

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

***Um...Where Is
Everybody?***



Jaxali

Ed.

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ON APPIAN WAY

Missing, and Missed

Late last fall, I remember reading that chronic absenteeism was still a problem in many school districts across the country, despite students being fully back in schools after a couple of rocky pandemic years. One specific line from a story on WBUR's *RadioLab* really stood out: "Between 2019 and 2023, the statewide rate of chronic absenteeism soared by 72%, according to state officials." I thought, that can't be right? It's still that high? I assumed, obviously naively, that the majority of students were back in classes. After I looked at other sources, I found similar sobering statistics. Around the same time, I also learned that several people connected to the Ed School, including Professor Karen Mapp and alum **EYAL BERGMAN, Ed.M.'14, Ed.L.D.'21**, were involved in a new research study that looked at this troubling issue and had a possible solution: Have schools strengthen their engagement and outreach to parents. With these statistics and new study in mind, it seemed like the perfect time for the magazine to tackle this topic, which we did in our cover story, "Um...Where is Everybody?" You'll find the story following our tribute to Dean Bridget Terry Long, who is stepping down after this academic year before taking a sabbatical and then returning to the Ed School to do what she continues to love: teach. LH

Spring/ Summer 2024



A

People

6

Feature: Eyal Bergman, Ed.M.'14, Ed.L.D.'21; Lindsay Page, Ed.M.'04, Ed.D.'11; Professor Karen Mapp, Ed.D.'99; Svati Mariam Lelyveld, Ed.M.'12

16

Patrick Tutwiler, Ed.M.'00

19

Tatiana Geron, Ph.D.'23

20

Moriah Lit, Ed.M.'24

22

Marc Raila



“I felt my heartstrings
pulled and felt I could make
a contribution.”

PATRICK TUTWILER, ED.M.'00,
MASS. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

B

Ideas

26

Feature: 6 grads on
changed thinking

34

On My Bookshelf:
Emiliana Vegas,
Ed.M.'96, Ed.D.'01

35

Spring books from HEP

36

A zen course

C

Practice

40

Feature: Do we still
need the SAT?

48

The Q+A: Eric Taylor

50

Reach Every
Reader 2.0

52

On My Mind: Ramiro
Hernández, Ed.M.'24

54

ABCs of inspiration

56

The Snap



The Next Chapter

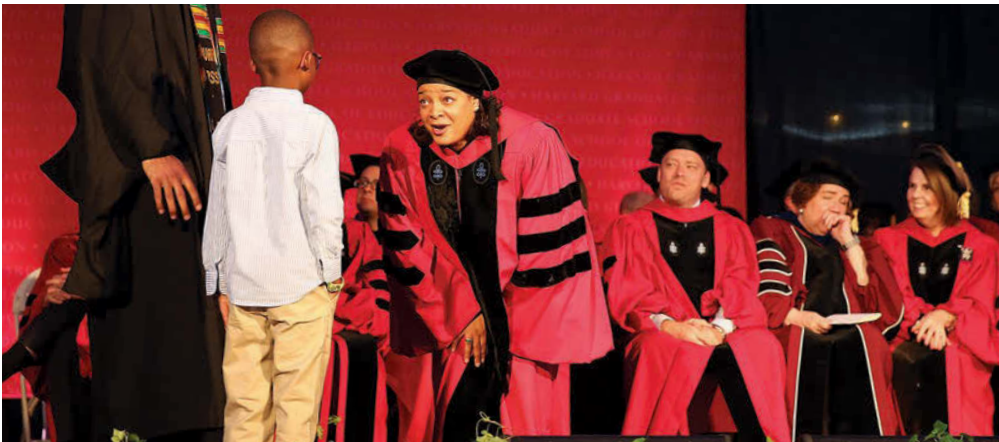




Calling it an “unforgettable honor,” **Bridget Terry Long** announced in January that after a decade in leadership at the Ed School, six as dean and four as academic dean, she would step down and return to teaching at the end of this academic year. “This decision was not an easy one,” she said at the time, “but I believe this is the right time for me to embark on my next chapter — and the school is well positioned to embark on its own next chapter, too.”

During Long’s tenure, the school has seen and made incredible change that has led to new directions. Most notably is a complete overhaul of the master’s programs. More recently, after 100 years of in-person only programming for degree students, the Ed School added an online master’s program following the success of virtual learning during the pandemic. This new option has become a model for the rest of the university.

As the semester comes to a close, we can see that Long’s legacy is, well, long. Learn more and see additional photos of her past decade in leadership by scanning the QR code to the left.



ALL PHOTOS JILL ANDERSON EXCEPT TEACHING: JASON JONES

People

**“I want to show that we can do anything and
that the opportunities are limitless.”**

MORIAH LIT (SEE P. 20)





Umm...

Where Is Everybody?

Families may be the key to ending
chronic absenteeism, a pandemic-era
problem that has only gotten worse

Story by **Elaine McArdle**
Illustrations by **Gary Taxali**



While much of the world

may have returned to a semblance of normalcy after the COVID-19 pandemic, one thing has not: kids in many districts are not showing up for school.

An “unprecedented wave of chronic absenteeism” across the country has fostered an “attendance crisis,” according to Attendance Works, a nonprofit focused on getting children to go to school. Prior to the pandemic, 8 million students were chronically absent — defined as missing more than 10% of the school year — but now that number has doubled.

“It’s really bad!” exclaims **EYAL BERGMAN, ED.M.’14, ED.L.D.’21**, senior vice president of Learning Heroes, a nonprofit focused on ensuring parents have accurate information about students’ academic progress. “And if you’re in high-poverty urban schools, it’s atrocious, it’s really devastating. Kids are just not coming to school.”

Twenty-eight percent of students across the country were chronically absent during the 2021–22 school year, nearly twice as many as 2018–19, according to *The New Yorker*, citing data compiled by Thomas Dee, a professor of education at Stanford University. Alaska leads with 49% chronic absenteeism in 2021–22, versus 29% pre-pandemic, followed by the District of Columbia (48%), New Mexico (40%), and Michigan, Oregon, Nevada, and Colorado (each with 36%), according to *District Administration* magazine. In Massachusetts public schools, chronic absenteeism grew by 72% between 2019 and 2023, prompting public service announcements on TV and billboards in which State Secretary of Education **PATRICK TUTWILER, ED.M.’00**, urges, “School is where kids belong.”

Experts have theories on why exactly kids haven’t returned to the classroom

after the pandemic. Just as many adult employees are resisting returning to the office instead of working remotely, and for children, school routines were broken and norms and expectations have shifted, suggests Todd Rogers, a behavioral scientist and professor at the Harvard Kennedy School, who studies strategies to address and improve attendance.

“I think people grew accustomed to the idea that there will be absences, and they got a lot more lenient,” says Serapha Cruz, founder and principal of the Bronx School of Young Leaders in New York, a Title 1 school where 100% of students are eligible for free lunch.

Before the pandemic, around 27% of her students were chronically absent, Cruz says. “Believe it or not, 27% chronically absent is pretty good with our population of students,” she says. With a big push on attendance, they were making huge strides, expecting to end the 2019–2020 school year with absenteeism rates in the single digits, “which is practically unheard of in New York,” Cruz says. Then the pandemic hit, and with kids attending class virtually, chronic absenteeism soared to 45%.

Today, through a pervasive emphasis in the school culture on attendance, they expect to end this year with pre-pandemic rates. But it’s not easy. For one thing, staff are absent at higher rates than before the pandemic, “so they might not put pressure on the students missing school. We haven’t swung fully back to [the idea] that this isn’t the norm,” Cruz says.

Numerous studies demonstrate how important it is for kids to be in school; they not only do better academically but are less likely to be held back, drop out of school, or be suspended. Indeed, under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, a large majority of states and the District of Columbia

use some measure of chronic absenteeism to evaluate the performance of school districts. “There are one or two exceptions to this rule, but usually kids with attendance problems don’t do well,” says Cruz.

“There are many reasons why it’s important for children to be in school: for socialization; for best chances for learning; for other supports and opportunities that students get through their school, whether it’s meals or counseling, in addition to what’s happening in the classroom,” says **LINDSAY PAGE, ED.M.’04, ED.D.’11**, who teaches education policy at Brown University. “I think we should think about the entire social ecosystem of school and how that plays a role in the functioning of families.”

So, especially post-pandemic, how do you get chronically absent kids to show up?

“Nudge Letters” Work

Rogers is a numbers guy. A behavioral scientist with a Ph.D. received jointly through Harvard’s Department of Psychology and Harvard Business School, he believes in data. When someone proposes a theory on why a problem exists or whether a solution will help, Rogers insists on rigorous testing using large data sets and randomized controlled trials.

About 10 years ago, he got involved in the issue of chronic absenteeism. Working with **KAREN MAPP, ED.D.’99**, a professor of practice at the Ed School and an expert on the importance of school-family engagement, Rogers set out to prove whether chronic absenteeism could be reduced by mailing (via the U.S. postal service) monthly personalized letters to families informing them of how often their child was out of school. He ran multiple large-scale, randomized studies involving more

than 100,000 families across 12 school districts around the country.

The results were striking: These so-called “nudge letters” reduced chronic absenteeism by 10–15%. The results were consistent across grade levels and were most effective with students around the threshold for being chronically absent.

The letters work best when they are easy-to-read, written in the language spoken in the home, mailed regularly, and inform a family of precisely how many days their child has missed so far that year, as well as how their child compares to others in the school. The tone, Mapp and Rogers say, should be one of partnership with families, rather than scolding, and include useful information on community resources like food banks. Letters, as tangible items, were more effective than texts or emails, the study found. (Texting parents, for example, reduced students’ chronic absenteeism by 2.4–3.6%, according to the American Institutes for Research.)

Why do nudge letters work? Families tend to significantly underestimate how much school their kids have missed, Rogers explains, and they have no idea how their child’s attendance compares to others. (Including the comparison feature was prompted by research showing that people significantly reduce their home energy usage if they receive a mailing comparing their usage to their neighbors.)

Nudge letters are easy to do across entire districts, and they are one-fiftieth as expensive as the next best proven intervention, which is absence-focused mentors and truancy officers, says Rogers. (For comparison, a new program in 15 districts in Connecticut, in which outreach workers visit homes of chronically absent middle and high schoolers, increased attendance by 15–20% — but cost \$24 million.)



**EYAL BERGMAN,
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
OF LEARNING HEROES:**

**“KIDS ARE
JUST NOT COMING
TO SCHOOL.”**

“We found that in schools with stronger relationships between teachers and families before the pandemic...they’re not showing near the declines as everyone else post pandemic.”

TODD ROGERS



LINDSAY PAGE,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
BROWN UNIVERSITY:

“WE SHOULD THINK ABOUT THE ENTIRE SOCIAL ECOSYSTEM OF SCHOOL.”

But they aren’t a silver bullet. Nudge letters reduce chronic absenteeism by 10–15%, which is “a cost-effective start, but it’s not nearly enough,” says Rogers.

Still, the results of their research were so significant and consistent that, in 2016, at the request of school districts across the country, Rogers co-founded EveryDay Labs, which mails out nudge letters on behalf of districts. (Rogers describes himself as EveryDay Labs’ chief scientist; his work there is independent of his role at Harvard.) During the pandemic, EveryDay Labs also began overlaying text messages with attendance information and tested to see how much extra these helped. The answer: Not very much. Parents are just too overloaded with text messages, although offering information on food, shelter, transport, and other resources “seems to create value for families and districts,” Rogers says.

Rogers is now considering other proposed interventions for absenteeism in order to devise trials to test their effectiveness. This ongoing work, he says, “was important when we did it 10 years ago and it’s twice as important now because kids are missing twice as many days.”

The (Family) Ties That Bind

But sending nudge letters is a tactic, not a strategy. And there is a strategy that works incredibly well in fostering and improving student attendance: strong family-school partnerships.

In mid-2020, during what Mapp calls the twin pandemics of that year—the murder of George Floyd and COVID-19—she, Rogers, and Bergman, who was an Ed.L.D. student at the time, set out to answer a question: Would schools with pre-existing

strong family engagement better weather the disruptions to education?

They analyzed data on family engagement from 3,000 schools collected for the 5Essentials Survey in Illinois, and what they found stunned even them: Schools with the strongest family engagement experienced six percentage points less chronic absenteeism post-pandemic than schools with the least family engagement.

