in *The Multiplier Effect* (Foster's book), use their intelligence to amplify smarts and capability. Multipliers believe that everyone has something worthwhile to contribute. They see brilliance everywhere, actively uncovering and accessing each employee's "native genius" — that thing he or she does exceptionally well that can't be turned on or off.

Multipliers not only put genius to work, but they stretch these natural talents in new ways that cause growth. By redefining what it means to give 100 percent, the school or district quickly develops a reputation as a "place to grow." Connecting natural passions and native genius to opportunities isn't just

a lucky discovery, it's a deliberate management approach.

For example, during an initiative to revolutionize STEM learning across the Los Altos School District in California, assistant superintendent Alyssa Gallagher tapped math teacher Courtney Cadwell and three others to be part of a blended learning pilot team tasked with integrating online learning tools. It was a messy process with big challenges. Cadwell stepped in asking questions and helping others make sense of the issues. Gallagher recognized how these messy areas brought out Cadwell's natural leadership — her genius for navigating complexity. The more complex the challenges, the better she was.

After a successful pilot, Gallagher wrangled funding to spread these new strategies across all upper-grade math classes involving more than 50 teachers. Cadwell became an elementary school principal while a second pilot team member took a new STEM role. Starting with a blank sheet, these "Magic Markers" — people who create something from nothing — designed a lunchtime Tinker Club for student design challenges. Working for a multiplier, teachers felt utilized, stretched, and ready for the next big challenge.

A first step to engage people at their highest point of contribution is to become a genius watcher, actively on the hunt for what's native. Constantly challenge yourself to uncover latent capabilities by asking, "How is this person smart?" One by one, you'll discover the native geniuses of your staff.

ELISE FOSTER, ED.M.'06 IS A LEADERSHIP EDUCATOR. **ALYSSA GALLAGHER** IS WITH THE WISEMAN GROUP. **ERIK BURMEISTER** IS SUPERINTENDENT OF MENLO PARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT.



5 ESSENTIAL Q'S TO ASK YOURSELF (OFTEN)

With this year's commencement right around the corner, we thought it wise to share a list of five essential questions that you should ask yourself regularly, courtesy of Dean Jim Ryan's commencement speech from last year. (And if this summary isn't enough, check out Ryan's new book based on these questions called *Wait, What?: And Life's Other Essential Questions*.)

1.) Wait, what?

Ryan says it's a very effective way of asking for clarification, which is crucial to understanding. "It's the question you should ask before drawing conclusions or before making a decision."

2.) I wonder... (followed by why or if)

"As in, I wonder why our schools are so segregated, and I wonder if we could change this. Or I wonder why students often seem bored in school, and I wonder if we could make their classes more engaging."

3.) Couldn't we at least?

"It's what enables you to get past disagreement to some consensus — as in, couldn't we at least agree that we all care about the welfare of students, even if we disagree about strategy?"

4.) How can I help?

"How we help matters as much as that we do help, and if you ask how you can help, you are asking, with humility, for direction."

5.) What truly matters?

"This is the question that forces you to get to the heart of issues and to the heart of your own beliefs and convictions."

WISE WORDS

"If you don't understand it and you act as if it doesn't exist, you may shoot yourself in the foot."

Professor **FERNANDO REIMERS, ED.M.'84, ED.D.'88**, in response to a disparaging remark then-presidential candidate Donald Trump made about the term "global citizenship," on why understanding global affairs is critical to making sense of one's life. (*Commonwealth*)

THE MAKING OF

Lecturer Gigi Luk

As Gigi Luk knows, based on her own experience speaking many languages, as well as her ongoing research on children at the Brain.Behavior.Education (BEE) lab at the Ed School, bilingualism shapes our brains for life. In fact, as she has also learned, the ability to speak more than one language in a changing world is not only helpful, but it could actually be a survival skill.



1977

I was born in **Hong Kong** where English and Cantonese are spoken. My parents and relatives spoke both languages to me.

1980

My parents and I moved to **Singapore** because my father had a job there. In Singapore, there are many languages: Mandarin, English, Tamil, Malay, and other dialects. I used to live in a very multicultural neighborhood, and my parents sent me to a school that used Japanese as a medium of instruction. I did not speak a word of Japanese. To this day, I still remember the feeling of not being able to comprehend and share my thoughts because I do not speak the language.

1982

Two years later, I moved back to Hong Kong with my family so I could start elementary school. I attended a Catholic school where I heard the story about the **Tower of Babel**. The story was about how God tried to stop people building a tower that was reaching up to the sky by scattering people around the world and confounding them to speak different languages. As a young bilingual, I wondered why this was a problem because every person can just learn to speak more languages and communicate!



1989

During middle school, we had a choice to take French instead of Chinese. I opted to learn French because having the opportunity to learn about different languages was very important for me. I was fortunate enough to grow up with many opportunities to learn languages, both in everyday life and in classrooms.

1997

I started to study economics as an undergraduate at York University in Toronto. During the freshman summer, I took an introductory course covering a variety of

topics in psychology. I was fascinated by the knowledge psychologists accumulated to understand human behavior. In particular, I was drawn to how psychologists study human development and cognition.

2001

During my senior year of college, I completed two research projects and worked as a teaching assistant in a statistics course. I enjoyed the research and teaching experiences as a senior as it was gratifying to engage in knowledge generation and dissemination. With my passion to conduct research on development and cognition, I decided to pursue research to learn about how our mind and brain are shaped by our experiences, particularly bilingualism. My passion to understand language use and behavior has grown from a personal interest to an intellectual curiosity.



2008

After obtaining my doctoral degree, also from York, I started a postdoctoral fellowship at a geriatric hospital to study how lifelong bilingual experiences is related to brain health in the aging population. It is apparent that no single brain region is dedicated to managing multiple languages. Therefore, I examined how different brain regions work together to support the control of multiple languages. It was remarkable that bilingualism, an everyday experience for many, is reflected in our behavior and also makes a mark in our biology.

2011

Learning about the difference bilingualism has on the aging brain, I joined the Ed School to begin understanding how bilingualism, as a life experience, shapes development and learning in children. For children with diverse language backgrounds, there is much emphasis on English proficiency in the United States, which is a narrow representation of bilingualism. Furthermore, bilingualism is associated with other socio-demographic factors that may have

a negative impact on academic performances. These complexities masked the positive cognitive consequences that I have observed as a researcher.

2013

During a fellowship supported by the Spencer Foundation, I began to think of different ways to study bilingualism, development, and learning. Instead of comparing the absolute performance levels of children with different language backgrounds, I started to focus on change and differences. With these focuses, my research team and I designed studies that include all children with different lan-

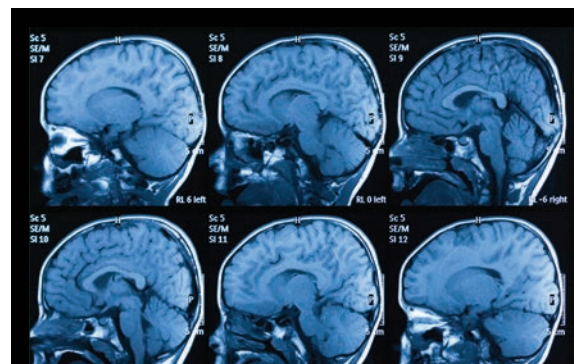


guage backgrounds, not just monolingual and bilingual groups.

2016

During my sabbatical in the fall, I integrated these focuses into a **functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)** study. Using cognitive neuroscience tools, my research team and I extended the current knowledge on bilingualism and

learning. In addition to conducting research, I traveled to Ecuador, **Saudi Arabia**, and Luxembourg to learn more about what bilingualism means in different countries. Our ability to acquire multiple languages is a survival skill adapting to the changing world. It's not a special talent, but an adaptation to the environment. If you live in Europe, you need to be bilingual. I hope that the science of bilingualism will strengthen our embrace for language diversity in education and beyond. Looking back at my early years in Hong Kong and Singapore, I know it did for me.



JILL ANDERSON (TOP)

JOBS FOR THE FUTURE AT FIVE



Five years ago, it started with one report from the Ed School that revealed that the majority of young people in America were not being prepared for success. As *Pathways to Prosperity* noted, fewer than half of all teens in the country reach their 20s with marketable college degrees despite 65 percent of jobs requiring postsecondary credentials by 2020. Unfortunately, as the report also found, more attention is given to college readiness than to career readiness. The need to address this skills gap, they found, was urgent.

In response, the Ed School joined forces with Boston-based Jobs for the Future, which includes many alumni, to create the Pathways to Prosperity Network. The network began small, working first with four states to develop clear career pathways for young people that would, in turn, create a pipeline of skilled workers for employers. The network has grown: Today, more than a dozen states are involved, covering nearly 46 percent of K-12 public school students. And the work these states are doing is tangible. In Delaware, for example, innovation grants were awarded to 15 high schools to develop pathways to high-priority industries in the state such as computer science and culinary arts and hospitality.

Network director **AMY LOYD, ED.L.D.'13**, who initially did her Ed.L.D. residency with Jobs for the Future, says, "This has become a huge national movement, with lots of energy behind it. One report launched this, but now it has expanded to something so much bigger."

Most recently, the network decided to reach back even further than high school. Possible Futures, Possible Selves, its new program for middle school students, provides open-source curricular modules for middle school teachers to download and use centered around skills for success and looking toward the future. The latter, in particular, allows students to look at their strengths and personal "sparks" — what motivates them — and ways they can use these to contribute to society. **LH**



LINK TO THE NETWORK: PTOPNETWORK.JFF.ORG
LINK TO THE POSSIBLE FUTURES SITE:
PTOPNETWORK.JFF.ORG/POSSIBLE-FUTURES



The Doctor Is In

HOW TEAMING UP WITH PEDIATRICIANS IS HELPING ONE PROFESSOR WITH HER RESEARCH

IT'S AN INTERESTING dilemma for Associate Professor **MEREDITH ROWE, ED.M.'99, ED.D.'03**. In order to do some of her research, which looks at literacy and vocabulary development from birth until age 3, she needs to study little kids. But as she has found over the years, recruiting families, at least on a large scale, isn't always easy. She would send out mailings or email parent groups. They would even post signs around town. Eventually, they'd find families, maybe 40 or 50 kids, but getting hundreds was always harder.

That's why, when pediatrician Barry Zuckerman from Boston Medical Center reached out to her, she jumped at the chance to collaborate on a new project: providing information to new low-income parents about how they can help their babies develop vocabulary, in a place all parents visit — the doctor's office.

"Barry came to me, and within seconds we both realized there were benefits to this partnership," Rowe says, noting Zuckerman had similar experience reaching parents through Reach Out and Read, his nonprofit that provides books to children at pediatric visits. "The thought was if we could go through pediatricians who have access to these families anyways and are seen as trustworthy, it would be a more effective way to reach families. Pediatricians are a trusted source of information for parents."

The plan is to recruit parents at Boston Medical when they bring their babies in for their four-month checkup. Families would be given an app that would deliver messages during the first two years of life, including short videos on everything from the importance of pointing to being responsive to baby babble to managing parent stress.

"We think it's essential to help parents understand how much of a difference they can make in their child's development," Rowe says. Parents will answer questions after watching the videos, which will be produced with WGBH once funding comes through.

Assistant Professor Dana McCoy is also part of the team. "The goal is, through this team, for Dana and me to provide context, Barry to be the connection to pediatricians, and Jillian Orr at WGBH to produce the videos," she says, adding that although it's a lot of work building relationships, "it's a great example of capitalizing on people's strengths and using community experts to make things happen." LH

Illustration by Melinda Beck



Where's Ed.?

"Teachers have to be aware. They have to know who's in their classrooms. They have to be aware which child has a parent who has been deployed or a parent who just came back."

Former Second Lady **Jill Biden** (pictured) speaking to the Harvard EdCast at the White House in November about Operation Educate the Educators, the initiative she started to meet the needs of military children.