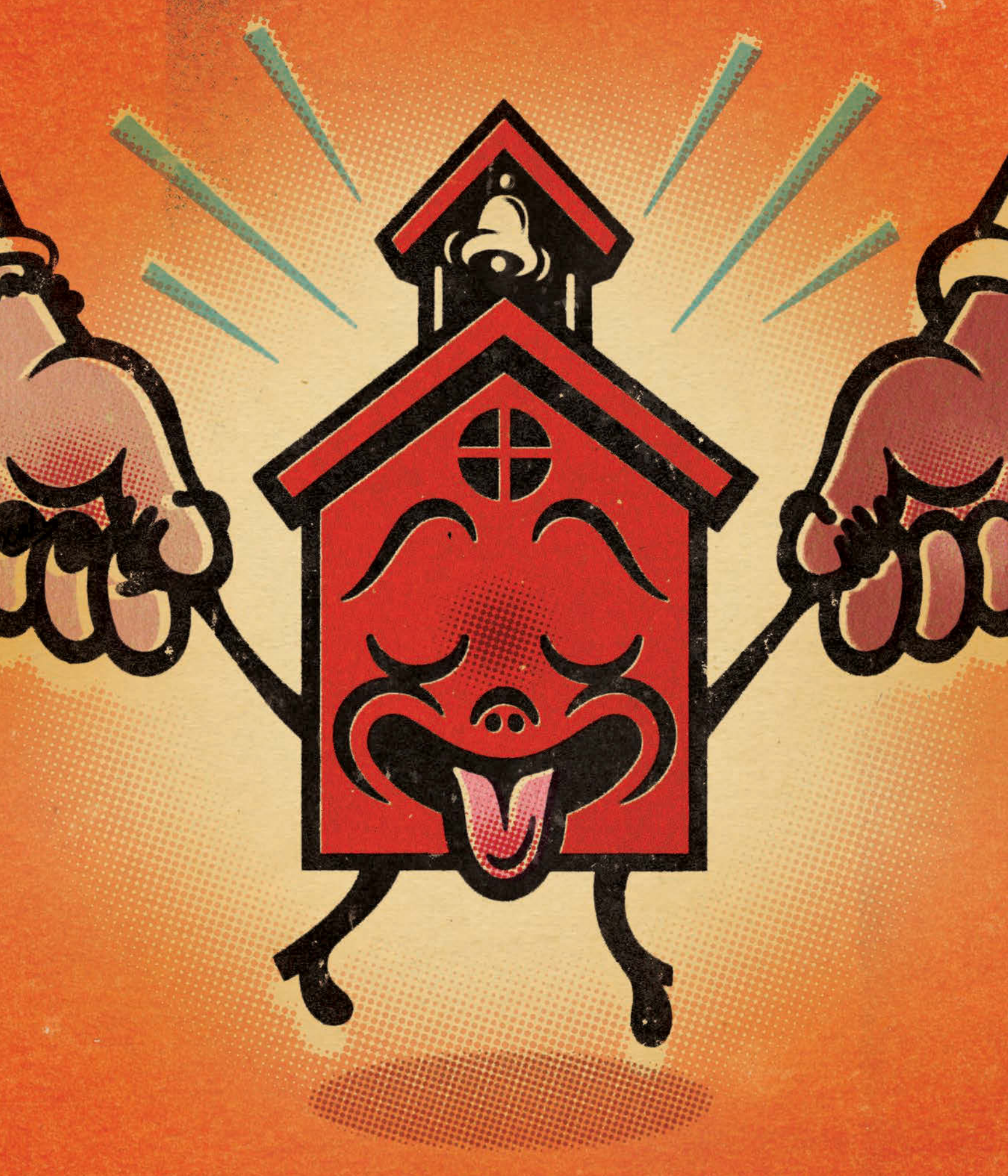
“We were hoping to see something, but we didn’t know what to expect — and we were quite shocked,” Bergman says.

“We found that in schools with stronger relationships between teachers and families before the pandemic, those relationships buffered them so that they’re not showing near the declines [in student attendance] as everyone else post pandemic,” adds Rogers.

The researchers were so surprised that they ran the numbers multiple times to make sure they were correct. The results were consistent: A school in the 10th percentile for family engagement had a 21% chronic absenteeism rate while a school in the 90th percentile had a rate of only 15%—a six percentage points difference.

Since schools in high-poverty communities tend to have much higher chronic absenteeism than those in high-income communities, the team also compared the effect of poverty versus family engagement and found it was a half percentage point less influential. “The effect of family engagement [on chronic absenteeism] is as large or larger than poverty,” explains Bergman. And while six percentage points “may not seem like a lot,” he adds, “show me a school that doesn’t want to lower its chronic absenteeism by 6%.”

For 20 years, Mapp has promoted family engagement as critical to school and student success, including in a 2022 book she



**TODD ROGERS,
PROFESSOR, HARVARD
KENNEDY SCHOOL:**
**COMMUNICATIONS
SHOULD BE “EXTREMELY
PARTNER-FOCUSED.”**



co-authored, *Everyone Wins! The Evidence for Family-School Partnerships and Implications for Practice*. She also partnered with Bergman and **MARISSA ALBERTY, ED.M.'14, ED.D.'21**, to co-author *Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Version 2)*.

The findings on how family engagement affects chronic absenteeism are only the latest support for her work. “For far too long, the effort and time it takes to build partnerships between home and school has been seen as burdensome and unnecessary to the short- and long-term goals of schools,” Mapp says. “This study soundly disrupts that thinking and demonstrates the profound value-add of partnerships between families and educators.”

Even though family engagement is one of the five essential factors in school success and improvement outlined in the 5Essentials initiative—the others are school leadership, professional capacity, a student-centered learning environment, and instructional guidance—it is often overlooked, even ignored.

“Schools must understand that family and community engagement is as important as the other four,” Mapp told educators in 2023 at “Supporting Success through Authentic and Effective Family Community Engagement,” presented by EdRedesign’s Institute for Success Planning Virtual Learning Series.

Yet most educators receive little if any training on how to build successful partnerships with families and communities. To the contrary, there is a long history of families, particularly those in underserved or marginalized communities, being undervalued by educators, Mapp noted. Most districts put very few resources toward teacher training and other supports in the area of family engagement, although

exceptions include Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Richmond, Virginia. “It has to be a core element of your plans to improve your schools, not an add-on,” Mapp said in her talk, adding, “It’s real when I see it on your budget sheets.”

The new research on how family engagement influences student attendance may help turn that around. “Hopefully this data gives school leaders and teachers what they need to make the case internally that family engagement is a worthwhile investment, to promote more professional development around family engagement, and to allow teachers the time they need,” Bergman says.

Mapp has long argued that family engagement must be woven into the entire culture in a school and school district, with a strong infrastructure supporting family-school partnerships. It’s an approach that should be multifaceted—simply notifying families of a school event, say, isn’t nearly enough—and family engagement must be part of every department from IT to human resources to classrooms, so that “we are not doing things to families, we’re doing things with families,” Mapp said. It is especially important to build trust in communities that have historically been disrespected by educators, she emphasizes.

“I agree completely,” says Cruz, principal at the Bronx School. “Engagement doesn’t necessarily mean [the parent] coming to school and going to events, but a parent who is really promoting a relationship with the school, like understanding where the student is in terms of their grade, and why they should be in school and promoting that with the child.”

Mapp, Bergman, and Rogers are now following up their findings with a qualitative analysis. They’ll be talking to teachers, principals, parents, and caregivers

“I don’t know if other schools [emphasize attendance] with the same excitement we do. People really want to be at school because it’s a nice place to be. It’s a nice vibe.”

SVATI MARIAM LELYVELD, ED.M.’12

that had strong pre-pandemic family engagement and strong post-pandemic outcomes, versus schools with the opposite. “We want to understand the policies, practices, and mindsets that allowed for strong engagement,” Bergman says. After those interviews, they plan to design a new measurement tool “so we can offer recommendations to schools in how to improve their data on family engagement.”

Coming to School Actually Matters

At the Bronx School, attendance is seen as so important to student success that it’s emphasized and supported in myriad ways. There are rewards for perfect attendance and improved attendance, and contests between classes where the prizes include trips to amusement parks or gaming chairs. Each morning, guidance counselors visit the homeroom classes to share a positive affirmation and remind students of the importance of coming to school ready to get to work. Incentives are both non-academic, like the prizes, but also academic, in that attendance leads to better grades, and good or improved grades are recognized with prizes as well. Rogers did a study that showed that mailing students a certificate for good attendance that they weren’t expecting actually disincentivizes going to class, because kids interpret it as saying that regular attendance is unusual. But the Bronx School puts coming to class as something everyone does and is recognized for.

“I don’t know if other schools [emphasize attendance] with the same excitement we do,” says **SVATI MARIAM LELYVELD, ED.M.’12**, who has been teaching eighth grade at the Bronx School of Young Leaders since 2012. Despite budget cuts that mean a broken PA system and classroom

clocks that are stuck at 12, “people really want to be at school because it’s a nice place to be. It’s a nice vibe.”

But there’s a big difference, Cruz notes, between kids who miss a day of school occasionally for a doctor’s appointment or a cold and those who are chronically absent. “With chronically absent students you have to get to know on an individual basis why they are missing school. Almost always it’s something not related to the child but to the whole family,” she says. It might range from a student who is staying home to care for younger sibling while the parents are working, to a student who has serious trauma or other psychological issues that need professional intervention. Cruz and her staff work with these kids to understand their particular circumstances and try to solve them.

A few years ago, Lelyveld had a student who lived across the street from the school but rarely attended. A guidance counselor began picking the girl up every day, knocking on her door at 7:30 in the morning, which made an impression on the family. “That really incentivized them to get her up and out,” Lelyveld says. Once the girl’s attendance was consistent, her achievement improved significantly.

Regular, “asset-based” communication, where families are supported and respected as partners, is a key part of family engagement, Mapp, Rogers, and others say. Although regular communications with families by themselves are not enough, if offered in a culturally sensitive way — recognizing that families are competent partners with schools — they are one way to start to build respectful relationships.

These communications should be “extremely partner-focused,” says Rogers, written in what Mapp calls “asset-based language” instead of pointing a finger of



**KAREN MAPP,
PROFESSOR, HGSE:**

**“THIS STUDY ...
DEMONSTRATES THE
PROFOUND VALUE-
ADD OF PARTNERSHIPS
BETWEEN FAMILIES AND
EDUCATORS.”**



Listen to a Harvard EdCast interview with Eyal Bergman on chronic absenteeism at [gse.harvard.edu/ideas/edcast](https://www.harvard.edu/ideas/edcast)

“We reached out to families on a regular basis to check in with them particularly when their child was absent, never in a punitive way but instead with a supportive tone with the goal of supporting the family.”

LINDSAY PAGE, ED.M.'04, ED.D.'11



SVATI MARIAM
LELYVELD, TEACHER,
BRONX SCHOOL OF
YOUNG LEADERS:

**“ONE THING I THINK IS
AN ISSUE FOR SOME
STUDENTS ... IS HAVING
CLEAN CLOTHES TO
WEAR TO SCHOOL.”**

blame. “A lot of the ways that schools think about families is through a deficit lens,” he says. “Solutions are often about circumventing families instead of treating them as partners or even recognizing that they are the experts in their kids and want their kids to thrive.”

“Texting, we know, is a best practice” with regard to contacting parents about something specific, says Bergman. “Parents prefer it usually, so it’s an easier way to get to people.” But he emphasizes that people respond faster to texts from someone with whom they already have a relationship and may not respond at all to texts from someone they don’t really know. Again, that’s why building a strong, respectful relationship with families is key.

A few years ago, Page, working with an AmeriCorps volunteer and others, created a pilot program at two kindergarten classes in Pittsburgh that sent a weekly text message to parents.

The texts were sometimes a general reminder of how important attendance is, or a specific message notifying them that the school noted their child was absent that day, or an informational message about community resources. Over time, families began responding, explaining, for example, why their child was out. In one case, the family’s text noted that their child had no clean clothes for school because the washing machine was broken. The AmeriCorps volunteer, who was bilingual in Spanish — many families in the area spoke Spanish as a first language — connected the family with a community group that provided a new washing machine. And the volunteer helped other families overcome obstacles keeping a child from school.