ALLEN HONORED

In November, political philosopher and Ed School Professor Danielle Allen was named a university professor — Harvard's highest faculty honor, which recognizes individuals whose work crosses the traditional boundaries of academic disciplines. The appointment as the James Bryant Conant University Professor comes after being at Harvard for less than two years. Since the professorship was started in 1935, 25 individuals have been given the title.

Allen's work explores the history of political thought and notions of citizenship and equality. In addition to teaching at the Ed School, she is also director of Harvard's Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics and professor of government in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Her packed resume includes a MacArthur genius grant, participation as a Pulitzer Prize board member, and five books and countless articles in both scholarly journals and popular media, including *Our Declaration* and *Why Plato Wrote*. She is a contributing columnist for *The Washington Post* and serves as co-chair of the newly appointed university-wide task force on inclusion and belonging.

In response to now holding a named chair once held by Harvard political theorist John Rawls, Allen says, "I'm deeply honored. One always chases after one's heroes, and I look forward to doing whatever I can to be worthy of this remarkable honor." LH



FOLLOW ALLEN ON TWITTER: @DSALLENTESS

READ THE ED. STORY ABOUT HER NEW VIDEO PROJECT: GSE.HARVARD.EDU/ED/EXTRAS

Photograph by Matt Weber

ON MY BOOKSHELF

Emmerich Davies Escobar,
assistant professor

YOU'RE CURRENTLY READING: My bedside table is mostly aspirational, and I have far more books on it than I'm actually engaged with, but the two I am currently reading are *Walkable City* by Jeff Speck and *Granta* magazine's India issue of stories.

THE THING THAT DREW YOU TO THEM: *Walkable City* came about from a conversation with my roommate who is an urban planner. I asked him what the 21st-century follow-up to *The Death and Life of Great Cities* was, a book I loved that helped me understand what is great about urban areas. *Granta*'s India issue has been on my list ever since it came out. *Granta* does a really nice job of focusing on one country and finding young fiction and nonfiction writers from there and dedicating an entire issue to them. The India issue was a no-brainer given my interest in South Asia.

FAVORITE BOOK FROM CHILDHOOD AND WHY YOU LOVED IT: I was weirdly really into Michael Crichton as a child, and if I remember correctly, my favorite of his was *The Andromeda Strain* although I can't quite remember why that one in particular.

PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO KNOW I'VE NEVER READ... Ha! This question is like that apocryphal story of the English professor that had never read *Hamlet* and when his department found out, he didn't get tenure! Probably *India after Gandhi* by Ramachandra Guha or any of Amartya Sen's books.

BOOK THAT YOU OWN THAT YOU'D NEVER GIVE AWAY AND WHY: In fiction, it would be *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie and nonfiction would be *Beyond a Boundary* by C. L. R. James simply because they're my two favorite books.

FAVORITE SPOT TO CURL UP WITH A GOOD BOOK: My deck in the summer and a coffee shop in winter.

ANY PLACE WHERE YOU FIND IT HARD TO READ? If it's for work, anywhere noisy, but if it's for pleasure, the distractions and noise are welcome.

NEXT UP: I'm going to be in Mexico City, so I just picked up a collection of short stories called *Mexico City Noir*. I've never read any noir stories, so I'm excited to check them out. LH

THE DIVERSITY BARGAIN

Natasha Warikoo

What do college students think about diversity and merit? Associate Professor NATASHA WARIKOO, ED.M.'97, interviewed students at Harvard College, Brown, and Oxford and found that many elite white students understand the value of diversity in an abstract way and reluctantly agree with affirmative action, but only as long as it benefits themselves. They don't necessarily see the benefit to people of color. Many also see themselves as part of an elite that was fairly chosen through an inclusive process, not taking into account how their privileges or upbringing may have helped them.



STYLING BY LIZ PARSONS

WHEN THE FENCES COME DOWN

Genevieve Siegel-Hawley

One of the goals of this new book by GENEVIEVE SIEGEL-HAWLEY, ED.M.'05, assistant professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, is to shed light on the major issues involved in understanding the relationship between boundary lines and segregation. Using data from four U.S. districts — Richmond, Virginia; Louisville, Kentucky; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina; and Chattanooga, Tennessee — Siegel-Hawley shows “the damages wrought by the segregating impact of school district boundary lines” as well as regions that have tried to counteract them.

COLLEGE FOR EVERY STUDENT

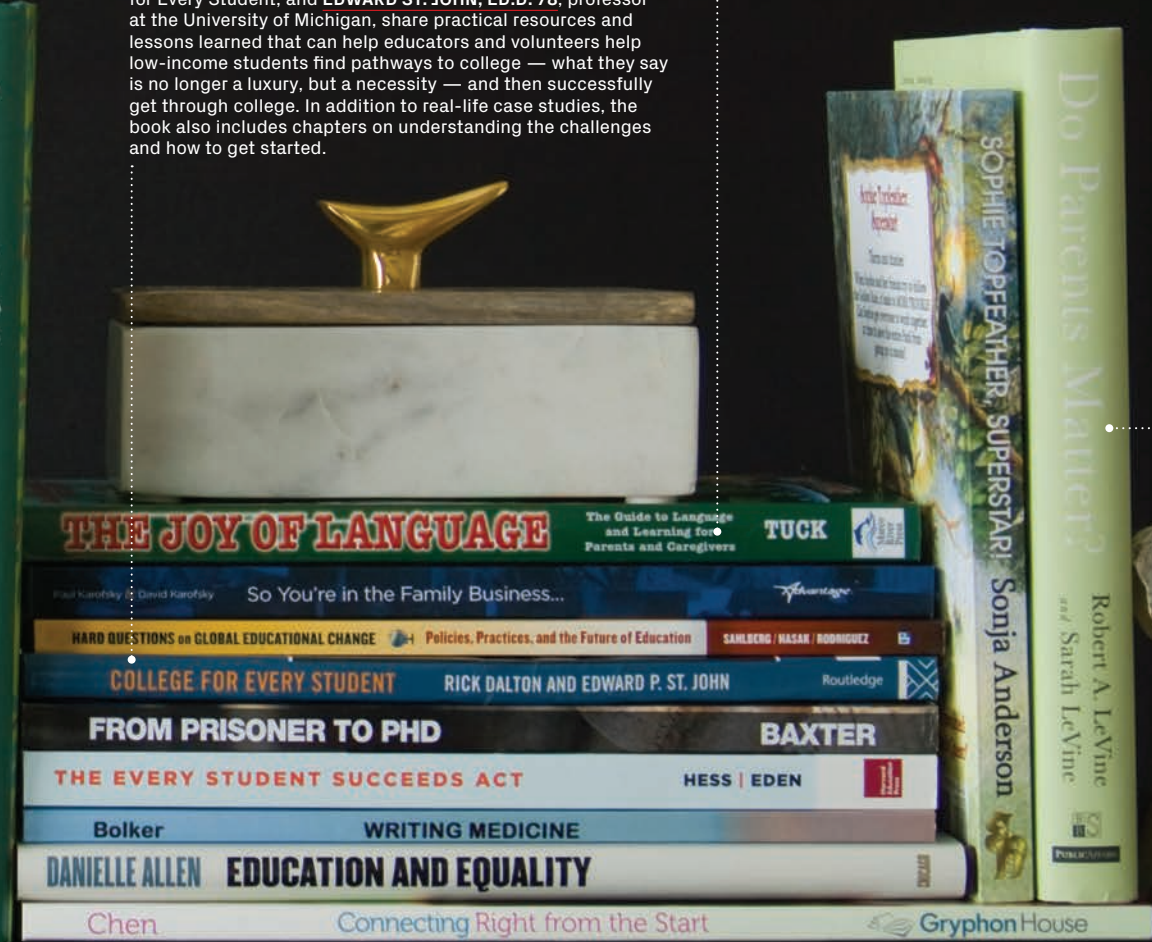
Rick Dalton and Edward St. John

RICK DALTON, ED.M.'79, ED.D.'88, president and CEO of College for Every Student, and EDWARD ST. JOHN, ED.D.'78, professor at the University of Michigan, share practical resources and lessons learned that can help educators and volunteers help low-income students find pathways to college — what they say is no longer a luxury, but a necessity — and then successfully get through college. In addition to real-life case studies, the book also includes chapters on understanding the challenges and how to get started.

THE JOY OF LANGUAGE

Tara Tuck

Over the years, TARA TUCK, C.A.S.'91, a teacher and speech-language pathologist, found that when she spoke to parents about how language and speech developed, they had many questions and there were few books she could recommend to them. Most were written as college textbooks or in academic lingo. So Tuck decided to write her own book, using common questions to frame the chapters. Her book, *The Joy of Language*, also contains easy-to-understand definitions and a glossary of terms, as well as “try this” and “share the joy” exercises and activities for parents and caregivers.



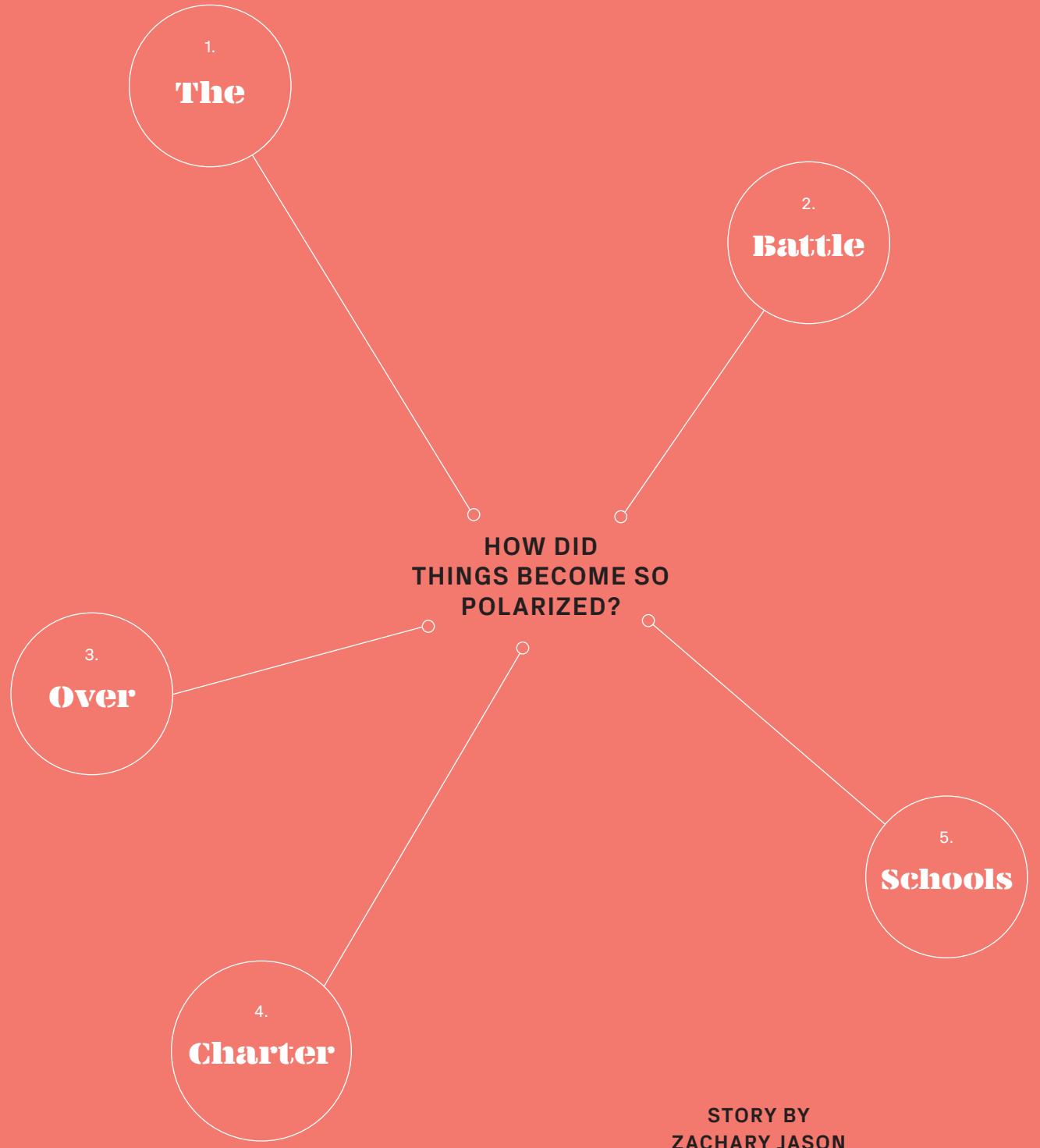
DO PARENTS MATTER?

Robert LeVine and Sarah LeVine

After decades studying the cultural aspects of parent-hood and child development, anthropologists Professor Bob LeVine, emeritus, and Sarah LeVine explore how differently people around the world parent and how this affects the development of their children. American middle class parents, they find, compared with parents elsewhere, “feel burdened and anxious, not only about their children but about the effectiveness of their parenting.” Yet the influence of parenting on child development has been “grossly exaggerated” in the mass media, they say. “The time has come for American parents to reconsider the burdens they place on themselves for dubious ends.”



FOR A FULL LIST OF BOOKS FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE: GSE.HARVARD.EDU/ED/EXTRAS. IF YOU'RE PART OF THE ED SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND YOU'VE RECENTLY PUBLISHED A BOOK, LET US KNOW: BOOKNOTES@GSE.HARVARD.EDU



STORY BY
ZACHARY JASON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
MIKE MCQUADE



T



HE FIERCEST BATTLE YET IN America's struggle over charter schools erupted last fall in Massachusetts. If passed, a ballot initiative in the general election would have given the Commonwealth the power to annually add up to 12 new charter schools — publicly funded, independently run alternatives to traditional public schools.

They would have been built in a handful of urban communities, where 32,000 children, a majority black and Latino, were sitting on waiting lists of existing charters as they languished in underperforming district schools. But teachers, parents, and investors across the state, and the country at large, took to picketing, advertising, evangelizing. In one corner formed Save Our Public Schools (aka No on 2), a coalition that included teachers unions, PTA committees, the Jewish Labor League, and the Brazilian Women's Group, and aligned with the likes of the NAACP, the mayor of Boston, and Senator Elizabeth Warren. They argued, broadly, that charters pilfer money and students from district schools, aren't held accountable, and privatize public education.

Their opponent called themselves Great Schools (Yes on 2), a cluster of charter advocacy groups, funded by the Walton family and former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg and aligned with low-income parents of public school children, Massachusetts Senate President Stanley Rosenberg, and Governor Charlie Baker. Yes on 2 insisted that all families should have the ability to choose their education, and teachers should have the freedom to innovate. Both sides spent a combined \$33 million, one of the largest ballot-item campaigns in the state's history. A week before the election, polls showed a dead split.

To help decide, dozens of constituents asked Professor Paul Reville, former secretary of education in Massachusetts, how they should vote. Reville was the chief architect of the Education Reform Act of 1993, which introduced chartering to Massachusetts, and he's been an outspoken champion of charters since. But whenever someone asked, "What do you think of charter schools?" Reville was quick to respond, "Which school are we talking about?"

Are we talking about New York's Success Academy or KIPP schools nationwide, perennially profiled examples of the best — charter, public, and private included — in the nation? Are we talking about any of the five Massachusetts charters that Senior Lecturer **KAY MERSETH, M.A.T.'69, ED.D.'82**, investigated in *Inside Urban Charter Schools*, wildly different in curricula, pedagogy, and mission, but all wildly successful? Are we talking about Boston-based Codman Academy, founded by **MEG CAMPBELL, C.A.S.'97, ED.M.'05**, where 100

percent of its students (98 percent minority) are accepted to college? Nationwide, while charters only educate 6 percent of the nation's students, they regularly fill a third of *U.S. News and World Report's* top 100 high schools.

Or are we talking about Philadelphia's Harambee Institute of Science and Technology, a K-8 charter with a cafeteria that on weekends converted into an illegal nightclub? Harambee was featured in a recent *Last Week with John Oliver* segment on sensational examples of failing charters, including several that closed in the middle of the year, and a Florida elementary charter that shuttered in the middle of a day.

Reville's point: It's impossible to generalize charter schools. How charters are run, funded, and overseen varies dramatically from state to state, school to school. In *Charter Schools at the Crossroads*, one of the most comprehensive overviews of the charter movement, **CHESTER FINN, M.A.T.'67, ED.D.'70**, concludes, "The charter track record can best be described as stunningly uneven."

But voters most often asked Reville a simpler question: "What am I voting for?" A majority were unfamiliar with charter schools; there are 78 in Massachusetts, to traditional public schools' 1,934. As Finn told me, "Most Americans still have no idea what a charter school is." Knowing seems to make a difference. When *Education Next* surveyed parents, teachers, and members of the general public across the country last fall, only 28 percent supported the formation of charter schools. Yet when participants were provided a two-sentence definition of a charter school, 52 percent approved.

Today charters educate 3 million pupils (a million more sit on waiting lists) in 43 states. But as some 330 new charters open a year, the sides grow more polarized. Folks like Meg Campbell claim they fight for charters because they're fighting "on the side of justice." Others, like **KELLY HENDERSON, ED.M.'06**, a public high school English teacher in Newton, Massachusetts, claim that charters are not only an "attack on public schools," but also a "pernicious" and deliberate "attack on women," who comprise 76 percent of public school teachers.

How did charters get so muddy? How did a movement that began with far-flung bipartisan support just 25 years ago morph into one of today's most contentious debates in education?

FIRST, A DEFINITION. THE "CHARTER" IN charter schools is a contract, agreed upon between those who run the school and the entity that authorizes the school's existence (which ranges from school districts to for-profit companies to boards of education). Charter schools are public schools, tuition-free and open to all on a first-come, first-serve basis, or by lottery. But the charter grants autonomy to develop

6,800

Number of public charter schools in the U.S.

2.9

MILLION

Number of U.S. students enrolled in charter schools



“The charter [school] track record can best be described as stunningly uneven.”

Chester Finn, M.A.T.'67, Ed.D.'70

curricula, personnel, and budgets free of the regulations to which district schools are beholden. For example, many charters have longer school days and school years than their peers. It is the good and the bad that charter schools have done with that autonomy that has largely fueled the charter battle.

Looking back, a schism over charters seems inevitable because its roots are so tangled. In the 1960s, conservative economists and liberal academics alike argued for school choice, albeit for different reasons. In *Capitalism and Freedom*, published in 1962, the Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman proposed that the government provide needy families with vouchers that they could redeem at private schools. This would allow market forces, not the government, to shape public education — causing failing schools to close and compelling individuals and organizations to open competitors.

Then-Ed School Dean TheodoreSizer made a similar proposal in 1968 with a “Poor Children’s Bill of Rights,” though not to grant the market power, but

to give “incentive for each [public] school to be sensitive to the needs and expectations of its constituency,” as Sizer later wrote.

Finn cites seven other “ancestors” of chartering including a growing emphasis on educational outcomes and equity, and “the impetus to replace a bureaucratic quasi monopoly with a competitive marketplace.” Finn, president emeritus of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education think tank, says



The first charter school opened in Minnesota in 1992

the propulsion toward school choice is and has always been that “way too few kids in America have been able to pick their schools, and way too many have been stuck in bad schools that they have no alternative to.” As Dean James Ryan wrote in an *Ed Week* blog, “Are you comfortable allowing more affluent families to choose their schools while denying poorer families similar opportunities?”

In 1974, Ray Budde, a World War II veteran and an education professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, introduced the idea of chartering. He proposed that states grant charters to create new, experimental programs and departments at existing public schools. The response? Nothing. As Budde recalled, “No one felt that things were so bad that the system itself needed to be changed.”

But soon after he shelved the idea, think tanks and the federal government released a series of damning reports on public schools, most notably the Reagan Administration’s *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform*, the 1983 report that warned of a “rising tide of mediocrity.”

When Budde resurrected his charter idea in 1988, he caught the attention of Albert Shanker, longtime president of the American Federation of Teachers. Though teachers unions almost unilaterally oppose charters today, Shanker became the movement’s first major booster. Writing in *The New York Times*,

he extended Budde’s argument, and proposed the establishment of publicly funded, independently managed schools that could experiment with ways to educate the some 80 percent of students that he estimated traditional schools weren’t serving well.

Shanker piqued the curiosity of a group of progressive educators and policymakers in Minnesota. They pitched charter schools as educational “labs” — district schools would adopt trials that worked. Teachers unions feared a lack of accountability and charged that charters would prove a back-door entrance to private-school vouchers. But the state passed a charter law in 1991, and the country’s first charter school opened a year later. St. Paul’s City Academy still exists today. California passed a charter law in 1992; six states followed in 1993.

In *The Charter School Experiment*, the authors note that charters schools’ early advocates “envisioned small-scale, autonomous schools run by independent mom-and-pop operators who would be positioned to respond to local community needs.” The vision enjoyed sweeping appeal. Everyone from the NAACP to the Walton Family Foundation to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation supported charters. Bill Clinton signed a federal support program for charters in 1994, and every president since has advocated for school choice. As John Oliver quipped, “Charter schools unite both sides of the aisle more quickly than when a wedding DJ throws on ‘Hey Ya.’”

But as charter schools bloomed, the laboratory theory largely gave way to the reality of a parallel education system. Charters collaborated with public schools far less often than teachers unions liked, and liberal legislators — historic allies — began to side with the unions more readily. Competition bred animosity. Finn boils down the charter battle to this: “If you are an adult invested in district education for jobs, and you discover charters are slowly eating your lunch, you will grow intense in your desire to contain or kill charters.”

The top criticism of charters is that they rob funding from district schools. It’s the primary tactic No on 2 took last fall. And it’s true, but only in that states and districts transfer funding per pupil; the money follows the child. In 2016, the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation concluded that the district-charter balance had been stable — 3.9 percent of students were in charters, and 3.9 percent of district funding went to charters. But district schools argue that this still makes it harder to cover their relatively unchanged operating costs. For example, if a school loses two students per grade, they lose the per-pupil funding but fixed administrative costs remain the same. As Moody’s found in 2012, a yearly trickle of students transferring isn’t the “critical mass” district schools need to justify cutting programs, and so some districts struggle to adapt. But some states, Massachusetts included, have even reimbursed public schools the funds they lost to charters.

Opponents also cite the high turnover rate: Nationwide, charters lose 24 percent of their teachers each year, double the rate of traditional public schools. Why? Longer hours and less pay, for one. But charters in general are also less apt to retain teachers for decades, and more apt to embrace both a startup-like culture and millennials’ compulsion toward multiple careers, and to continuously recruit fresh, highly motivated talent. (The average Success Academy teacher, for example, leaves after four years.) But the attrition gap is narrowing, and these numbers are also slightly misleading: When charters franchise, many veteran faculty leave existing schools to ensure the new locations maintain the quality of the original. Still, high turnover tends to diminish student achievement.

And critics highlight that after 25 years and some 6,000 schools, charters still on average produce results roughly equal those of the public schools to which they set out to be better alternatives. Nationwide, low-income students, especially black and Hispanic, tend to benefit from charters the most, studies show. But for white and Asian students, as Finn notes, “the effects are generally neutral or negative.”

THE STAGGERING RANGE IN CHARTER quality starts with authorizers. Every charter school has a state-sanctioned organization that grants its license, reviews its performance, and renews or terminates its contract. About 200 charters

close a year, not just for academic shortcomings, but for flawed governance or leadership, a drop in student demand, or financial miscalculations. Districts themselves authorize 39 percent of the country’s charters, state education agencies 28 percent, and the rest include colleges, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations. In Indianapolis, even the mayor’s office has authorizations. An undiscerning authorizer is the main root of weak charters.