“We reached out to families on a regular basis to check in with them particularly when their child was absent, never in a

punitive way but instead with a supportive tone with the goal of supporting the family,” Page explains.

The result? The rate of chronic absence among the kindergarteners fell from 30 percent to 13 percent.

Page believes other schools could replicate these results at a reasonably low cost, especially with an AmeriCorps or other volunteer organization involved. “Absolutely, there are interventions that can work” in getting kids to school, says Page, who was also involved in a 2022 brief for EdResearch for Recovery, “District Strategies to Reduce Student Absenteeism,” which emphasized providing timely information to parents about their child’s absences, making sure students have safe and reliable transportation to school, and other home visits to foster stronger family-school connections.

“One thing I think is an issue for some students with their attendance is having clean clothes to wear to school or weather-appropriate clothes,” agrees Lelyveld. Teachers have pooled their resources to buy a warm sweater or sweatpants for a child, and the school connects families with local centers that provide food and clothes.

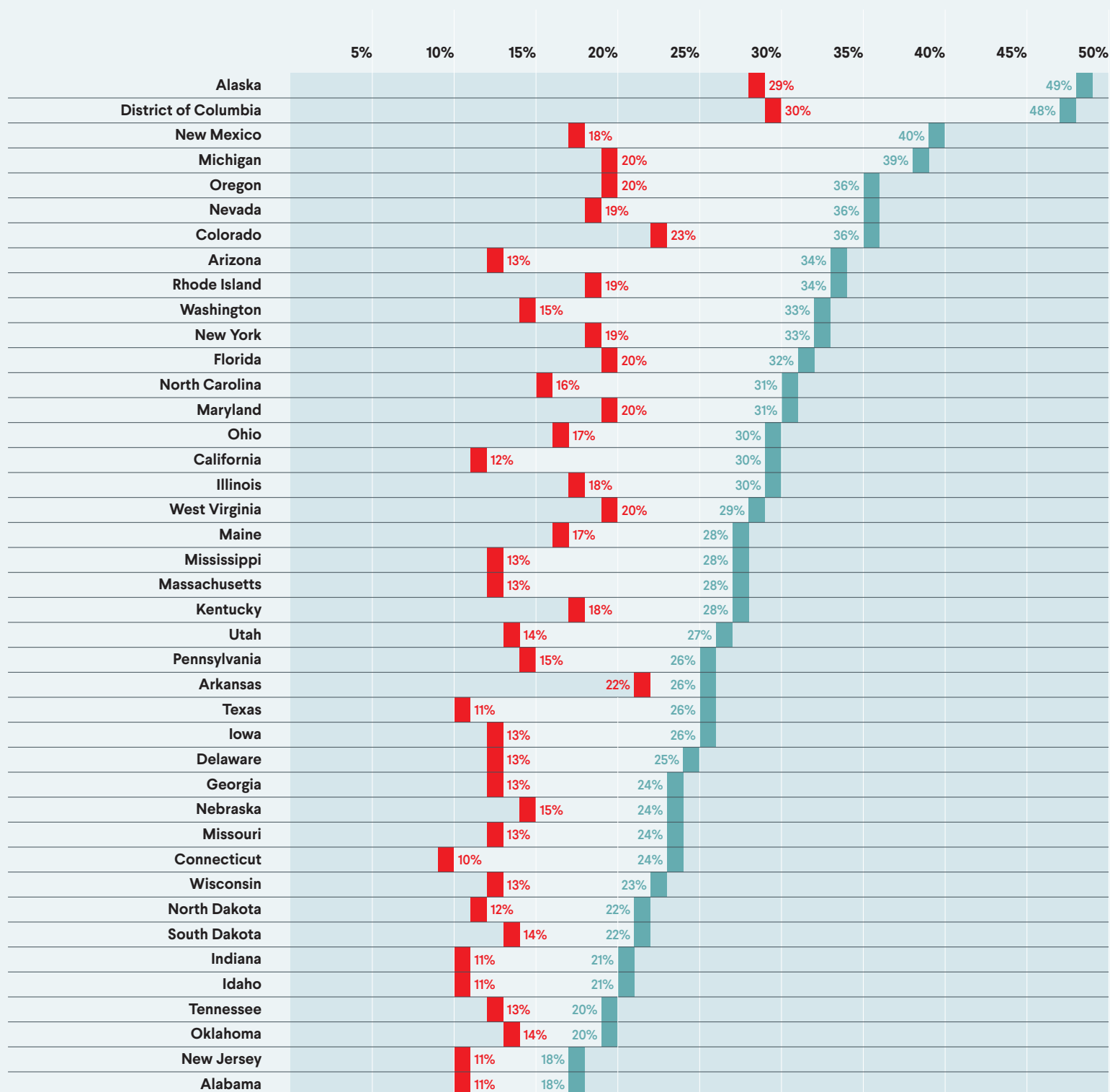
Overall, the point is that strong partnerships between schools and families are essential to education. Indeed, family engagement is so influential in student success — including reducing chronic absenteeism — that Bergman is excited to promote the study’s findings, including in webinars offered by the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement.

“In a world of really bad news, this is a good news story,” says Bergman. “This is something schools can do.” □

Elaine McArdle is a writer based in New York. Her last piece for *Ed.* focused on librarians and book bans

How Did Chronic Absenteeism Grow in Each State?

A LOOK AT THE PERCENT OF STUDENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY WHO MISSED AT LEAST 10% OF THE SCHOOL YEAR IN **2018-19** AND **2021-22**



STATES NOT INCLUDED: HAWAII, MONTANA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, WYOMING USED A DIFFERENT DEFINITION OF CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM; OTHERS BECAUSE DATA NOT AVAILABLE FOR ONE OR BOTH YEARS / SOURCE: AP NEWS, STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

AT WORK

A Leader First, but a Teacher Always

PATRICK TUTWILER on his journey from the classroom to the highest education office in the state

Story by **Andrew Bauld, Ed.M.'16**

To understand **PATRICK TUTWILER**'s career in education, from teacher to superintendent to Massachusetts secretary of education, you have to start with a book.

Unlike many people who knew from a young age that they wanted to become teachers, Tutwiler, Ed.M.'00, was set to graduate from college, with no plans to enter the classroom, when he stumbled upon Jean Anyon's *Ghetto Schooling* — a troubling chronicle of the life of teachers and students trapped in a failing school system in Newark, New Jersey.

Tutwiler saw much of his own educational experience in the pages. "That's when I received my calling," he says. "I felt my heartstrings pulled and felt like I could make a contribution."

After earning a master's in teaching and curriculum from the Ed School, Tutwiler began his career in the Boston Public Schools teaching high school history, but as much as he loved the classroom and connecting with students, he felt like his voice wasn't being heard.

"There were decisions that were being made that impacted how I performed the craft, everything from the schedule to pedagogical approach, and some of the decisions I agreed with and some of them I didn't, but I didn't have a seat at the table," Tutwiler says.

After earning his Ph.D. from Boston College, Tutwiler served as principal at Wayland High School, headmaster at Brighton High School, and finally superintendent of Lynn Public Schools, the fifth largest school district in Massachusetts.

In 2022, Tutwiler was working as a senior program officer at the Barr Foundation, a grantmaking organization focused on arts, climate, and education, when then-Governor-elect Maura Healey named him secretary of education, a position that made him the top education adviser in the state and the first Black person to ever hold the job in the history of Massachusetts.

"Now I have a seat at a different table, bringing the experiences, the perspective, the stories, pain points, and the bright spots of 24 years of being in K-12 education to bear on policy and resource allocation, and it's the honor of a lifetime," Tutwiler says.

He laughs when he gets asked the most basic question: What exactly does the secretary of education in Massachusetts do?

"Well, it's funny, because most people don't know," Tutwiler says. "I'll go to staff and teacher professional development, or sometimes I'm with groups of high school students, and I'll ask that question. 'Hey, raise your hand if you know what the secretary of education does,' and no hands go up."

But as a former educator, Tutwiler uses the opportunity as a teachable moment to share exactly what responsibility the job holds.

"At a high level, I advise the governor on all things education, from birth through college." That includes overseeing policy for students in early education, K-12, and higher education. Tutwiler also sits on the boards of each governing education agency in the Commonwealth, including the University of Massachusetts system. →

"There were decisions that were being made that impacted how I performed the craft ... but I didn't have a seat at the table."

ANDREW BAULD, ED.M.'16, is a writer based in New York City. His last piece in *Ed.* looked at the state of civics education

Patrick Tutwiler



BIG TALK

“

When I think about the QT Library, when I think about what motivates me in education, I think about possibility.

”

CARINA TRAUB, ED.M.'21, co-founder of a new brick-and-mortar LGBTQIA+ library opening in Boston this summer, in a video interview posted on the Ed School website

Tutwiler (top, right) connects with K-12 students last October for the kickoff of Massachusetts STEM Week at an event at Boston University's Center for Computer and Data Sciences. Below right, Tutwiler gets ready to do art with Governor Maura Healey (far right) and preschoolers at the YMCA of Cape Cod after announcing additional funding for preK expansion in the state



Over his first year in office, Tutwiler's leadership has been defined by his mantra of stabilize, heal, and transform, a reminder that schools around the state are still very much in recovery mode following the pandemic. "In the governor's first budget, we were very intentional about making sure that we were building out supports to address" the issues still plaguing schools across Massachusetts, he says, including chronic absenteeism, teacher shortages, and student mental health struggles.

"One of the perspectives that I embraced as superintendent is this idea of a systems-based approach to developing solutions," Tutwiler says. "And one of the real strong points of my role now is that we have the opportunity to build on, improve, create, and refine systems from birth through college." Some of those solutions include a newly proposed statewide student mental health framework and an initiative to reimagine the traditional high school experience.

Despite his broad sphere of responsibility, Tutwiler still finds ample time to interact with students and teachers. Last year he visited more than 60 school districts around the state, and his team adds new stops monthly. "Those are really valuable experiences to hear what is at top of mind for the people these decisions and policies are impacting," Tutwiler says.

Although his leadership journey has taken him further and further away from the classroom, Tutwiler still holds close the words of a mentor from his early teaching days that guide his work today as secretary of education.

"I have a sort of moral imperative that is wrapped up in a phrase a mentor shared with me, and apply this actively in my career, and the phrase is this: 'As a leader in education, I must love the student, the teacher, and the craft of teaching, none more than the other, but in that order.' That," he says, "is my philosophy in this work." □

Decisions and Crowded Classrooms

And why these decisions are ethical, not just practical Story by Lory Hough

In this issue's Quick Chat, **TATIANA GERON, PH.D.'23**, explains what "crowdedness" means when it comes to ethics and teacher decision-making in the classroom. Geron, a former middle school teacher, wrote about the term recently in the *Harvard Educational Review*. She is currently a visiting assistant professor at Colby College in Maine where she is looking at the intersection of political philosophy and teacher practice.

In basic terms, what does "crowdedness" mean?

[Educator] Philip Jackson came up with the term in *Life in Classrooms*, which he wrote in 1968. In this book, which is a classroom ethnography, he uses the word "crowdedness" to describe how a classroom is a collection of individuals, but also has its own group dynamic. And because it's a bounded physical space where many individuals are interacting and become a cohesive group, teachers have to worry about things like students' needs trading off against each other and how to preserve peace and order, but also how to let students be themselves. It's that interplay between the group and the individual, and teachers have to make decisions that allow that interplay to work. What I add to Jackson's concept is the idea that these decisions are ethical, not just practical, so crowdedness has an ethical dimension to it too.

How did you experience this when you were teaching?

I taught middle school in Boston Public Schools and in New York City for several years. I had come to the

classroom with a political philosophy background as an undergraduate. I was always thinking about education as having an ethical and a political dimension, but I rarely felt like I had the opportunity when I was in the classroom to step back and think about how decisions I was making had an ethical aspect to them. They had to do with my own values. Every decision you make as a teacher has to do with the well-being of your students and their opportunities for flourishing. That can feel really weighty as a teacher. And teachers just don't have opportunities frequently to reflect on or talk about that with colleagues.

Give an example of an ethical dilemma you faced in the classroom.