Take Ohio, often called the Wild West of chartering. Notorious for its leniency with authorizers, 65 in all, Ohio celebrated what *Charter Schools at the Crossroads* dubbed a 15-year-long “fiesta of almost unlimited chartering” that resulted in a lasting hangover. A 2014 study from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University found that the average Ohio charter student, compared with his or her public school peer, acquired 14 fewer days in reading and 43 fewer days of math in a 180-day school year. The results were nearly identical five years earlier. CREDO cited many authorizers’ inability to “provide monitoring and oversight” as the primary source of failure.

But Finn also blames parents. Learning why they sent their children to charters, he says, “was a real cold shower.” Surveys by the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington and others revealed that parents, especially low-



DeVos is a champion of vouchers, state-funded scholarships that parents in low-income districts can use to send their children to private or religious school.

Known as Michigan’s “godmother of school choice,” newly appointed Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, above right, with President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, has been one of the top funders of Detroit’s charter schools

income parents, often pick schools based on convenience and safety, “but pay little or no attention to whether the kids were learning anything,” says Finn. Demand for things like location, security, and athletic programs allowed failing charters to thrive. (See sidebar for more on parents.)

Also consider Michigan, home state of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. Known as Michigan’s “godmother of school choice,” DeVos has been one of the top funders of Detroit’s charter schools, which, as a *New York Times* op-ed commented, “even charter advocates acknowledge is the biggest school reform disaster in the country.” As the *Times* reported, half of Detroit’s charters performed only as well, or

TYPES OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

Half of the country’s 6,800 charters could be classified as “general,” without a specific mission, pedagogy, or curriculum. In addition to novel approaches, many charters follow “good old-fashioned education practices” that district schools had abandoned, as a Massachusetts Department of Education study found. Specialized charters include progressive (like some Montessori), single-gender, STEM, and arts-based, plus:

No Excuses: Characterized by high academic and behavioral expectations and rigorous structure, no excuse schools predominate in urban areas with a majority of minority children. Some 15 percent of charters follow the no excuses model, though fewer call themselves such today. One franchised example includes KIPP, with 200 schools across the country.

Online: Virtual charters educate 8 percent of all charter students and are found in 17 states. In 2015, Stanford’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes found that the average online charter student, compared with the average district school student, achieves 72 fewer days in reading each year and 180 fewer days (not a typo) of learning in math, based on a 180-day school year.

Hybrid: These schools include face-to-face and online instruction. Forms vary greatly. At San Francisco’s Flex Academy, students take online classes in the same building five days a week, but on-site teachers only intervene when students perform poorly. At others, students complete the vast majority of coursework at home, save for occasional drop-in hours.

Expeditionary Learning: Largely influenced by German educator Kurt Hahn, “EL” schools like Launch focus on immersive, interdisciplinary, and often community-based research projects, character development, and leadership skills. **ZJ**

WHAT PARENTS THINK OF CHARTERS

In 2016, *Education Next* magazine asked 1,571 parents to assess their children's respective district, charter, or private schools. Private school parents were more satisfied than their peers on almost every measure of their schools' performance (save racial and ethnic diversity, with which charter parents were equally satisfied). Parents of charter and public school children are equally satisfied with their respective school's quality of teachers, safety, and facilities. But parents of charter school children were "very satisfied" more often than district school parents in terms of their schools' discipline (34 to 17 percent), student achievement expectations (38 to 25 percent), "instruction in character or values" (38 to 21 percent), and on every measure of the schools' communications with parents. **zj**

worse, than traditional public schools in the city, which are some of the most challenged in the country. (Last year, only 10 percent of rising high school seniors scored college ready on reading tests.) Some of the worst charters have even added locations. The problem stems largely from Michigan's plethora of authorizers (44), most of which allow "just about anyone [who] can raise the money" to open a school, according to *The Washington Post*.

Perhaps it's not surprising that for-profit companies run 80 percent of Michigan's charters, far more than any other state. Finn writes in *Crossroads* that there's nothing "reprehensible" about profiting from "public education, any more than a paving contractor that profits from work it does for the highway department." Charter opponents argue schools shouldn't be run like businesses — weighing education with efficiencies. Some even see a slippery slope. Says Henderson, "Are we going to have charter police forces, charter fire departments?"

Ideologies aside, the overall record of for-profit schools is subpar. In 2009-10, while 66 percent of nonprofit charters achieved what the No Child Left Behind Act defined as "adequate yearly progress," only 51 percent of for-profit charters made the grade. Beginning in the mid-2000s, many states have banned for-profit charters. At one point, the New Jersey-based Edison Schools Inc. franchised 130 charters in 22 states. They now run five. Today for-profits run 14 percent of all charters, many of which are online charters, which have failed students horribly. On average, online charter students achieve 180 fewer days of learning math each year.

Charter opponents pound on these grim examples to build the case of charter schools as a failed experiment. As Merseth says, "Terrible schools are the biggest black eye in the whole charter movement."

BUT CHARTER ADVOCATES, OF COURSE, argue that they exist as better alternatives to terrible public schools. And states with judicious authorizers have a strong record of charters outperforming districts. Massachusetts has one lone authorizer, the state board of education. Every Massachusetts charter must provide annual evidence of its "faithfulness" to its contract, its academic success, its equity among students, and its engagement with parents, and be subject to annual financial auditing and site visits, otherwise the state can close the school. "That's the thing I like most about charter schools: There's a public mechanism for shutting them down," says Campbell. CREDO found in 2013 that the commonwealth's charter students gained 36 more days in reading and 65 more days in math a year. Studies from the Ed School's Center for Education Policy Research and MIT show similar results, and two months before the election, Brookings Institution released a study that found the state's charter cap "holds back disadvantaged students." Massachusetts is the poster child for charter success.

Standouts include Alma Del Mar, a K-8 charter that **WILL GARDNER, ED.M.'10**, founded in 2011. While running an afterschool program for middle schoolers in low-income New Bedford, Gardner was shocked that, in spite of the "tremendous resources and human capital" in Massachusetts, many students were woefully behind their peers even in sixth grade. After fielding suggestions from dozens of local parents, he decided to start a "high-demand, high-support" school where college prep would start in kindergarten. Alma's teachers are expected to keep their cellphones on at night for homework help and/or emotional support and to visit the home of every child every year.

In Dorchester, Campbell's Codman Academy, which was founded in 2000, is the only school in the country located within a community health center. High school students complete healthcare internships, and all students receive free dental cleanings and vision screenings.

A Dorchester resident for the past 35 years, Campbell sent her children through the Boston Public Schools. But she started Codman after becoming frustrated with local public schools' lack of flexibility (BPS has the shortest school day in the country) and what she described as tracking systems that begin in second grade and perpetuate "the illusion that intelligence is innate." Her fervor for charters only grew after she served on the Boston School Committee from 2011 to 2015. Even though more than 20 BPS schools were performing well below the state's average, the committee, she says, "sat on its laurels just because its competition was so bad." She concluded, "I'm under much more scrutiny as one little charter school than any district school."

But No on 2 still found myriad criticisms.

They contend that charters inadequately serve children with special needs. Charter schools suspend children with disabilities at a higher rate than public schools, and there have been many cases of inadequacy due to a lack of resources, experience, and insensitivity. Nationwide, however, the gap is relatively small: 12.6 percent of public school children have special needs, 10.4 percent in charters. And many charters serve special needs children specifically, such as Utah's Spectrum Academy for autistic students and Minnesota's Metro Deaf Charter School.

They also note that since charters serve a disproportionate amount of minorities, they are more racially segregated than traditional public schools. As the Brookings Institution also noted last fall, this is a delicate balancing act. "Reducing school segregation and improving the quality of schools serving minority students are both important goals, but they are not necessarily the same." Still, the NAACP boosted the No on 2 campaign in October, when the civil rights organization called for a national moratorium on expanding charters until there was less segregation and better accountability and transparency.

In the end, despite the polls, Reville says the vote was always "no contest." No on 2 had a sprawling ground game, thanks in part to 110,000 members of the Massachusetts Teachers Association. And the message they repeated relentlessly stuck with the undecided voters: Charter schools steal public schools' money. Most charter advocates agree the referendum was a doomed political strategy. Explaining the nuances of funding "gets too complicated for the average voter," Reville says. Sixty-two percent of voters rejected the cap lift. Only 18 of 351 towns voted a majority in favor, and they were all in suburban districts without charters. In the state with the nation's greatest charter record, the vote marked the charter movement's greatest defeat.

THE CHARTER WAR HAS ONLY GROWN more fraught since the election. President Donald Trump backed Michigan native DeVos, an ardent school-choice crusader, to lead the Department of Education, with a proposed \$20 billion for school-choice initiatives. A victory for charters, but at the cost of deeper division.

While not solely responsible for charters' failings in Detroit (and although she has backed successful charters in Michigan), DeVos remains what Reville calls a "divisive figure even within the charter movement" and has left many questioning her ability to hold charters accountable.

Many also fear that should Trump become the face of choice (he urged Congress, in his first address to them in March, to fund choice), many would-be supporters of charters may convert to

pro-district school only, simply as a revolt against Trump. Reville says many leaders of high-quality charters have decided to keep a low profile for now. "They don't want to be alienated by associating with a DeVos-Trump charter framework," he says.

On the other hand, DeVos is a champion of vouchers, state-funded scholarships that parents in low-income districts can use to send their children to private or religious school. Charter and district supporters alike tend to dislike vouchers. As a result, would both sides of the charter war unite against vouchers? How things move forward with DeVos could drive district and charter schools to compromise and collaborate.

Merseth, Campbell, Reville, and Gardner all argue that there's already much more collaboration than the mainstream narrative of competition suggests. The Alma Del Mar Charter School leads monthly professional development workshops for public school teachers in New Bedford and neighboring towns like Fall River and Dartmouth and has partnered with the local high school, where Alma's top eighth-graders can take ninth-grade algebra. If pro- and anti-charter zealots "zoom in, they'll see lots of cross-pollination," says Gardner.

Bolstering the original "laboratory" ideal of charters, informing the public more about charter schools themselves, closing failing charters, holding for-profit charters as accountable as nonprofit charters and district schools — these would all staunch the charter debate, experts all agree.

In *Charter Schools at the Crossroads*, Finn and his coauthors make their final case for charter schools by referencing the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, the oldest constitution in continuous effect in the world, written centuries before the advent of charter schools and decades before Horace Mann universalized public education. The document mandates that the Commonwealth "cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them ... to encourage private societies and public institutions ... to inculcate the principles of humanity and general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and frugality, honesty and punctuality." Lofty goals for all children, and very open-ended for how to achieve them.

Finn says, "If the goal is educational excellence for children, we should be agnostic as to what sorts of institutions can best deliver it."

ZACHARY JASON IS A BOSTON-BASED WRITER WHOSE LAST STORY, "BORED OUT OF THEIR MINDS" WAS PUBLISHED IN THE WINTER 2017 ISSUE OF *ED*.



California has the most charter schools of any state: 1,253



Number of states without charter schools

Alabama
Kentucky
Montana
Nebraska
North Dakota
South Dakota
Vermont
West Virginia

62.1
PERCENT

Percentage of **NO** votes for the Massachusetts ballot question to expand the charter cap (37.9% voted **YES**)



LINK TO DEAN RYAN'S *ED WEEK* BLOG, WHICH LOOKS AT CHOICES FOR PARENTS AT: GSE.HARVARD.EDU/ED/EXTRAS



A School of Their Own

How one alum's new learning center in North Carolina could redefine homeschooling

Story by Barry Yeoman Photographs by Jillian Clarke

Opposite and above: Current students from Dimensions Family School

C

CHARLOTTE DUNGAN CALLS SEVEN MIDDLE AND high school students into a brick classroom above an ice cream shop in Durham, North Carolina. They pile, loose-limbed and heaving with giggles, into seats around a square table. “All right,” she says. “All people, bring your voices down.” It takes a while for the laughter to subside. When it does, **DUNGAN, ED.M.’16**, begins today’s Big Picture Ideas class with a small lesson on living with compassion.