One dilemma that I thought about a lot was how to support students with really diverse learning needs all in the same classroom. I had a lot of students who were English language learners in my fifth-grade classroom when I taught in Boston. One student in particular who came in the middle of the year had just moved from the Dominican Republic. He had not had much formal schooling. He was such a dynamic member of the class community. That was really meaningful. However, it didn't solve the dilemma of how to make sure he was getting the instruction he needed, in his home language and in English, where in both he was reading far below grade level. I had to figure out how to get the student the resources that he needed that didn't take him out of the classroom all the time and change our community. I wanted him to be with us, but how do I do that in a way where



Tatiana Geron

he's not just on the computer using Google Translate all the time? Once you have a student in your class community, that's an important dynamic that shapes how you make decisions. When you make an ethical decision as a teacher, it's based on so many decisions that you made before. It's based on the group dynamic that you have. And then it impacts the kind of decisions that you can make in the future.

It's complicated!

I came up in a time of "teach like a champion" and a lot of accountability measures. The understanding seemed to be, if you follow these rules and do these best practices, you'll have this ethical impact. The reality was so much more complicated than that. It had more to do with: How do you get to know your students? How do you know your school environment? How do you understand how the decisions that you make have ramifications throughout the year and among different students? And, of course, how do you do that in a just way? □

"When you make an ethical decision as a teacher, it's based on so many decisions that you made before."



Moriah Lit

Collegiate Recovery

For one student, education brings a clean start

Story by **Lory Hough**

It was the beginning of January 2023, and Moriah Lit opened the first acceptance letter for graduate school. Within a couple of weeks, she would open seven more. It was a surreal and triumphant moment for her; only six years earlier, after a long bartending shift, Lit had found herself curled up on the floor of her shower. She had used again and knew it was finally time to get sober.

“Something came over me that night and I said, ‘I can’t do this anymore,’” she says. “The next day, I checked into rehab, a 35-day program, and got clean.”

She spent the next year going to daily meetings and finding a new set of friends. She got a sponsor. And during that pivotal year, she realized she had bigger aspirations — and a way to get there. “For me to expand the possibilities for my future,” she remembers thinking, “school was part of that gateway.”

She had tried higher education before, a couple of community colleges after attending an alternative evening high school where she says not a lot of learning happened.

“I would go for a semester or two, then I’d stopped going to classes,” she says. “My GPA reflected that, and back then, I just decided that education was beyond my reach. I had other priorities at the time, which was partying and having fun.” At 23, she overdosed and went to rehab. When she was 29, her father, who had been in active recovery, overdosed and died. Lit’s drug use spiraled for several years. And then that night in the shower happened and, at the age of 32, she went back to her local

community college in Philadelphia and started taking classes again, this time with a new focus. She became president of the student government and three years later, gave the commencement address. She knew she wanted to keep learning.

“For me, an associate degree wasn’t enough,” she says. “I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do, but that was when I started to think that I might want to do something in college counseling.”

She wasn’t sure how to apply to a four-year colleges, so she did the obvious: She Googled top schools. Eventually, she got full offers from four of the Seven Sisters colleges.

“This is really dear to my heart,” she says. “A lot of the Seven Sisters schools have programs for nontraditional age students.” At the age of 36, she started her undergraduate degree at Wellesley College, majoring in sociology.

Two years later, after graduation, she found herself again on Google, this time researching education graduate programs. She applied to eight and got into all of them, including HGSE. She says she didn’t hesitate in deciding which one to pick.

“Harvard was hands down my first choice,” she says. “There was no way that I wasn’t going to come. Everything about it — from its reputation to the fact that they had a higher education concentration at the intersection of human development — really spoke to my values and the direction I knew I wanted to go in.”

Part of that direction, she says, now includes helping other students who are in recovery.

“Since I had gotten clean, I started to advise friends how to go to college because it had been such a transformational experience for me,” she says. And then an aunt suggested starting a company.

“I was telling her that all I really wanted to do was help people in recovery get back into college because I understood,” she says. “When you get clean, let’s say you’re 32, 33, you think that you have these limitations. You think, the best I can do is make \$18 an hour working at a recovery house or a bar. You don’t understand that there are so many opportunities and so much funding available. For a lot of people, the process is so daunting that they put it off and say maybe one day.”

After working on the business plan in her classes, Lit’s new company, Collegiate Recovery Solutions, was selected as a Harvard Presidential Innovation semifinalist. The company fills a crucial gap.

“I looked into it, and there are all sorts of support services to help people in recovery integrate back into society,” she says, “but there’s no program that specifically helps people get back to school.”

But there should be.

“Students in recovery are all over campuses across the country,” she says. “They’re largely unnoticed and under the radar, but it’s important to hold space to recognize them. I also want to decrease the stigma that people that have substance use disorders should be relegated to one kind of lifestyle for their whole lives. I want to show that we can do anything and that the opportunities are limitless.” □

“Something came over me that night and I said, ‘I can’t do this anymore.’

The next day, I checked into rehab, a 35-day program, and got clean.”

MORIAH LIT



Puzzling Thoughts

When an interest in doing crosswords becomes an interest in making crosswords

Story by **Lory Hough**

One across: What Ed School employee is a cruciverbalist, or a person skilled in creating or solving crossword puzzles?

Answer: Marc Raila, manager of the Education Innovation Studio, the school's makerspace on the third floor of the Gutman Library.

For decades, Raila, a former art major who taught photography and says he loves the creative process, has been solving crossword puzzles for fun.

"Crosswords have always been there for me in some shape or form," he says. "I've always been interested in solving them, although never on any kind of regular basis."

But then the pandemic hit. With the extra time, Raila started building a canoe (which he finished and launched last year) and ramped up his crossword game.

"Locked at home for months on end, I was trying to reduce my screen consumption and I had some crossword books laying around that I'd never finished," he says. "I started voraciously consuming those," often multiple puzzles each day.

He actually prefers doing them on paper, he says, with pencil. "I always make mistakes."

Nowadays, Raila does crosswords whenever he has free time, like (on his phone) when waiting for the bus or (on paper) at the rink where his two daughters take skating lessons. His daughters also help him do *The New York Times* mini and other puzzles most nights.

He went one step further in early 2023 when he came across a *New York Times* series about how to create your own crossword puzzle.

"The process seemed confusing, but I thought, hey, I enjoy solving problems, so this could be the hobby's logical next step," he says. "I made a couple and submitted some to *The New York Times*. They've all been rejected, of course — this is actually a fairly competitive arena" — but *USA Today* published his first puzzle in March of this year. He also created a custom puzzle for *Ed.* magazine, on the next page, complete with a few clues found in this issue.

Raila admits that when it comes to creating puzzles, the process is "a little slow going." Coming up with a theme is the hardest part.

"I'll rack my brain for weeks coming up with a theme and fleshing it out, and then getting it to fit into the grid," he says. "Writing the clues is one of my favorite parts. It's where the wordplay and jokes come in."

Before making revisions to a new puzzle, Raila runs a draft by his wife and other family members, who serve as beta testers, as well as a neighbor who also makes crossword puzzles. With her, he says, "We bounce things off of one another."

One family member who would have been especially interested in Raila's hobby is his maternal grandmother, Ebba Bestgen, who was born in Wyoming and eventually settled in Quincy, Massachusetts, just south of Boston, where Raila grew up.

"My grandmother, who lived to be 97 and kept all of her mental faculties almost until the day she died, didn't do crosswords but she did other word puzzles," he says. "She swore that's what kept her sharp throughout her older years." □

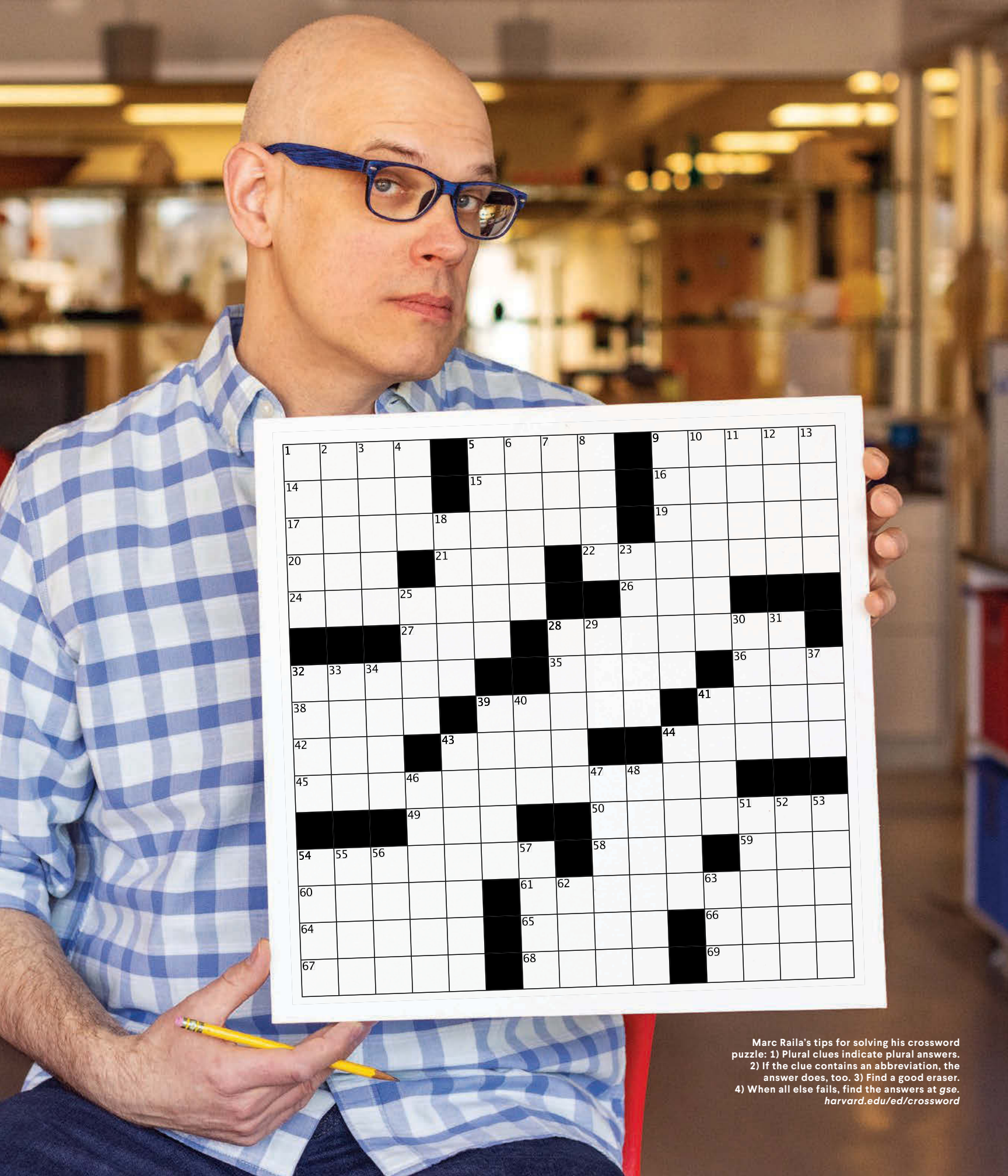
ACROSS

- 1 Party thrower
- 5 Sometimes popular processed meat
- 9 Performed in a play
- 14 Analogy phrase
- 15 ____ mater
- 16 Common poetic device
- 17 Ed.D.'99 professor of practice (p. 13)
- 19 Occupied, like a seat
- 20 ____ out (barely manage)
- 21 Arles affirmative
- 22 Theater backdrop
- 24 Spotted, like some animals
- 26 Big little name in theaters
- 27 Black gold
- 28 Superlatively stylish
- 32 Unit of ownership
- 35 Medical plans that require a PCP
- 36 It can take a lump or two
- 38 Duke of ____ (namesake of Manhattan and environs)
- 39 Not small
- 41 Fourth down option
- 42 Org. for Magic, Jazz, et al.
- 43 One who saves the day
- 44 Arial and Helvetica
- 45 Overseers of the exam discussed on p. 40
- 49 ____ de parfum
- 50 Grocery packing option
- 54 Pop's pop
- 58 LBJ's successor
- 59 Actress de Armas
- 60 The Pine Tree State
- 61 Ed.M.'12 and Ph.D.'20 lecturer (p. 36)
- 64 Passion
- 65 Aahs' partners
- 66 Busy as ____
- 67 Pre-adults
- 68 Force from power
- 69 Neither's partners