One of the students, a 12-year-old named Mic with flushed cheeks and fine blond hair, has brought a box of vegan cookies to share. “Do you remember why we bring cookies?” Dungan asks the students.

“It makes the space a little more comfortable, I guess,” says Luci, a blue-eyed 12-year-old wearing a camo hoodie. “Normally, we wouldn’t be able to eat food during class.”

“People want to come when there’s food, right?” Dungan says. “It’s welcoming. And when everyone eats the same thing, we’re thinking about others’ needs. When you think about your snacks, make sure that our vegan has something to eat. Or if someone has a food allergy — we have a student who is allergic to walnuts — you can be thinking mindfully about making sure everyone has something.”

If this lesson sounds rudimentary, it’s because Dungan knows that these students have had fewer opportunities than many of their peers to share snacks in a classroom. They are homeschooled students who attend classes and clubs at a nonprofit learning center called Dimensions Family School (DFS). Dungan founded DFS last year with the intention of providing peer support, social opportunities, and high-quality teaching to children and parents who have opted out of the conventional educational structure.

It’s a sophisticated advance on an old idea. For the roughly 2 million homeschooled children in the United States, learning doesn’t necessarily entail sitting at a kitchen table all day with a parent and siblings. “Homeschoolers rely extensively on net-

works of the like-minded,” writes Robert Kunzman, a professor of education at Indiana University and managing director of the International Center for Home Education Research. Those networks range from informal playground groups to co-ops in which parents share the teaching or occasionally hire outsiders. Some public schools also offer part-time programs for homeschoolers.

Dungan’s DFS goes beyond the informal, the like-minded, or the part-time. It provides a 10-room space that’s open every weekday from 9 a.m. till 4 p.m. It draws a heterogeneous membership of 50 families from a wide geographic area. Its instructors, some hired and others parent-volunteers, hold graduate degrees. It offers outward-looking community activities like service projects and a craft market. Dungan recently launched a parent-education curriculum and has hired a researcher to gather periodic data to assess the efficacy of the model.

“A co-op on steroids,” she says.

The curriculum, which runs from prekindergarten through high school, includes classes in traditional subjects like chemistry and music theory. Dimensions also offers instruction in less academic skills: community service, self-governance, and, during another Big Picture Ideas class, emotional self-regulation.

Dungan writes the word “hijacking” on the whiteboard, asks for a definition, and then flips the conversation from cockpits to adolescent brains. “Emotional hijacking is when your body takes over or it steals control of your emotion,” she explains. “You are so mad that your brain literally stops thinking — the higher part of your brain — and [you] just punch somebody. Or your sadness takes over and you can’t get that thing done that you know you have to do. You are no longer going in the way that you would normally, rationally want to go.”

One student protests. “If you’re like that all the time,” she says, explaining, “that is the way you would normally go.”

“Not in the long term, when you’re 40,” Dungan says. “It’s not where you need to be, in order to be healthy or successful or happy.” Adolescents, she explains, lack the brain structure they need to modulate their emotions. “But there are things you can learn,” she adds. Dungan introduces an exercise that she acknowledges will be “really hard”: sitting quietly for four minutes of intentional breathing and guided body-awareness meditation.

“Are you trying to torture us?” Luci says, laughing but serious. This is a class that is prone to wiggling and crosstalk, tomfoolery and the occasion dramatic exit. Four minutes of stillness would be unprecedented. “I want you to do this,” says Dungan, “because the skills that you learn can be applied way outside of a classroom. It will help you in your relationships. It will help you in your schoolwork. It will help you with your parents.”

“I want you to do this because the skills that you learn can be applied way outside of a classroom. It will help you in your relationships. It will help you in your schoolwork. It will help you with your parents.”

Dimensions Family School founder Charlotte Dungan, Ed.M.’16, giving advice to students at the new school she founded for homeschool families.



A few students duck out. Most stay and eventually quiet down. “Try to relax your hands and feet,” Dungan says. “Settle your body. And know that there’s a place of peace inside of you that you can go to just by breathing and paying attention.”

D

DUNGAN WAS AN ACCIDENTAL HOMESCHOOLING parent herself. Raised in poverty, without a strong parent-advocate, she suffered what she calls a “spoty” gifted education in the Michigan public schools. “In fourth grade, I took fifth-grade math,” she says. “The next year I didn’t have math at all; they had me be a reading tutor. And that was my experience of what it meant to be gifted: We’ll accelerate you, make you do extra work, then we’ll pull all your services. And we’ll keep doing that year after year.”

That said, the public schools also served as an important safety-net function for Dungan. “School was a place where I could eat,” she says.

Dungan graduated high school, attended classes at a community college, then became a computer programmer for 10 years. In 2006, after her second child was born, she enrolled in Ohio’s Antioch University to become an educator. While earning her bachelor’s degree, she worked at the Antioch School, a century-old private alternative school where students help design the rules and curriculum.

Then Dungan’s husband got a job offer in North Carolina. The couple moved in 2008 with a first-grader and a 4-year-old, plus a third child on the way. Arriving too late in the summer to find a compatible school, the couple decided to keep their kids home for a year.

“Homeschooling was lovely,” Dungan says — so lovely, in fact, that one year turned into nine (with periodic forays into the public schools). Her children — she now has four — “were all able to learn at their own pace. We were following their interests and going deep into subjects.” The highly educated Durham-Chapel Hill area had a large, vibrant homeschool community that offered myriad enrichment opportunities. “But we were also driving around a lot,” she says, “and spending a lot of money.” Dun-

gan would drop off her eldest daughter at Spanish class, her son at nature school, and her second daughter at swimming practice, all the while shuttling her baby from errand to errand. “The essence of what I wanted to do as a homeschool was about relationships and about deep learning,” she says. It wasn’t supposed to be about chauffeuring.

Researchers say homeschooling can stress parents as much as it rewards them. Some of the burden comes from never having enough personal time, some from playing a dual role in a child’s life. “There’s a lot of additional emotional baggage that comes with making your own child learn the times table,” says Jennifer Lois, a sociologist at Western Washington University. Lois has interviewed numerous homeschooling mothers, one of whom described how her son felt “completely safe breaking down emotionally” over an academic assignment — something he’d never do in school.

Lois concludes that homeschooling parents suffer burnout much like that of professional educators. Those stresses are minimized when families form supportive communities.

Creating communities was on Dungan’s mind, too, when she entered the Learning and Teaching Program at the Ed School in 2015. By then, she had taught gifted children on the autism spectrum, founded a summer tinkering program, and ran off-site camps for a science museum. Now she wanted to build a more ambitious organization: a centralized location to house a wide-ranging educational program for homeschoolers.

As she envisioned Dimensions, not only would it relieve parents of time pressure; it would also provide children with some of the social benefits of attending school.

“They want a locker. They want a mascot. They want the feeling of belonging,” she says of the kids. Unlike conventional schools, DFS could offer “those trappings with the individuality of their own program, their own philosophy, their own pace.”



Above: Artwork from Medieval Times, a class for the elementary kids. Opposite: Backpacks, lunchboxes, and discovery.

At the Ed School, Dungan did much of the planning for Dimensions’ launch, while deepening her grounding in educational theory and strengthening her leadership, financial management, and research skills. She also learned how to foster diversity and how to scale an institution beyond a single location. “She had a core commitment to learner agency,” recalls Associate Professor Karen Brennan, “to provide the structure and supports for them to design their own learning.”

With a master’s degree in hand, Dungan returned to North Carolina, where the homeschooling rate is almost twice the national average. Then she began to race the clock.

DIMENSIONS OPENED THREE MONTHS LATER, IN September 2016, on a commercial strip that once served millworkers and now caters to college students and professionals. From the sidewalk, a wooden stairway leads up to a reception area that branches into three activity nodes. The front section houses the teen lounge, an often-rambunctious space governed by the older students with occasional adult intervention; it has foosball and pool tables along with comfy

sofas and chairs. Off the lounge are three classrooms where, during a recent visit, two high-schoolers analyzed different translations of a Taoist text and some middle-schoolers created digital storyboards.

Two rooms near the middle of the building are used primarily by elementary school children. One, called the Creative Cave, has shelves stacked with wire and beads, and supplies for sewing and scrapbooking. Last fall, with the faint edge of Hurricane Matthew approaching Durham, Dungan used the Cave to teach seven children about extreme weather. The lesson covered geography, history, and science and ended with the creation of a miniature hurricane in a stainless-steel bowl.

Further back, the kindergarten and pre-K students huddle around a table making arts-and-crafts sheep from construction paper and felt. As the glue dries, their teacher gathers them into a nest of pillows and rugs for story time.

The reasons these children are being homeschooled vary widely. DFS registrar Mistie Gotch, whose son brought the vegan cookies, worried that conventional schools have a “homogenizing” effect that “doesn’t always allow for the individual student to have a fulfilling sense of purpose.” Gotch wants

her sons to understand issues like wealth inequality, which she feels most schools gloss over, and to develop a strong sense of environmental stewardship.

Brock Sayre, who teaches DFS's Dungeons & Dragons class, started homeschooling his son, now 14, about five years ago — it was supposed to be a short-term fix — when he decided the boy was being ill-served by his charter school. “The stuff he was really good in: They were like, ‘Oh, great, he just won't learn any math for three more years,’” Sayre says. Meanwhile, his son was struggling with writing. “So he would hide under his desk and cry until writing time was over. Then he didn't have to write.”

Missing from the mix are families who homeschool for primarily religious reasons, even though they represent the majority of homeschoolers nationwide. Those families tend to follow more standardized curricula. Dungan notes that Dimensions' membership includes people of faith, even if they use secular teaching methods.

Despite their dissatisfaction with conventional schools, Dimensions parents say they don't want to isolate their children at home.

Before Niambi Jaha-Echols, artist and consultant, moved east from Chicago in 2014, her now-13-year-old son Jelani was struggling at a private school that, in her view, set a lower expectation for him as an African American male. Jaha-Echols also found the curriculum relentlessly Eurocentric. Jelani, who is serious and sensitive, felt alone. “I wanted to fit in,” he says. “It felt like no one wanted me to be a part of the activities after class. That weighed on me because then I started thinking I wasn't good enough.”

When they landed in the North Carolina countryside, 35 minutes from Durham, Jaha-Echols and her husband, an engineer, decided to create a new model: a little bit of home teaching supplemented heavily by “a la carte classes” in the community. “We knew that socialization was a high priority for him,” she says of Jelani. “We were able to outsource almost 90 percent of his classes. The only problem for me — because I'm not a homeschool teacher; I don't feel like I could do that — was having to take him from place to place to place. I became the unpaid Uber mom.”

Dimensions relieved the transportation strain while also providing Jelani with the friendships he craved. “What I love about DFS is that it's in one space,” his mother says. “He's getting all the social components that typically happen in school.” Jelani recognizes that he and his classmates are not being shoehorned into a common set of expectations. “They are able to work with anyone,” he says. “If you have a reading disorder, or something like that, there is no pressure to get it right the first time.”

IN THE FIRST MONTHS AFTER DIMENSIONS' opening, students and parents talk about the school in the language of homecoming. “Last Sunday,



The start of a carton-to-school-garden pollinator project.

I wanted to go to sleep as fast as I could because I needed to get here,” says 13-year-old Beckett, who attends three days a week. He glances around the teen lounge, where his friends are waiting for him to join them for lunch on the street below. “It's definitely nice to be a community,” he says.

Dungan, in November, says she is generally satisfied with the launch, based on the feedback she's getting. “There are parents that are really happy that their kids have finally found a fit,” she says. During at least one conversation a week, she has watched a parent shed tears of relief.

That said, “it would be unhealthy for us to think we had it right from the get-go. I think of us as a learning organization. You just have to open, and be bad at stuff for a bit, and get better.” She has identified some shortcomings, which she plans to rectify when Dimensions' third quarter begins in January. “Which makes me frustrated because I feel like we could do things better right now.” The schedule for each quarter, she notes, is set months in advance.

One of those shortcomings is the elementary school curriculum: a hodgepodge of one-hour classes without a common thread. “People aren't necessarily willing to drive over for a single hour,” Dungan says. “What we hear now is, ‘Well, my kid really wants to do that engineering class and that math class. But the Shakespeare class, not so much.’”

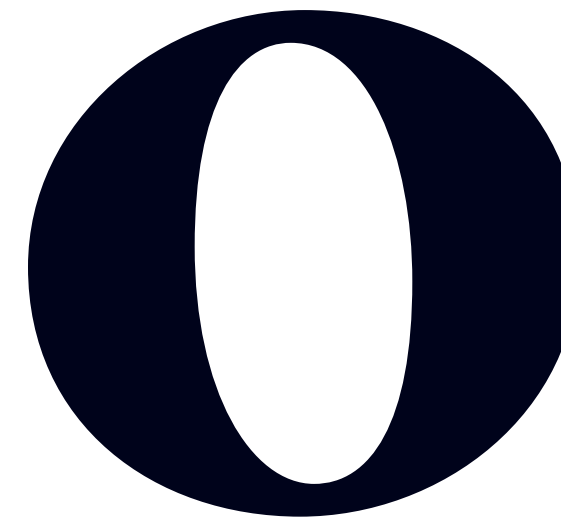
Dungan's solution is to create “unit studies”: three-hour interdisciplinary blocks centered on topics like inventors, animals, and the solar system. Within the solar-system unit, for example, “they would do math, and they would read a biography, and they would create a science project,” she says. “But it would all be integrated in a theme that they were interested in.”

Meanwhile, some of the older students have expressed to Dungan that sitting in a classroom all day isn't their favorite way to learn. She's planning

to remedy this with project-based learning, starting on a pilot scale. “We're going to see if, for kids who do not love the traditional system — whether or not they're good at it — can we create projects for them that are meaningful, that cover the subject areas.”

Some issues remain unresolved in these initial months, such as pricing. When Dimensions opened, full memberships — which cost \$300 per family plus \$50 per child per month — also required parents to work a certain number of hours. “My original vision was that everyone would share a little bit of their time and talent,” Dungan says in November. “In some cases that's happening beyond my wildest dreams” although she worries that the most enthusiastic volunteers might burn out. Other parents aren't stepping up at all, often for legitimate reasons like family illness.

Dungan suspects that some families have not applied to DFS because of the work mandate. She wonders if there should be a higher-cost membership that exempts parents from labor. “Which brings me questions about our mission,” she says. “Do we want to offer a service, or do we want to build a community? Those are the things that keep me up at night.”



“They want a locker. They want a mascot. They want the feeling of belonging.”

Dungan, on how Dimensions provides homeschool students with some of the social benefits of attending a more traditional school.

ON A JANUARY AFTERNOON, AT THE EDGE OF A RIVER outside Durham, six students gather around a buzz-cut man for a hands-on lesson in stream restoration.

“This is *Chasmanthium latifolium*,” says Keith Neelson, superintendent of Eno River State Park, as he fingers the delicate seeds of a native oat grass growing along the bank. He explains that when erosion threatens to swallow up a hiking trail, workers cut a new trail further from the water. They then close the old trail by scattering wild grass seeds, which the students will collect today.

“These are river oats,” Neelson says. “They grow close by the river. Don't fall in. That is a big rule.”

The students, both elementary and middle school, set out to collect seed in plastic cups. Supervising them is Dimensions' newest teacher (and Dungan's Ed School classmate), [STUART JECKEL, ED.M.'16](#), who

taught at Khan Academy and did quantitative social science research at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. The weekly Outdoors at the Eno class is one of DFS's early forays into project-based learning, and Jeckel integrates multiple disciplines into today's field trip. He turns the discovery of a spring into a lesson on groundwater versus surface water. He locates an exotic grass and points out the dense rhizomes that enable the plant to spread: an organic lesson about invasive species. Later, Luci, along with Dungan's 12-year-old daughter Kristin, leads the younger children in a writing and drawing exercise inspired by their riparian surroundings.

It's now the third quarter, and Dungan is rolling out her improvement plans. The elementary kids are immersed in “unit studies”: On a Tuesday morning, the three-hour Medieval Times class includes a computer activity in which they dress knights and design posters for lost dragons. Later this morning they will work in groups to build castles with clay. Teacher Leigh Ann VanSchaick, a former public school teacher, has also woven math into the unit (calculating castle perimeters, for example), along with historic concepts like the feudal system. To help students imagine life before electricity, VanSchaick convened a “Round Table” meeting at which the children tried to read by candlelight.

Dungan has also resolved the volunteering quandary: Dimensions now offers higher-priced memberships that don't include a work requirement. “We clarified that so we can charge people transparently when they decide not to volunteer,” she explains. “Currently no one is using it — and we have a lot of people stepping up to collect their hours.”

There is more in the works. In March, DFS held an open house at its future second location, 40 miles south: a farm in rural Moncure, where Dungan hopes the children will learn ecosystem monitoring, animal husbandry, and astronomy hands on. She envisions the children growing their own food and eating it for lunch. She also plans to provide transportation between Moncure and Durham, so students can take classes at both sites.

“I think this may be the wave of the future,” says Peter Gray, a research professor of psychology at Boston College who studies homeschooling models that encourage children to follow their own interests. “In my view, the biggest part of education, whether you're in school or not, is what you learn in interactions with other children.” For her part, Dungan is less attached, over the long term, to running Dimensions than she is to propagating more alternatives for homeschooling families. “I see the family-school model as a movement,” she says. If that pans out, she wants to help cut as many trails as possible.

BARRY YEOMAN IS A WRITER BASED IN DURHAM WHOSE WORK HAS APPEARED IN *THE AMERICAN PROSPECT*, *POPULAR SCIENCE*, *THE NATION*, AND *THE SATURDAY EVENING POST*.

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue suit and tie, stands in front of a brick building with a decorative archway. He is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background shows a multi-story brick building with many windows and a large, ornate black metal archway. The scene is outdoors, likely on a college campus.

Poor, but Privileged

NEW FACULTY MEMBER **TONY JACK** KNOWS FIRST HAND
WHAT HIS RESEARCH REVEALED: SOME LOW-INCOME KIDS COME
TO COLLEGE MORE PREPARED THAN OTHERS

STORY BY LORY HOUGH PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD DIONNE

When Tony Jack started his freshman year at Amherst College in 2003, something seemed off.

He looked around and saw a diverse group of students, but unlike him, none seemed poor. They talked about study abroad programs and boarding schools like Andover and Groton. Back at home, in Miami, summer was just a season. At Amherst, he quickly learned, it was also a verb.

“I kept asking myself, am I really the only poor black person here?”

The answer was no.

Some of his classmates had grown up the way he did — barely making ends meet, the first in their families to go to college — but they had taken part in programs like Prep for Prep and A Better Chance that pluck promising, low-income kids from struggling urban schools and give them funding to attend private high schools.

What Jack noticed about these students was that, unlike other poor kids who hadn’t gone to elite schools, they all seemed to be transitioning from high school to college without issue. They were already versed in college terms like “orientation” and “syllabus.” They didn’t hesitate to approach faculty members or raise their hands in class.

Jack didn’t know it at the time, but this observation would eventually help shape the research question that he is currently trying to answer as a junior fellow at the prestigious Harvard Society of Fellows and as an incoming faculty member at the Ed School: Why do students from equally disadvantaged backgrounds experience the same college so differently?

What he found is that colleges and universities, and society in general, tend to treat all low-income students the same. While reading articles for his Ph.D. in Harvard’s sociology department, Jack says the story — whether it was written by an anthropologist, economist, or sociologist — was always the same.

“If you’re poor and black, if you’re poor and Latino, if you’re poor and anything in college, you’ll have this experience. Period,” he says. “There was so little variation in talking about the experience of poor students. I didn’t see in the research what I saw at Amherst.”

So Jack did what made the most sense: He set out to change the research — and the national conversation around diversity in higher education.

As his mentor and dissertation chair William Julius Wilson, a professor at Harvard Kennedy School, says, “When Tony initially described his research project I immediately thought, Here is a project that will very likely uncover issues not previously considered by sociologists and will enhance our understanding of how pre-college exposure to important social milieus for the acquisition of cultural and social capital matters for low-income students.”

After two years of interviewing more than 100 black, Latino, and white undergraduates at an elite university, Jack came up with a new way to think about how factors like poverty and socioeconomic segregation — segregation by class — shape the way students experience college. He splits low-income college students into two groups: The “doubly disadvantaged” are poor kids who went to public schools, often underresourced. The “privileged poor” are poor kids who went to private high schools, usually well resourced.

As he explained during a recent podcast interview with a Harvard alumni group, the terms are purposefully loaded. “Privileged poor is kind of like jumbo shrimp, right?” he said. “It’s got that oxymoronic quality to it intended to make the reader ask: How can one person be both privileged and poor?”

What he found is that students who are privileged poor and went to private high schools come to college not only academically prepared, but also culturally prepared. Jack says they come knowing how to navigate the informal social rules that govern college life and this gives them an advantage. For many, it also helps them get more out of college. On the other hand, the doubly disadvantaged, although also academically gifted, usually come less exposed to the norms and unspoken expectations of college, making the transition especially difficult. The privileged poor also experience culture shock, but much earlier, he explains — in middle or high school, when they are recruited into programs like Prep for Prep. As one student told Jack, “The shock I would have experienced [at an elite college], I experienced from eighth grade to high school, ...from public to private school.”



“I kept asking myself, am I really the only poor black person here?”

While talking about these two groups, Jack often uses office hours as a way to explain how different their experience can be in college.

“One thing I would like for every college to do is institute a policy that professors define terms like ‘office hours’ on the syllabus. That’s so simple,” he says. “The college doesn’t have to dictate what kind of description they give because office hours look different for a chemistry class or a Spanish class. But what would happen if a professor said, ‘Hey, I’m Professor Jack. The class meets on Tuesday and Thursday at a certain time, and my office hours are 1 to 2:30, now let’s get started,’ versus ‘Hello everybody. I’m Professor Jack, and class is Wednesday and office hours are Thursday from 1 to 2:30, and I view office hours as a time for us to not only go over course material and larger course aims, but also an opportunity to talk about fellowships or how this course relates to larger issues.’ That’s making it personal. How different do those two things sound to everyone? In the first one, you’re assuming everyone knows what office hours are. They don’t. That’s a fact of the matter. Not all kids come to college knowing what office hours are. So translate it. And this is a kind of translation that has nothing to do with language like Spanish or French or Mandarin. This is about translating the college experience for students and their families.”

When Jack started at Amherst, he was lucky enough to know what office hours were because, although he had attended public schools in Miami through 11th grade, he transferred his senior year to a nearby private school, Gulliver Prep, after a bad experience with a football coach who didn’t value his academic skills. That one year — just one year — gave him a leg up navigating his way in college.

“My one year gave me such an advantage,” he says, noting that because of that year in private school, he puts himself in the privileged poor category. “My school had mandatory office hours for teachers. Because they did that, I was used to going not only to my academic adviser at Amherst, but also to the academic dean. It put me on a pathway to be a little more at ease at Amherst.”

While he was doing his research, he found that other privileged poor students felt the same level of comfort when it came to approaching faculty. He tells a story about a boy from a troubled neighborhood who attended an affluent boarding school. In college, the boy felt “empowered” telling professors he wanted to meet with them, and he had no qualms calling a professor on his cell phone for virtual office hours.