DOWN

- 1 Took a trail
- 2 Naomi of tennis fame
- 3 Sore throat source, briefly
- 4 Dancing digit
- 5 Adams of beer fame, and Harvard alumnus of 1740 and '43
- 6 Kilt pattern
- 7 Roadie's load
- 8 Atlas pages
- 9 Goddess of the hunt
- 10 Orange Monopoly card
- 11 Toddler
- 12 Like a retired prof., maybe
- 13 Not confess
- 18 "It's true!"
- 23 River boat
- 25 Primary ingredient of 5-across
- 28 Pulsate
- 29 Texter's exclamation
- 30 Shock
- 31 Camping shelter
- 32 Lip ____ (pretend to sing)
- 33 Wandering worker
- 34 Shrinking Asian sea
- 37 @@@
- 39 Getting this gives you an advantage
- 40 Common word that sounds like its second letter
- 41 Pea places
- 43 Repeated top-of-page text blocks
- 44 Swiss currency
- 46 Bespectacled Beatle
- 47 ____ Book Club
- 48 Close...
- 51 1990s martial arts-based fitness fad
- 52 Kind of beauty
- 53 Zoo enclosures
- 54 Exam for a future MBA
- 55 Scarce
- 56 Assistant
- 57 ____ Gobi (Indian potato dish)
- 62 Promise to pay, in brief
- 63 *Star Wars* Solo

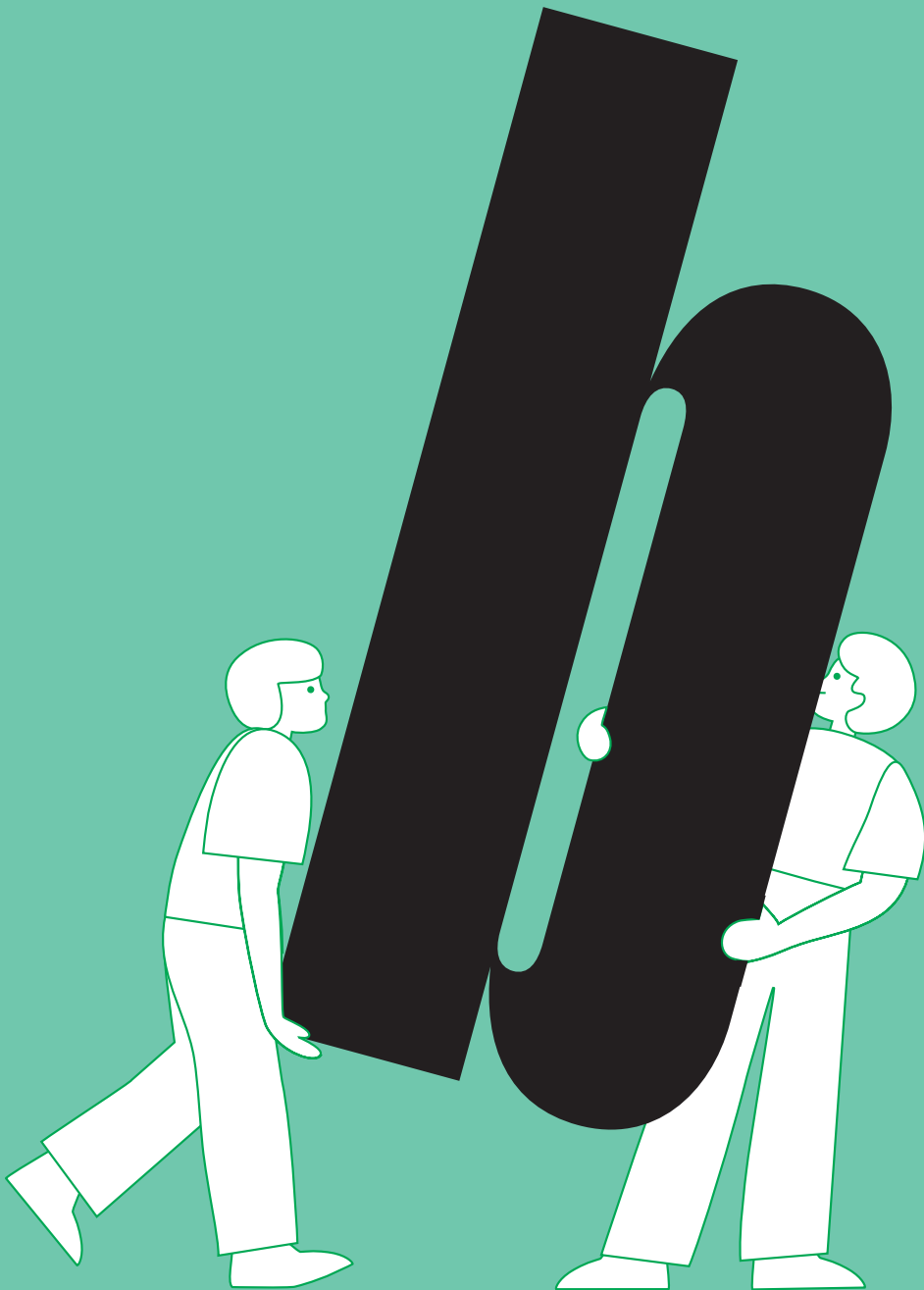
Marc Raila



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60									61	62				63	
64									65					66	
67									68					69	

Marc Raila's tips for solving his crossword puzzle: 1) Plural clues indicate plural answers. 2) If the clue contains an abbreviation, the answer does, too. 3) Find a good eraser. 4) When all else fails, find the answers at gse.harvard.edu/ed/crossword

Ideas



**“Regardless of our role in the field of education,
our job is to serve students and teachers. That is our north star.”**

DOUGLAS MOSHER, PH.D.’24 (SEE P. 29)



Change of Course

Six graduating students share
something they learned in class this past
year that changed their thinking

Story by **Lory Hough**
Illustration by **Bryce Wymer**



“We are our own resource”

Essay by **Bryant Odega, Ed.M.**

“Know history, know self. No history, no self.”

Those were the words projected on the wall in the beginning of [Ed.M.'05] Christina “V” Villarreal’s T004 Ethnic Studies and Education course. It is a saying written by revolutionary intellectual Jose Rizal, whose writings helped inspire Philippine resistance to Spanish colonization. It is a saying that I’ve often reflected upon throughout the fall semester of 2023, and my last semester this spring as I’ve been student-teaching ethnic studies at a high school in Boston’s southernmost neighborhood, the majority Black, Brown, and beautiful community of Hyde Park.

From this course I’ve learned that in many aspects, we are our own resource and that by learning our history, we can better know ourselves. It is about being critically conscious of the narratives we are told about ourselves and uncovering counternarratives. Working with Dr. V’s teaching fellow and Ph.D. student Melina Melgoza, I am also reminded about the importance of helping students create new narratives.

Throughout my student-teaching experience, I’ve had the honor to teach ethnic studies and be a witness to the wisdom and brilliance that my students possess. For example, my students learned about the five elements of hip-hop and, after reading *Black Indians* by William Katz, used them to showcase how Black and Indigenous people resisted European colonization in the Americas. Students illustrated concepts of resistance, community, and solidarity through powerful poems, songs, and graffiti art. Incorporating hip-hop studies in my practice was inspired by a lesson given by Dr. V’s teaching fellow and Ed.L.D. student, Justis “DJ Faro” Lopez.

The biggest lesson that I’ve learned from T004 is grappling with what this knowledge compels me to do. I’ve learned that ethnic studies is more than content and curriculum, it is a way of being. As I continue on my teaching journey, I hope to build upon ways to co-create with my students’ classroom environments that humanizes them and helps them uncover their own power.

After graduating from the Teaching and Teacher Leadership Program this spring, Bryant Odega plans on teaching high school ethnic studies in Los Angeles



“Serve students”

Essay by **Douglas Mosher, Ph.D.**

As a former first-grade teacher, I believe that the priority of teachers is to serve students.

When I left the classroom to begin my graduate work at HGSE in 2018, I wanted this mindset to prevail. Yet that guiding north star faded as I dove into coursework. So much of academia at times can feel like we serve science and ourselves in the quest to acquire grants and publish journal articles, with our research collaborators and participants becoming relegated to a distant second.

My adviser, Professor Jimmy Kim, however, provided me with an incredibly meaningful lesson during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools had closed and his research lab was in the final year of a three-year longitudinal study examining the effect of his literacy intervention on student outcomes. Initially, it seemed we should continue the study with treatment students receiving the intervention and control students receiving whatever the district provided. But the pandemic was an incredibly challenging time, and school districts were struggling to implement virtual instruction. Jimmy saw this need and decided to provide the intervention to both treatment and control conditions, serving all teachers and students, not just some. He threw a wrench into his study, not knowing how a decision like this might impact findings from a three-year investment. And still he put the needs of our district partners ahead of his goals as a researcher – something that seemed rare in the research world.

This was a pivotal moment in my time as a Ph.D. student. I was reminded that regardless of our role in the field of education, our job is to serve students and teachers. This is our north star. As a researcher studying elementary school interventions, everything I do should be in service of students and teachers. In this case, providing teachers with a ready-to-use curriculum was what was needed, even if it altered the longitudinal study.

Douglas Mosher is in his sixth and final year of the Ph.D. Program. Prior to beginning his doctoral studies, he was a first-grade teacher with Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools and before teaching, worked as a session musician in Nashville



“I truly belong”

Essay by **Gabriela Dumancela, Ed.M.**

“Students’ success is normally credited to institutions and lack of success to individual students.”

This was the headline in one of the class sessions of Lecturer Alexis Redding’s College Student Development course, and it became a revelation to redefine my professional objectives and the meaning of success in postsecondary education.

As Redding’s lecture unfolded, I was puzzled by the question: “If we aim for every student’s success, what actions are necessary?” In searching for answers, I found a personal connection to my own journey. Arriving at HGSE as a low-income, first-generation, international student, I faced numerous challenges and moments of uncertainty. My lack of connections made it difficult to establish a sense of community, and my unfamiliarity with the academic environment of an American college proved even more challenging.

However, despite the obstacles I initially encountered, I found the resilience to persevere, thanks to the supportive community at HGSE. The relationships I formed with faculty, staff members, and peers served as vital support to connect me with student organizations, find guidance to complete coursework, and mentorship to enroll in courses and activities to further explore my academic interests. Reflecting on my journey, I realized that the people around me played a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment, reaffirming my conviction that I truly belong to the Ed School.

I experienced a rewarding and exciting academic year, yet this enriching experience would not have been possible without the environment HGSE carefully created for me. As I look back on my journey, I am deeply thankful for the moments of inquiry and inspiration in Redding’s class. After radically challenging my thinking and assumptions, I circled back to my initial puzzle with the answer: If we aim for every student’s success, what we mainly need is a positive environment. When institutions involve stakeholders, like faculty and staff members, to promote students’ wellbeing as much as their learning, they create a system that provides a safe, equitable, and engaging climate, that each student needs for their academic and personal growth.

Gabriela Dumancela, in the Human Development and Education Program, is specializing in process redesign to enhance college students’ experiences. Her goal is to create environments that nurture their development as “whole persons”



“Teach kindness”

Essay by **Ezza Naveed, Ed.M.**

Something I learned this year that really stayed with me happened during my Equity and Opportunity Foundation class. I learned about “social class” and how it shows up in educational spaces.

I read about how isolating schools can be for people who “embody” a different class. I read about how a student, the son of immigrant parents from Ireland and Pakistan, grew up exposed to “high-class” activities. Instead of taking him to Pakistan or Ireland, his parents took him on expensive European vacations, trying to “culture” him. Yet, when this student showed up to an American boarding school, he felt deeply isolated from his peers. From the hidden curriculum of how the place ran to cultural references of the “upper class” students, it was difficult to relate.

This made me wonder — who were the peers in my elementary school who felt isolated because of class differences? I will never forget my classmate, Ehsan, who, on Parents’ Day, joined us in describing our parents: “Doctor, engineer, accountant, banker, army officer...”

Ehsan said, “My father has a chicken shop.”

“A CHICKEN shop?” the teacher asked, with surprise.

“A chicken shop,” he said, beaming with pride.

As 8-year-olds, we did what we knew best. We laughed at him. With time, I noticed that Ehsan started to shrink into the shadows, until one day, he left, and we never heard from him again. To this day, it breaks my heart to reflect on what happened. When we went to school, nobody thought about class. Nobody taught Ehsan to “perform” class. That “business owner” was the “right” way to describe his dad. But worst of all, nobody taught us how to accept someone who may be different.