As Jack said, low-income kids who come up through the private school pipeline learn not only that it’s okay to reach out to faculty, but that it’s actually expected. In his research, he found that the privileged poor pattern with middle-class students in this way. In contrast, the doubly disadvantaged

kids not only feel too intimidated to speak up, especially to those in authority, but they believe that the way to success is simply to put your head down and work hard.

Jack credits former First Lady Michelle Obama for being public and personal about similar struggles in college. Recently, when asked to write an op-ed reflecting on President Obama, Jack asked if he could write about Michelle instead.

“Not that I don’t love President Obama — I do — but what First Lady Michelle Obama has done, especially for first-generation students, especially in higher education, has been phenomenal,” he says. Most notable was a graduation speech she gave to a high school in Chicago in 2016 where she talked about growing up on the city’s south side and later, at Princeton, being afraid to ask for help, feeling it was a sign of weakness. Looking around at her confident freshman classmates, she said, “They never seemed to question whether they belonged at a school like Princeton.”

Jack says about the speech, “She laid it out and made it so personal. What she has done for my research in that one speech is as influential as some sociologists I’ve been reading for the last eight years. She’s allowed me to see how powerful the personal narrative of someone in a position of power can be.”

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Since then, Jack has been very forthcoming about sharing his personal narrative. He grew up in West Grove, a section of Coconut Grove that the *Miami Herald* dubbed “the Miami neighborhood that time forgot.” Some of Florida’s first black settlers, Bahamian natives, set roots there in the 1880s, and the area quickly became home for people who worked at the Peacock Inn or as nannies and butlers for the wealthy. He lived there with his sister and brother, a single mom, and his grandparents. His mom, Marilyn, worked security; his grandmother was a maid for a lawyer in nearby Pinecrest. He says the Wednesday before payday was often tough.

“When I go home, it’s one of those moments in which you remember the lived history of segregation, both racial and socioeconomic,” he says, “and you see the legacy of that.”

He started out as a Head Start kid, something he says he’s very proud of, and later spent most of his nonschool hours at nearby Elizabeth Virrick Park, a city-run playground that offered organized after-school and summer programs. One of the highlights was ceramics, something he did at Virrick from elementary to high school with a park leader named Gina Knowles.

“We would go there every day after school and stay with Gina. I never really talked about Gina before,” he says. “With her I made owl banks, chess sets, everything.” He pulls up photos on his phone

of a few of his pieces, including a ceramic chef that holds cooking utensils and sits in the kitchen of his Cambridge apartment. There’s another of a Dalmatian dog he called Cookies and Cream that he gave to one of his elementary school teachers who recently shared a photo on Facebook.

“We used to stay at Virrick until 11 at night, when the lights went out, doing ceramics and playing flag football and card games like Spades and Tonk,” he says. “If I was doing any activity outside of home, it was at Virrick. It was a safe space to be creative.”

The neighborhood though, like many, skewed toward sports — something Jack liked but didn’t love.

“The neighborhood was one where if you were good at sports, everyone knew who you were — a classic tale,” he says. Frank Gore, a running back for the Indianapolis Colts, was a local kid. “Everyone knew Frank. He was a cool dude,” Jack says. “But I was a bookworm. I was always a nerd.” Because of his size — Jack is now 6’4” with a size 16 foot — his mother didn’t want him to play organized football with kids his age until freshman year in high school when he reluctantly joined to please his brother. “I enjoyed the camaraderie, but I still did ceramics.”

Football was what led him to private school.

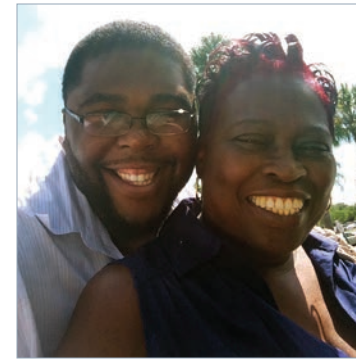
“I had no intention of going to private school, but we had a football coach who only wanted you as an athlete-student. If you didn’t need the coach to go to college, he didn’t care,” Jack says. He was eventually cut from the team after a shoulder injury, and the situation led to what he calls a “bad breakup” with the school. He decided to leave. “I would have stayed. I was going to be a public school student my whole life.”

At Gulliver Prep, he says he was exposed to a lot, both good and bad. He got more attention from his teachers and thrived in small classes, but he says, “They weren’t ready for diversity. They didn’t know

“What Michelle Obama has done, especially for first-generation students, especially in higher education, has been phenomenal.”



SHUTTERSTOCK



Jack in Miami with his mom, Marilyn, just before they flew to Cambridge for his Ph.D. dissertation defense in 2016.

how to deal with you. They were used to wealthy white or wealthy Latino.”

He remembers turning in a paper for AP European history and got a B. He worked harder and got an A- on the next paper. The teacher held up his A-paper to the class and questioned if it was his work. He was mad. His mom was mad.

“But it was one of those moments when you learn a lot. I never take for granted that these places [elite schools] have issues. I never want it to be seen that it’s all a bowl of cherries,” he says. “It’s a Band-Aid where stitches are needed. Sending a student to a private school can help that student, but it doesn’t add to structural inequality. I’m clear that I don’t think everyone should go to private schools.”

. . .

What Jack does think is that we need to do a better job of equalizing the pre-college experience. Disadvantaged students shouldn’t have to be recruited into a program like Prep for Prep and leave the public-school system to get a good college education.

We also need to start telling the full story about disadvantaged kids and success. He talks about former Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick as a good example.

“Deval is one in a million,” he says. “He writes in his autobiography that he was so poor that he had to share a bed with his mother and sister or sleep on the floor — they had to alternate. It’s remarkable — a Horatio Alger story of someone who pulled himself up by his bootstraps. He’s a remarkable guy, but what happens when you frame him instead as someone who graduated from Milton Academy? All of a sudden you’re like, ‘Yeah, someone from Milton Academy went to Harvard Law School.’ How many times have we heard that story before?”

But they’re one and the same person, Jack stresses. “We love telling poverty stories of poor black people so that we don’t actually want to see any kind of diversity in that story. To tell you how life can be for someone who’s poor and black or poor and Latino — everyone wants to hear that — but to tell a story about how all of a sudden that person went to one of the oldest, most prestigious boarding schools in the country with a multimillion dollar endowment, then went to Harvard Law after Harvard undergraduate? That is real. My research shows that on average, 50 percent of the lower-income black students at elite colleges graduated from private high schools, which is remarkable. One-third of lower-income Latinos, on average, graduate from private schools. These are huge numbers. But we still want to say they have a singular experience. What I’m saying is not only do they not have a singular experience, but I’m showing just how different their experiences are [from one another]. I’m also using their experiences to show that where their experiences are different,

their divergent pre-college experiences are shaping their sense of belonging in college and how they move through elite institutions.”

We also need to rethink what diversity means for colleges and universities. While higher education has made necessary strides in the past few decades, as Jack recently wrote in *The New York Times*, “they have thought less about what the inclusion means for academic life, or how colleges themselves might need to change to help the least advantaged on their road to success.”

In other words, achieving diversity alone isn’t the final answer, he says. “I don’t mean to sell it short, but creating a diverse class is easy. That requires money. That requires being able to say we’re going to recruit this many people and we’re going to take the cost of the school off the table. That’s easy compared to creating an inclusive community. I say time and time again, we need to move from diversity to inclusion. We need underrepresented students to not only graduate, but also graduate whole and hearty. That’s a more noble goal in the end.”

After spending seven years as a resident tutor at Mather, one of Harvard’s undergraduate residential houses where he says he was allowed to be the “Glee-loving, *Harry Potter*-reading, *House*-watching person that students would geek out with,” he saw many doubly disadvantaged kids who didn’t feel whole and hearty. “Universities have a responsibility to say we’re not helping all of our students in a way that we should.”

Which is why he’s already gone to bat for them, first by helping to get the Harvard undergraduate dining halls to stay open during breaks so that low-income kids who aren’t going home or on vacation have a place to eat.

“I could talk all day about how these two groups experience college differently, but both groups go hungry during spring break,” he says, referring also to the privileged poor. “I never say one is richer than the other. I say one has more cultural capital than the other. Both lack economic capital.”

He’s also mentoring future Ed School students. To one student from his home state, he said, “If you come here, I’m going to mentor you through the nonacademic side of Harvard. To know that now I’m in a position where not only can my research help colleges become more open and accessible to all of its students, but also my being here is making the place feel slightly more comfortable for some students” is amazing.

Quoting actress Viola Davis, he says, “Diversity is not a trending topic or something to be placed on the back burner as soon as the day is done. What we do here shapes conversations in ways we should never underestimate. I don’t take it for granted that the things we do here can shape the policies that a generation has to contend with. Which is why I’m very clear that I don’t think everyone should go to private

43

school. I don't think that is the route to end inequality. That will only produce it even more. I have to be careful about my policy recommendations."

In the book he is currently writing with Harvard Education Press, slated to come out in the fall of 2018, Jack is also clear that his goals are personal.

"As I write this book, I'm not writing it for sociologists or for a battle to see who understands *x* theory better," he says. "I'm writing it so that both students and college officials can understand the exper-

iences of the new diversity in higher education and then understand what we need to do to fix some of the problems that have been growing and festering for too long. I realize that's an ambitious goal, but I didn't spend eight years in a Ph.D. program to push sand around. This book is as much about the profession as it is about the person. I'm a first-generation college student before I'm a professor and I'm ok with that. This research, the fact that some of the stories are about people who graduated 10, 25, 30 years ago, that could be me. I'm a qualitative researcher so I value data, but also the stories and the perspective of people who trusted me with the experiences they had, good or bad. I do not take that lightly."

It's one of the reasons his mom values his contribution to education.

"She's a smart woman, and she worked at a public school for 30 years as a middle school security guard," he says. "She knows, from an historical context, that public schools have been gutted. She saw that field trips ended. She saw that summer programs, which were for enrichment, not just catching up, ended. Now there's nothing. She also drove me to private school and saw the difference."

But that's not the only reason she's proud.

"She's most proud that I found something that makes me happy. She always wanted us to do our best. She didn't make us get certain grades. She loves that I'm loving what I do and that I'm still me. No matter what, I'm still me," he says. This includes a continued love for all things Harry Potter. He even has a pair of Harry Potter Chuck Taylors given to him as a gift after officiating a wedding (he's done five). Harvard College students have given a Ravenclaw beanie, an Elders Wand pen, and a Hogwarts computer decal. Even his favorite quote is from

Hogwarts' headmaster Albus Dumbledore: It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live.

"When I got to Amherst, I was working so much — four jobs — that I exhausted all of my financial aid work study funds in the first semester," he says. "I got straight A's that year, but I never got to know or explore Amherst. It reminded me to slow down. I so often am future-oriented that I forget to live in the present."

He's trying to do just that. These days, he takes long walks along the Charles (listening to *Harry Potter* books on tape), and treats students to dinners out as often as he can.

"The kind of conversation you have over a meal or baking is much deeper," he says. It's a lesson he learned from his grandmother, who taught him how to bake from scratch, including her famous pound cake. "With Swan Down flour, Land O'Lakes butter, and Dixie Crystals sugar," he says. "If you came home with anything else, you had to go back out to the store."

Although his star is clearly rising fast at Harvard (he also has a forthcoming professorship at Radcliffe and the Ed School recruited him two years

before he's slated to start) family has kept him grounded, says Amherst Professor Kristin Bumiller. She taught Jack in several of her courses and even now, a decade later, says her connection to him is "one of the strongest I have made during my long career teaching at Amherst." He feels like family, she says, and he often visits for birthday parties and other events. (It's one of the things he says he loves about Amherst College. "Relationships never end" at Amherst, he recently tweeted.) In turn, she follows his research and has gone to all his graduations. She knows his relatives. "After you meet his mother, you fully understand the secret to his success — it is founded in her enormous pride in his accomplishments, instilling the sensibility of always doing what is right and responsible, and the ability to put him in his place with the roll of an eye."