For 18 years, I sat with this incident, but never quite knew what went wrong. My Equity and Opportunity readings made me realize, Aha, that is what happened. My first interaction with classism during school. Now, as an educator, I’m beginning to think, how can I build a world that will teach kids to be kind, no matter what? To teach children about classism without making them aware of their class?

Ezza Naveed is originally from Pakistan, where she built a tech fellowship for low-income students in her province of KPK, Pakistan. She is in the Learning Design, Innovation, and Technology Program



“I must play”

Essay by **Missy Arellano, Ed.M.**

The most impactful lesson I have learned so far at HGSE is the importance of play.

I embarked on my graduate school journey with the goal to research and implement arts curriculum for young children, and to explore how the arts can build social emotional learning skills. I spent the fall studying with Lecturer Louisa Penfold, creating a portfolio of arts workshops for preschoolers to shape the next generation of critical thinkers. I learned that materials do not need to come in the form of traditional art supplies, they can be found, natural, or recycled objects; and by providing children with everyday objects, I can make art more accessible and equitable.

One day after Louisa’s class I came home to my four-year-old son, Yee, playing with two paper bags from Trader Joe’s. I sat there in awe watching him transform bags into shoes, imagining himself as an alien from another planet. He began narrating a story rich with language, asking me questions about space and the solar system. I was fascinated by how quickly he scaffolded the activity, bringing me another bag and asking me to cut holes for eyes so he could create a mask, then grabbing markers to add color. He spent the rest of the evening coloring the bags and identifying colors to express his emotions. He embraced the true essence of learning through play via grocery bags!

That night I reflected upon how what Louisa was teaching in the classroom unfolded in my own home. It left me wanting to further explore ways in which children can experience impactful arts learning. Over the last year, I have uncovered that effective early learning experiences come from creating interconnected relationships by all parties — teachers, families, administrators, communities, and policymakers, but most importantly the child.

I am always learning, and I am grateful for my time at HGSE. Every day I remind myself that to grow I must play, just like Yee.

Missy Arellano, from Long Beach, California, came to the Ed School to research early childhood theory and policy to develop effective and equitable practices that support early learners and their families. She is in the Education Policy Analysis Program



“Reflect on feedback”

Essay by **King Adjei-Frimpong, Ed.M.**

I recoiled whenever I received feedback. I had to emotionally brace myself because even when I received positive feedback, I prepared for its critical counterpart. What exacerbated my reaction was that I struggled with waiting until I thought a product was “done” before sharing it for feedback. When the feedback was critical, I was left vulnerable.

That changed this fall semester when I took Real Talk: The Art and Practice of Brave Communication, taught by the esteemed Lecturer Tim McCarthy, with the support of teaching fellow Diego Garcia-Blum. I took the class expecting to improve my public speaking skills. Yes, that did happen, but what I did not expect was how the class would change my perspective and reactions to feedback.

Tim uses a “learn, apply, reflect” framework. At the beginning of the week, you learn methods and structures for giving a speech. You then apply those learnings to your speech. After your speech, you receive feedback that you reflect on in order to improve your next speech. The structure of the class is all about feedback, and there are three distinct ways that can happen:

1. Feedback from an impartial party: Teaching fellows from other sections host office hours. They are not grading you, nor do they see your speech, but they are available to talk through ideas or listen to an early version.

2. Feedback from your classmates: After you give your speech, classmates offer on-the-spot feedback. They are also given time to type more detailed feedback.

3. Feedback from the teaching team: The teaching team shares their feedback after classmates. Their feedback is incisive, robust, and thoughtful.

Initially, I was nervous about the layers of feedback, but I experienced Tim’s method as caring. I felt comfortable evolving my approach to feedback and quickly reaped the benefits of doing so. The framework and the positive experience bled into other classes and advanced my personal and professional development — and all without the typical sting I felt when receiving feedback in the past.

King Adjei-Frimpong is focused on leadership, communications, and andragogy. He is the host of the podcast *What Keeps Us Going*. He is in the Education Leadership, Organizations, and Entrepreneurship Program



On My Bookshelf

Professor Emiliana Vegas

This past winter, with thoughts of Italy and the beach on her mind, **EMILIANA VEGAS, ED.M.'96, ED.D.'01**, former co-director of the Center for Universal Education at Brookings and chief of the education division at the Inter-American Development Bank, shared what she's reading and thoughts on who she'd invite to a book group. Vegas's new book, *Let's Change the World: How to Work within International Development Organizations to Make a Difference*, is coming out this fall.

What book are you currently reading?

Currently, I am reading *L'Amica Geniale (My Brilliant Friend)* by author Elena Ferrante.

What drew you to this book?

Last year, I became an Italian citizen, thanks to my heritage from my mother's side of the family. I was born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela, and my native language is Spanish. I decided last June that I wanted to learn the Italian language, and since then I've been studying the language using an application, listening to Italian podcasts, and music. The next step was reading a book in Italian, and this is a bestseller. I'm really enjoying it thus far, and each chapter gets easier as I make progress in the language.

Did you have a favorite book growing up?

As a kid, I studied in a bilingual English-Spanish school in Caracas. I remember loving a series of American books titled *Jack and Jane*.

You're forming a book group at your house. Name three people you'd want in the group and why.

Caroline Hoxby: She's a fabulous economist but also endlessly curious. I'd love to get her book suggestions. (She was also on my dissertation committee!) Amartya Sen: I have learned so much from his books; it would be wonderful to get his views on others' books.

Martha Nussbaum: I admire her feminist philosophy and capabilities approach.

Name a book you were given as a gift and why it is memorable.

Dancing with Life by Peter Moffitt. It was given to me by a counselor when I was going through a very difficult personal time. It changed my approach to facing challenges and enjoying the good times.

Is there a book you're assigning to your students at HGSE that you think all educators should read?

Educational Goods: Values, Evidence, and Decision-Making by Harry Brighouse, Helen Ladd, Susanna Loeb, and Adam Swift.

Favorite place to read.



On the beach, in the shade. I grew up near the Caribbean Sea, and to me reading a book by the sound of the waves is very relaxing.

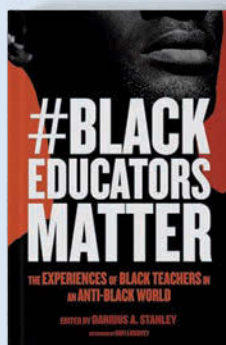
What books, in addition to Ferrante's, are on your nightstand?

Me, Elton John, a gift from my 20-year-old son who knows how much I love music and this artist.

Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives our Success by Adam Grant. And *In an Uncertain World: Tough Choices from Wall Street to Washington* by Robert Rubin, former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury.



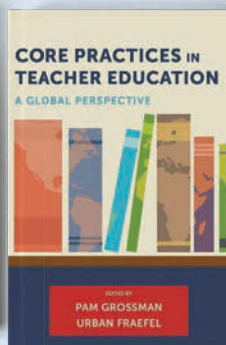
Looking for past On My Bookshelf interviews? Go to gse.harvard.edu/ed/bookshelf



#BlackEducators Matter

By Darrius Stanley
(HEP, FEBRUARY 2024)

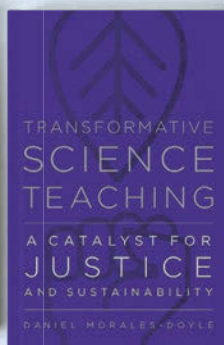
This collection of personal accounts, educator portraits, and research findings assembled by Darrius Stanley, an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota, spotlights the critical work of Black K–12 educators in the United States. The collection lays out historical and contemporary issues faced by Black educators and the efforts they have made to fight oppression and racism as they continue to have a positive impact on students, schools, and society. The essays also offer strategies that education leaders can use to recruit, retain, and support Black educators in K–12 schools.



Core Practices in Teacher Education

By Pam Grossman and Urban Fraefel
(HEP, MARCH 2024)

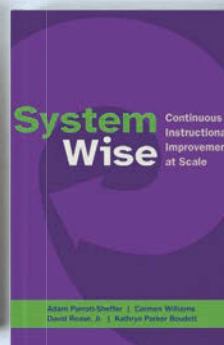
In this new book, Pam Grossman, a professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, and Urban Fraefel, professor emeritus of education at the University of Northwestern Switzerland, look at the shift in teacher education programs in the United States and across the globe as they focus more centrally on practice and new ways to reorganize their preparation programs. With teachers facing many common challenges, this book offers an international perspective on the work related to practice-based teacher education and core ways of educating students.



Transformative Science Teaching

By Daniel Morales-Doyle
(HEP, APRIL 2024)

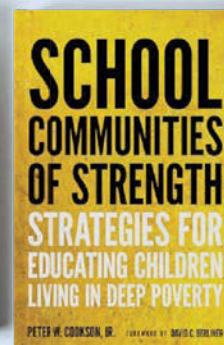
For more than a decade, author Daniel Morales-Doyle taught high school science in the Chicago Public Schools. Now an associate professor of science education at the University of Illinois Chicago, Morales-Doyle tackles in this new book what science education is and could be. Challenging middle and high school science teachers to think differently about instructional priorities, Morales-Doyle offers lesson plans and suggests more emphasis on topics relevant to students' lives, such as racial and environmental justice, which could give all students, not just those focused on STEM careers, a closer connection to the sciences and their communities.



System Wise

By Adam Parrott-Sheffer, Ed.M.'09, Ed.L.D.'20; Carmen Williams, Ed.L.D.'22; David Rease Jr., Ed.L.D.'14; and Senior Lecturer Kathryn Parker Boudett
(HEP, APRIL 2024)

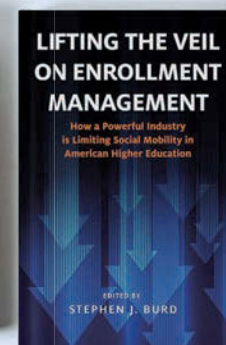
Following up on *Data Wise*, the popular step-by-step guide published in 2005 that showed individual school leaders how to use information like test scores and classroom data to improve teaching and learning, *System Wise* extends the *Data Wise* process from classrooms and schools to broader educational contexts. Using real-world stories, planning checklists, and implementation templates, the authors show how district leaders and school systems can benefit from the improved use of data rooted in what they call the ACE habits of mind: action, collaboration, and evidence.



School Communities of Strength

By Peter Cookson Jr., C.A.S.'91
(HEP, APRIL 2024)

In his latest book, Peter Cookson, the author of more than 15 books focused on inequality and education, and a senior research fellow at the Learning Policy Institute in California, provides strategies for educating the 5 million children who live with the extreme material hardship known as deep poverty. Geared toward K–12 schools, the strategies include whole-child teaching and learning, asset-based approaches, and creating a relationship-centered school culture. To help schools improve their “poverty responsiveness,” he says, will require adequate funding and meaningful collaboration among families, neighborhood partners, and educators.



Lifting the Veil on Enrollment Management

By Stephen Burd
(HEP, MAY 2024)

Lifting the Veil explores some of the factors that contributed to the rise of the enrollment management industry, including a deep interest in college rankings. Enrollment management, or the strategies and tactics used by colleges and universities to attract and retain students while keeping control over their established goals, has evolved to shape college admissions in the United States ever since the term was coined in 1976. The essays in this book explore the rise of these strategies, as well as the inequities that have been caused, and include recommendations to reduce the industry's influence, especially for low-income students.



Find these books on the Harvard Ed Press website

CAMPUS

Zen and the Art of Grad School

Spring course focuses on understanding and looking inward

Story by Lory Hough

The first paragraph of the syllabus for Lecturer Liao Cheng's spring course at the Ed School begins with this sentence: "What we see is shaped by how we look, and rarely do we look with innocent eyes."

It's intriguing — and exactly why **CHENG, ED.M.'12, PH.D.'20**, wanted to teach a class to educators focused on psychology (understanding how the mind works and why people react) and Zen philosophy (using introspection to know the nature of the mind).

"As an educator, it's important to be self-reflective and mindful of our assumptions about our students and about what education means and what learning looks like," she says. "And that could be shaped by our own experiences as students or the information that we receive."

Unfortunately, self-reflection isn't something educators are typically trained to do.