It's the eye roll that also keeps him grounded.

"When I go home to visit, I'm not Dr. Jack or someone who's been in this paper or interviewed by this person," he says. "I still take out the trash. The last time I went home, my mom made me catch an Uber. She didn't even pick me up. I'm just me." ♥

"When I go home, it's one of those moments in which you remember the lived history of segregation, both racial and socioeconomic," he says, "and you see the legacy of that."

Left, top: Jack at his Harvard commencement with Amherst Professor Kristin Bumiller. Bottom: Jack with his siblings, Gregory Glenn Jr. and Aleshia Jack.

Grad.

"In the 30 years I have worked at Harvard University, I have been privileged to count among my students and colleagues many who have been refugees, immigrants, and citizens of the countries now included in the executive order. They have been, without exception, talented individuals, committed to working to advance educational opportunity around the world, the kind of force for good that helps us advance a world governed by reason."

FERNANDO REIMERS, ED.M.'84, ED.D.'88, IN A JANUARY HUFFINGTON POST PIECE BASED ON A SPEECH HE GAVE AT THE UNITED NATIONS



IN MEMORY

1940–1949

NATHAN MYERS, GSE'40
TRENOR GOODELL JR., GSE'46
ALLYN SHEPARD, ED.M.'47

1950–1959

BONNIE RILEY, ED.M.'58

1960–1969

ELEANOR LEVINSON LEWIS, M.A.T.'60
EUGENE LEE, ED.D.'61
KEITH PRICHARD, ED.D.'61
A. FRANK LATTANZI, M.A.T.'62
SUSAN LYMAN, ED.M.'63
PETER DURKSON, ED.M.'64
PAULINE STITZINGER, M.A.T.'64
PHILIP RUBENSTEIN, C.A.S.'65
SHIRLEY MISHARA, ED.M.'66
JANE BRECKENRIDGE, M.A.T.'67
FRANK FARLOW, M.A.T.'67
WILLIAM WARREN, ED.D.'67
ROGER BRANDENBERG-HORN, ED.M.'69
DONALD LAYTON, ED.M.'69

1970–1979

MARY MELODY, ED.M.'70
DAVID SEELEY, ED.D.'70
ADELE HERSEY, C.A.S.'71
MARY CREAMER, ED.M.'71, C.A.S.'72
WILLIAM DOLAN JR., ED.D.'73
NOEL SHERWIN, ED.M.'74
SANDRA MCGDADE, ED.M.'76
NEILL WATSON, GSE'76
JUNE PIZZI, ED.M.'78

1980–1989

LUANNE WILLIAMSON-PRYOR, ED.M.'84
REBECCA CORWIN, ED.M.'63, ED.D.'87
STANLEY PAZDEN JR., ED.M.'89

1990–1999

JEAN MALONEY, C.A.S.'90
MATTHEW RYAN JR., ED.M.'91
PAMELA COCHRANE, ED.M.'85, ED.D.'92
ELLEN WILLARD, C.A.S.'98

2000–2010

DONNA WICK, ED.M.'95, ED.D.'04
JOSIAH EPPS, ED.M.'10

1972

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, Ed.D., a professor at the Ed School since 1972, recently published *Growing Each Other Up: When Our Children Become Our Teachers* (see page 7).

1975

Joan Bolker, M.A.T.'62, Ed.D., wrote two new books: *Really Writing* and *Writing Medicine*. Bolker has been teaching writing for many years, including at Harvard, where she founded the Writing Center, and at UMass Boston, where she started the Language Place.

1978

Edward St. John, Ed.D., co-authored *College For Every Student* with **Rick Dalton**, Ed.M.'79, Ed.D.'88. (See page 21). St. John is a professor at the University of Michigan.

1979

Anne Dichele, Ed.M., was appointed interim dean of the School of Education at Quinnipiac College. Dichele has been at the college since 1999, serving as director of the Master of Arts in Teaching Program and as a faculty member.

1982

Kay Merseth, M.A.T.'69, Ed.D., steps down at the end of the school year as faculty director of the Teacher Education Program. Merseth joined the Ed School in 1982 and will continue to serve as a senior lecturer.

1978

Anthony Baxter, Ed.M., recently published a memoir, *From Prisoner to Ph.D.* He is a special staff officer and prevention analyst for the U.S. Marine Corps at Camp Pendleton.

Learn more about Baxter: fromprisonertophd.com.

Vicki Jacobs, C.A.S.'80, Ed.D., will take on the directorship of the Ed School's Teacher Education Program at the end of this school year. A prior high school English teacher, Jacobs most recently served as director of the Specialized Studies Program.

Richard Roberts, Ed.M., is the author of two books: *I Was Much Happier When Everything I Owned Was in the Back Seat of My Volkswagen* (nonfiction) and *Digital Darling, American Story* (fiction).

1987

Sonja Anderson, Ed.M., recently published *Sophie Topfeather, Superstar!* The book is the second in a series for children aged 8–12. She is a public elementary school librarian in Washington state.

1988

Rick Dalton, Ed.M.'79, Ed.D., co-authored *College For Every Student* with **Edward St. John**, Ed.D.'78 (see page 21). Dalton is president and CEO of College for Every Student.

Fernando Reimers, Ed.M.'84, Ed.D., spoke at the United Nations in January at the 18th annual Committee on Teaching About the United Nations conference. At the event, Reimers was also awarded the organization's Global Citizen Award.

1990

Paul Karofsky, Ed.M., recently published *So You're in the Family Business*. Karofsky is founder of Transition Consulting Group. His son David Karofsky, who co-wrote the book, is president and CEO.

1991

Tara Tuck, C.A.S., recently published *The Joy of Language* (see page 21). She is a teacher and speech-language pathologist in Seminole County (Florida) Public Schools.

1993

Dana Burde, Ed.M., won the 2017 University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order for her work looking at the influence foreign-backed funding for education has on war-torn countries and how such aid affects humanitarian efforts.

1994

Michael Walker, Ed.M., released his book *The 1929 Sino-Soviet War: The War Nobody Knew*. Walker is a retired U.S. Marine Corps officer.

1995

Masahiko Minami, Ed.M.'88, Ed.D., is a professor at San Francisco State University. He served as an invited professor at the National Institute for Japanese Language and



Last August, Willette Stinson, director of library services at West Virginia State University, read through the magazine between classes when she was attending the annual PPE Leadership Institute for Academic Librarians.

Linguistics based in Tokyo, where he edited the *Handbook of Japanese Applied Linguistics* in the *Handbooks of Japanese Language and Linguistics* series.

1997

Natasha Warikoo, Ed.M., recently wrote *The Diversity Bargain* (see page 20). Warikoo, a cultural sociologist, joined the Ed School in 2009 as an associate professor.

2000

Allison Gaines Pell, Ed.M., will begin a new position as head of school at the Wheeler School in Providence, Rhode Island, starting in July. Prior, she founded New Leaders for New Schools, which supports principals at urban schools, and a small K–8 public school in Brooklyn.

Rachel Korn, Ed.M., was elected to the Association of International Graduate Admissions Consultants.

2002

Tarajeen Yazzie-Mintz, Ed.D., a member of the Denver-based American Indian College Fund staff, was appointed by President Obama

to serve on the board of directors at the National Board for Education Sciences. Yazzie-Mintz was the 2016 recipient of the Ed School's Alumni Council Award for Outstanding Contribution to Education.

2004

Jennifer Chen, Ed.M.'99, Ed.D., is an associate professor of early childhood and family studies at Kean University. She recently published *Connecting Right from the Start: Fostering Effective Communication with Dual Language Learners*.

Eileen McGowan, Ed.M.'98, Ed.D., a lecturer at the Ed School, will take over the role of director of the Specialized Studies Program at the end of the school year.

2005

Sheena Collier, Ed.M., was appointed director of engagement for the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, where she focuses on strategic initiatives related to racial diversity in the private sector, among other duties.

Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, Ed.M., assistant professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, recently published *When the Fences Come Down* (see page 21).

2006

Elise Foster, Ed.M., was certified in November by Ed School Professor Bob Kegan and Lecturer **Lisa Lahey**,

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Professional Education

WILLETTE STINSON

THE 1-QUESTION INTERVIEW:
JOAN BOLKER, M.A.T.'62, ED.D.'75

Q WHAT ONE PIECE OF WRITING ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO NEW ACADEMICS?

A Remember “writing” is both a noun and a verb: It’s what you produce, and how you do it. My advice is pay attention to the process. Figure out what works for you, and you’ll have an easier and happier time filling your screen or your pages to say what you have to say.

Ed.M.'80, Ed.D.'86, as an immunity-to-change coach.

2007

Deidra Suwane Dees, Ed.D., is the tribal archivist and director of the Office of Archives and Records Management for the Poarch Band of the Creek Indians in Alabama. Dees is a former instructor at Pensacola Junior College.

2008

Mark Carr, Ed.M., was named the new principal of Walsh Jesuit High School in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.

Wendy Harbour, Ed.D., was appointed by President Obama before leaving office to serve as director of the National Center for College Students with Disabilities with the Association on Higher Education and Disability. The organization

advises Congress and the president on disability policy issues. Harbour is currently an adjunct faculty at St. Catherine University in Minnesota.

2010

Eric Oberstein, Ed.M., produced the album *Cuba: The Conversation Continues*, which was nominated for a Latin Grammy Award and for Best Latin Jazz album.

2011

Emily Cook Dwight, Ed.M., will become the new principal of KIPP Halifax Primary School in North Carolina, starting in August. She is currently the principal and founder of KIPP Gaston College Prep Primary in Gaston, North Carolina.

2013

Abby Kaufman, Ed.M., was ap-

pointed assistant director of the Mandel Jewish Community Center's Camp Wise residential camp in Beachwood, Ohio.

2014

Jonathan Hasak, Ed.M., coauthored *Hard Questions on Global Educational Change* with former visiting faculty member Pasi Sahlberg and Vanessa Rodriguez, Ed.M.'13, Ed.D.'16. Hasak is a manager of public policy and government affairs at Year Up.

Liliana Polo-McKenna, Ed.L.D., was named interim CEO of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, a Brooklyn-based nonprofit that helps high school dropouts.

2015

Brian Barnes, Ed.M.'03, Ed.L.D., was named as a 2017 Presidential Leadership Scholar. Barnes is the cofounder and CEO of TandemEd in Memphis, Tennessee.

Jesse Tang, Ed.M., is the principal of Schmidt Elementary School in Denver, Colorado.

2016

Vanessa Rodriguez, Ed.M.'13, Ed.D., coauthored *Hard Questions on Global Educational Change* with former visiting faculty Pasi Sahlberg and Jonathan Hasak, Ed.M.'14. Rodriguez is an assistant professor in the Center for Early Childhood Health and Development in the Department of Population Health at the NYU School of Medicine.

Kelvin Woon, Ed.M., cofounded CubbyCase with Fred Ge, Ed.M.'16. The company sends subscribers education products and activities for kids aged 5-9, along with related curriculum for parents. Wood and Ge developed the idea for CubbyCase while students at the Ed School. Francesca Barreiro and Andrew Zuniga, both Ed.M.'16, joined the team as curriculum designers.

THE 1-QUESTION INTERVIEW: JENNIFER CHEN, ED.M.'99, ED.D.'04

Q WHAT'S THE FIRST THING A NEW TEACHER CAN DO TO BETTER COMMUNICATE WITH DUAL-LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

A The very first thing that a new teacher should do is respect and learn about their dual-language learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds by conducting formal and informal assessments, including observing students' communicative skills and behavior exhibited in the classroom and conversing with their families about them.

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