"There are two broad categories of knowledge: knowledge about the world and knowledge about the self," she says. "And there are two broad categories of skills: skills to transform the world and skills to transform the self. I feel that in education, both K-12 and in higher ed, there's a lot of training for getting knowledge and skills about the world, but very little education about how to understand and improve ourselves. There is a real need for that."

Cheng has taught the course, *Becoming a Self-Reflective and Autonomous Educator: Lessons From Zen and Psychology*, twice before, and leans heavily on case studies and stories to get students looking inward — a common element of Zen, she says.

For example, one case study looks at the interaction between a white teacher and a Latino student as a way to recognize assumptions brought into the classroom. "The student is often late to class, and the teacher assumes, without communicating with the student, that the student is lazy and doesn't care about school — that's why the student is always late," Cheng says, describing the case study. "But the teacher doesn't know that the student comes from a low-income family and the parents work the night shift, leaving the student to do a lot of housework every night. The student really cares about school and wants to succeed but has this obstacle in her life. That's an example of how important it is for us to uncover our own assumptions."

Asked what she hopes her students take away from the course, she says, first and foremost, "I want them to realize the importance of paying attention to our inner world because I think our psychological world is in our blind spot. It's very easy to pay attention to things that are happening outside in the external world."

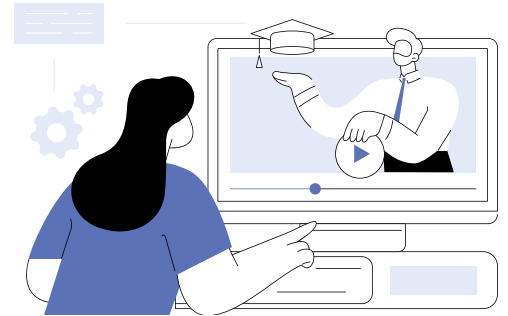
One reason she specifically chose Zen philosophy, she says, "is because the pedagogy used in Zen is very radical from today's perspective. There's no authority, no following a certain practice or treating teachers as authorities. Any authority is torn down because the goal is about self-actualization."


Teaching with this kind of approach, she says, has really allowed her students to get to know who they are, "and no one else can stand in the way of that." □





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 Podcast lovers! Did you know that the Ed School has a podcast? Hosted by Jill Anderson in conversation with thought leaders in education, the Harvard EdCast focuses on what makes a difference for learners, educators, parents, and communities. New episodes broadcast weekly during the academic year, and have included a look at FAFSA challenges for first-gen students, why hitting is still an option in some schools, and the complex influence of mom groups on education across the country. Stream or subscribe using the QR code.

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Practice

“I usually tell them there should be a good reason you’re sending your SAT scores in with your application.”

CLARA YOM, ED.M.’15 (SEE P. 40)







SAT

Is the SAT still needed? We look at the yeas and nays for keeping — or dropping — the test that's been called the great leveler and the enemy of equity

Story by **Elizabeth Christopher** Illustration by **Dana Smith**





Sam Noel, a senior at Melrose High School in Massachusetts, didn't sleep well the night before his SAT last spring. "I was nervous," he says, not just about taking the college entrance exam but also about making it to the test center on time. When he searched online for a spot to take the test at his high school, or at any of the high schools in neighboring cities, the closest one he found was a 45-minute drive away.

Difficulty accessing test centers, a problem that reached its peak during the pandemic, is just one of the reasons colleges and universities have adopted test-optional admission policies. Another, and perhaps bigger reason, is the belief that making submissions of SAT or ACT scores optional is fairer and more equitable for students that come from less-advantaged backgrounds. Data shows that students from high-income families on average score higher than those who come from lower-income families. Recent research from Opportunity Insights, a team of Harvard-based researchers and policy analysts, which set out to examine if highly selective colleges perpetuate privilege across generations, reveals how wide the score gap is.

"One-third of the children of the very richest families scored a 1300 or higher on the

SAT, while less than 5% of middle-class students did,” out of a possible 1600, according to the study. “Relatively few children in the poorest families scored that high; just one in five took the test at all,” *The New York Times* reported, citing the study.

This is where it gets complicated.

Some researchers say that, despite that sobering data, dismissing the SAT and tests like it is shortsighted. Harvard Professor Raj Chetty, part of the Opportunity Insights team, told *The New York Times* the disparities in SAT scores by class and race are a “symptom, not a cause,” of educational inequality in the United States. Moreover, researchers like Chetty say SAT scores can do a good job of identifying students who are better prepared to complete the rigorous course work of Ivy Plus institutions — the eight ivy league schools, plus others like MIT and Duke. This is true regardless of the income level of students’ families, Chetty says. This is, in part, the reason schools like Harvard, Brown, Yale, and Dartmouth College are returning to requiring standardized tests for undergraduate admissions. Dartmouth did its own study on the role of testing in its admissions process and concluded that, as its website reads, “a standardized testing requirement will improve — not detract from — our ability to

bring the most promising and diverse students to our campus.”

Yet many people, including college admissions officers and high school counselors, say the benefits of making test scores optional in college admissions are too great to ignore. They feel that college admissions should be based on other aspects of a student’s application — the transcript, essay, letters of recommendation, and extracurricular activities. Today, more than 80% of colleges do not require applicants to submit standardized test scores as part of their college applications, according to *Inside Higher Ed*.

And, so, the question being asked is, is the SAT still needed?

Students’ scores from the SAT, ACT, and standardized tests like them are “just not the main thing a lot of colleges are paying attention to,” says **JAMIERE ABNEY, ED.M.’17**, director of admissions at Western Oregon University. He feels that concerns about grade inflation are overblown and that a student’s transcript, GPA, essay, and letters of recommendations do a better job of helping admissions officers understand who the student is and what their potential for success is. Taken together, these

A History of the SAT

1900



The College Entrance Examination Board (now called The College Board) is created to administer admissions tests. A year later, the first college entrance exams were held in 69 locations in essay format. Today, the College Board manages standardized tests like the SAT and ACT, as well as the Advanced Placement program.

1917

During World War 1, Robert Yerkes, then president of the American Psychological Association, persuades the U.S. Army to let him give intelligence tests to more than 1 million recruits. Called the Army Alpha test, this first mass-scale testing program is based on intelligence tests created by Alfred Binet. The alpha test was for those who could read English, the beta for those who could not. One of Yerkes’ assistants was Carl Brigham.

1926



Brigham creates the first version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) after being appointed to the College Board’s test development committee. The standardized test, based on the Army Alpha test, was given to 8,040 students (60% male) and consisted of 315 questions with a 97-minute time limit. (Today’s digital SAT consists of 98 questions.)



No one is suggesting only the highest-scoring students be admitted to Ivy League colleges.”

**David Deming,
Harvard professor,
HGSE and HKS**

“The SAT is a real lifeline for people who don’t go to elite high schools.”

components of a student’s record “give us a three- to four-year story of who you are academically and intellectually, not just at one moment in time,” Abney says.

If a student sees a test requirement or if they see that their score falls below the average scores of students attending that school, they may wonder, “is this a school that I can even have a chance at?” says Abney, who favors his school’s test-optional policy because it “gives students one less thing to worry about.” Encouraging lower-income students to apply is important, he says, because earning a college degree is still one of the surest paths to upward social mobility. Forty-seven percent of students at Western Oregon, the oldest public university in the state, are first-generation college students; some of them might have opted out of applying to college if it weren’t for its test-optional policy. “If testing is what’s turning people away, then we have to ask ourselves, ‘Is it really worth it?’”

In general, **CLARA YOM, ED.M.’15**, a high school counselor in Chicago, advises her students not to submit scores if that’s an option. “I usually tell them there should be a good reason you’re sending your SAT scores in with your application.” It’s rare for her to see an SAT score above 1200 and those scores just don’t reflect her students’ potential, she says.

Between 75% and 80% of the students at the high school where Yom works now are eligible to receive free and reduced lunch, and a large percentage of students identify as Black and Latino. The vast majority of students at her school aspire to go to college.

“Personally, I think it’s impossible to get an SAT score above 1200 without ‘studying’ the SAT,” she says. “It’s not like you get straight A’s in your high school classes and you take AP English and then you’re guaranteed a high score on the SAT.” Rather, it’s about learning how to take the test well and that often depends on having parents who can pay for tutoring. Before becoming a high school counselor, Yom worked as an SAT tutor. Most of the students she tutored came from affluent families and were able to raise their scores 200 to 300 points after weeks of drills.

Others who welcome test-optional policies do so because it represents a shift away from what they feel is an overemphasis on personal achievement. It says, “loud and clear, that who you are as a person and the choices you have made are more important than one test,” says Brennan Barnard, the college admissions program adviser for Making Caring Common, an Ed School project that seeks to help schools develop empathy in students. Colleges and universities should be looking



It says, “loud and clear, that who you are as a person and the choices you have made are more important than one test.”

Brennan Barnard,
college admissions adviser,
Making Caring Common



The people who have the money and the time ... get over-represented in the population.”

Andrew Ho,
Harvard professor,
HGSE

at alternative ways to assess students’ readiness for college, says Barnard, who is also director of college counseling at the Khan Lab School, a mastery-based school in California, and author of *The Truth About College Admission*. “If a student shows they can master calculus and tutor other students, doesn’t that say a lot more about who they are as a student and their potential to be successful than a test score?” he says.

But proponents of standardized testing say eliminating the SAT and ACT, at least for admissions to Ivy Plus schools, would be a mistake because research shows that the tests uncover students who are more academically prepared for rigorous coursework, including those who come from less-advantaged backgrounds.

“The SAT is a real lifeline for people who don’t go to elite high schools,” and who wouldn’t get noticed by admissions officers without those scores, says David Deming, a professor at the Ed School and the Harvard Kennedy School, as well as one of the authors of the Opportunity Insights study. This matters because attending an Ivy Plus school can have a significant impact on a student’s social mobility. “Attending an Ivy Plus instead of a flagship public college,” notes the study, “triples students’ chances of obtaining jobs at

prestigious firms and substantially increases their chances of earning in the top 1%.”

However, the researchers also found that Ivy Plus institutions currently rely “too much” on non-academic attributes of a student’s application in their admissions practices and “are more than twice as likely to admit a student from a high-income family as compared to a low- or middle-income family with comparable SAT/ACT scores” because of their preferences for legacy applicants as well as for applicants with impressive extracurricular and athletic resumes. If these schools changed their admissions policies, the researchers say (to rely more heavily on SAT and ACT scores), then “Ivy Plus colleges could significantly diversify the socioeconomic backgrounds of America’s highest earners and leaders.”

As Deming says, “No one is suggesting only the highest-scoring students be admitted to Ivy League colleges,” as diversity also needs to be a priority.

But that goal can sit alongside another priority, he says, which is to admit students who are ready to succeed and who can benefit the most from a challenging academic environment. To get there, Deming supports a system that includes the SAT in student assessment but that also makes some allowanc-

1928

Math is removed from the SAT and the time limit increased slightly. Tests given between 1936 and 1941 also contain no math questions.

1930

The SAT is split into two distinct sections: verbal and math.

1934



Harvard President James Bryant Conant creates the National Scholarship Plan to help admissions “better evaluate, reach, and recruit students from a wide range of high schools, specifically in the West and Midwest.” He asks Assistant Dean Henry Chauncey to find a test to evaluate candidates for these scholarships. Chauncey recommends the SAT. Conant liked the test because he thought it measured “pure intelligence,” regardless of the quality of the taker’s high school education.

1934

Chauncey talks all the member schools of the College Board into using the SAT as a uniform entrance exam, but initially only for scholarship applicants. A year later, Harvard makes it a requirement for all applicants. Within a few years, all Ivy League colleges also begin requiring the SAT for admissions.

1969

Bowdoin is the first college to go test optional for admissions.

1990

The College Board changes the name of the SAT to Scholastic Assessment Test. In 1994, the board starts using only the SAT initials.

2005

A new writing section is added to the SAT. The test shifts to a 2400-point scale after an 800-point writing section is added.

2015

The College Board partners with Khan Academy to offer free online SAT practice materials.



Disparities in SAT scores by class and race are a “symptom, not a cause,” of educational inequality.

**Raj Chetty, Harvard professor,
Department of Economics**

A test-optional policy “gives students one less thing to worry about.”

es for students who come from lower-income families and are first-generation college students. “I think we do have that system in a lot of ways,” he says. “Colleges do tend to put a thumb on the scale positively for low-income students who do well on the SAT. That’s just empirically true.”

The SAT is not perfect, says Deming, who believes test-taking practices that give the advantage to higher-income families should be eliminated. For example, he disagrees with “superscoring,” a practice which allows students who can afford to take the SAT or ACT multiple times to submit their highest scores without colleges knowing the number of times they took the test. But he maintains that “we should have some close-to-universally accepted standard of judging whether somebody is prepared to do rigorous college level work.”

And that works best when everybody takes the test, according to Professor Andrew Ho, president of the National Council on Measurement in Education. He’s a proponent of requiring the tests in college applications, but only if everyone were required to take it. He points out that in states that require public high school students to take the SAT or ACT to graduate, the pool of college applicants is more balanced demographical-

ly. The problem when the test is not required is that some students talk themselves out of taking the test and potentially out of the running for some schools and “the people who have the money and the time ... get over-represented in the population” of college applicants, he says.

In 2007, Michigan began requiring its public high school students to take the ACT during their junior year, which the state offers for free during the school day. (Eleventh-graders in Michigan are now required to take the SAT. They are one of nearly a dozen states that have made the test mandatory.) As a result, the state saw small increases in college attendance, particularly among disadvantaged students. By mandating the test, wrote Professor Susan Dynarski in *The New York Times* in 2017, a significant number of low-income students who scored high enough to attend a selective college were discovered. “For every 1,000 students who scored well on the optional test, an additional 480 did so on the mandatory test,” she wrote.

As educators, researchers, parents, and students consider the question about whether



Students' scores from the SAT, ACT, and standardized tests like them are "just not the main thing a lot of colleges are paying attention to."

Jamiere Abney, Ed.M.'17,
director of admissions,
Western Oregon University



For every 1,000 students who scored well on the optional test, an additional 480 did so on the mandatory test."

Susan Dynarski,
Harvard professor,
HGSE

the SAT is still needed, Ho says it's important to remember that test scores are just one part of a five-legged stool that college admissions officers draw upon to make their decisions and believing the other legs of the stool — the personal essay, recommendation letters, student records, and extracurriculars — are fairer is wrong because there is more and more evidence that the wealthy have an advantage in those other areas. These advantages reflect deep-seated educational inequalities that begin to take hold long before a student takes the SAT, "including differences in school quality, neighborhood exposure, and many other environmental conditions," according to Opportunity Insights. As Ho says, "Disparities in test scores reveal deep inequalities in educational opportunity, but removing the test does not remove the disparity."

Regardless of whether SAT and ACT are required as part of undergraduate college admissions, the educational inequality the test reveals is something we want to fix, says Deming. And how to do that comes down to an established formula, which, he says, includes more resources, more time in school, early childhood education, smaller classes, highly qualified teachers, attention to the core curriculum, and not letting students fall behind, which requires testing. "We can't fix a prob-

lem unless we can diagnose it," says Deming. He would also like to see more testing to identify learning gaps at the state, district, school, and even grade and classroom level.

Part of the solution starts with changing how the public thinks about testing, says Ho. Tests like the SAT can be a tool for educational equity if we can break three fallacies, he says: "that test scores are more meaningful, more precise, and more permanent than they are." Getting a low score doesn't mean you can't learn and thinking it does is damaging. Ho believes that educators are getting better about talking about how to interpret test scores in terms of asset frames versus deficit frames. In other words, "it's not what you lack; it's what you have and what you can do if we help. It takes good teachers, good educational systems, to remind people of this."

Melrose student Sam Noel made it to his test on time and was relieved when it was over, he says. It turned out that none of the schools he applied to required him to submit his scores and he was happy to have the option to share his scores only with the schools where he thought they'd make a difference in his application. □

Elizabeth Christopher is a writer based in Massachusetts. Her last story in *Ed.* focused on community college transfer challenges

2016

The SAT shifts back to a 1600-point scale: math (for a max of of 800) and evidence-based reading and writing (for a max of 800).

2020

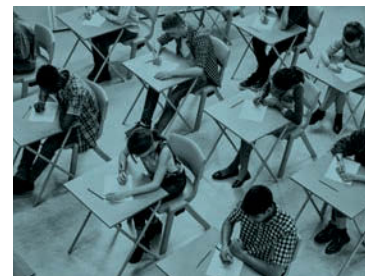


In response to the pandemic, SAT testing is paused in March, May, and June. It resumes in August 2020, at reduced capacity. Many colleges, including Harvard, go test optional.

2023

1.9 million high school graduates from the class of 2023 took the test at least once, up from 1.7 million for the class of 2022 and 1.5 million for the class of 2021. During COVID, 2.2 million from the class of 2020 took the test. The average SAT total score (class of 2023) was 1028; (class of 2022) was 1050; and (class of 2021) was 1060. Today, most questions are multiple choice, with some fill-in questions in the math section. There is no penalty for guessing.

2024



Starting in March, the SAT did away with the pen-and-paper format and went fully digital with an app called Bluebook, with exceptions for students with visual impairments, severe reading disabilities, or other documented challenges.

2024

Several colleges, including Harvard, announce that they will again require standardized tests for admissions.

SOURCES: FRONTLINE, "SECRETS OF THE SAT"; HARVARD UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES; THE COLLEGE BOARD, "A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONTENT OF THE SAT"; JOURNAL OF COLLEGE ADMISSION, "BEHIND THE SAT-OPTIONAL MOVEMENT"; ISTOCK IMAGES; BOSTON MAGAZINE, "THE SAT'S IN-STATE ORIGINS"

Does it Matter How Teachers Use Class Time?

The short answer is, it does

Story by Heather Corn



Eric Taylor

Should a teacher lecture? Open up the class to big discussions? Let students work independently or mostly in small groups? This past winter, Associate Professor Eric Taylor spoke to *Ed.* about a paper he co-published last summer in the *Economics of Education Review* that delves into the complexities and nuances of how teachers manage their classroom time, and, in turn, the impact those decisions have on student learning.

Can you give us a quick rundown of the process of your study?

This paper focuses on teachers' choices about how to allocate class time across different instructional activities. We studied 250 teachers and their 7,000 students, in England's public (state) secondary schools. Each teacher was observed eight times over two school years, on average. From those class observations we have time allocation data on a dozen different activities. Those activities fall into four groups: direct instruction, student-peer interaction, personalized instruction, and practice and assessment. We then link each teacher's class time use data to her

students' test scores at the end of the school year — the GCSE English and math exams, taken at age 14–16.

What did you find?

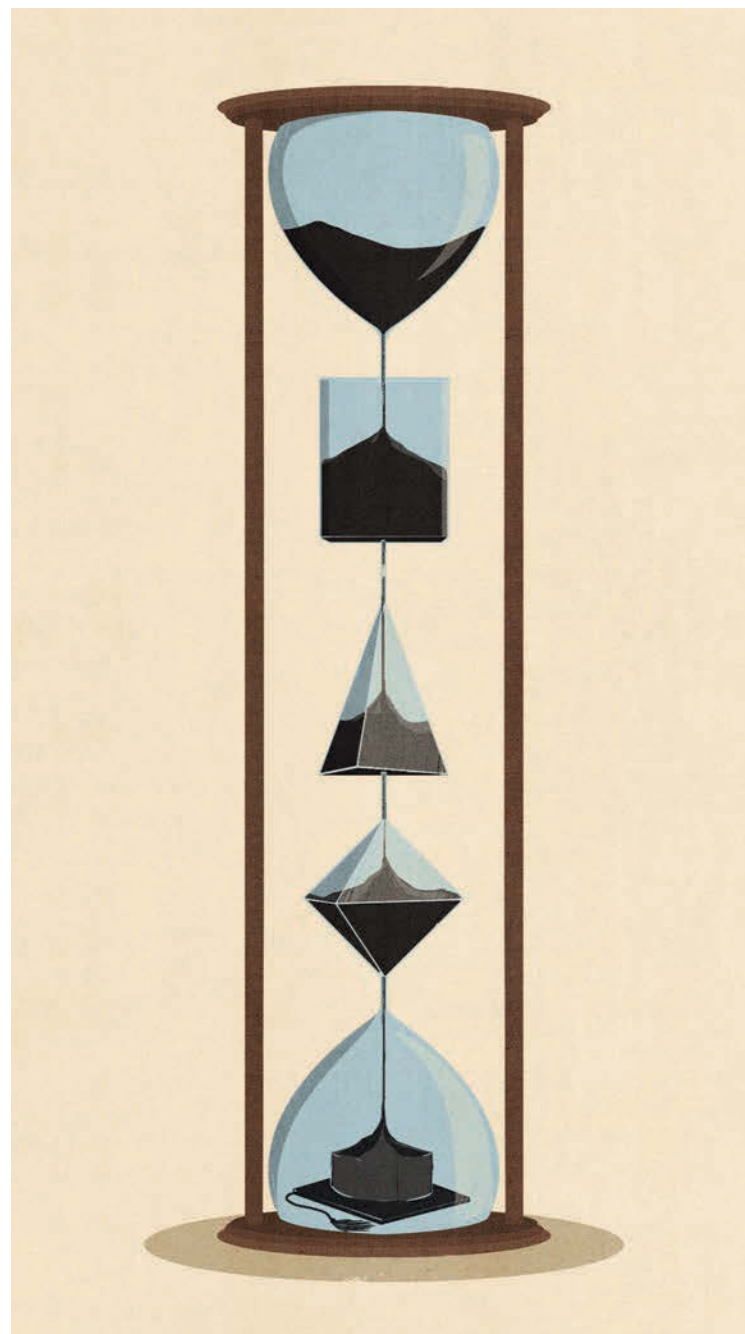
Students learn more math skills (score higher on their exams) when their teacher devotes more class time to individual practice and assessment. In contrast, students learn more language skills when their teacher devotes more class time to discussion and work in groups of students. Despite that difference, we find that the average math teacher and average English teacher make very similar choices about how to allocate class time.

What sparked your interest in research, particularly focusing on class time allocation?

Every year there are students who learn more math, language, and other skills than their peers in the classroom next door because they were lucky enough to get assigned to a more effective teacher. Those lucky students will go on to have more success as adults in college and in the workforce. Understanding why some teachers are more effective than others is an urgent long-standing challenge.

Class time allocation has not been previously studied as we do in this paper. Our data provide a rare

“Understanding why some teachers are more effective than others is an urgent long-standing challenge.”



“

The perception [of college] does not necessarily match reality. They're not giving out backstage passes to see Taylor Swift. I mean, it is what it is.

”

KEVIN FUDGE, ED.M.'08, a higher education finance executive and consultant, giving advice to families in a Usable Knowledge piece about setting expectations when applying to college

opportunity to link class time-use data to student achievement scores for a large sample of both teachers and students.

Learning how best to allocate class time is a skill. But it differs from the kind of skills typically studied by researchers or taught in professional development. Teachers' choices about how to allocate class time may be easier to change through direction from school leaders or easier to teach to novices.

Are there other possible explanations for learning beyond how teachers use class time?

You might be skeptical. Perhaps math teachers who spend more class time on individual practice are also teachers who are more skilled at asking good questions or managing student behavior. Perhaps those questioning or management skills are the true cause of students learning more, and class time choices are simply correlated. If that were true, we could ask a less-skilled teacher to increase class time for individual practice, but there would be no change in his students' test scores.

Our research addresses that skepticism. We can compare teachers who have the same level of general teaching skills but who allocate class time differently. We have data on each teacher's time use. But we also have data on each teacher's instructional effectiveness using the Framework for Teaching classroom observation rubric. In statistics jargon, even after we control for the teacher's instructional effectiveness, class time use still predicts student achievement. Even among high-skilled math teachers,

some allocate more time to individual practice, and their students learn more math. The same is true for low-skilled math teachers. And there is a parallel pattern for English teachers. The practical implication is that students would likely gain (or lose) from changes in class activities even if their teacher's general teaching skills did not change.

Did you have any “aha” moments doing this research?

The differences between math and English were most striking to me. Perhaps more-experienced educators are not surprised by the difference. But, at least in our data, both math and English teachers allocated class time in similar ways. For example, both the average math teacher and average English teacher allocated the same amount of class time to “student peer interaction.” English scores were higher in classes with more peer interaction, but math scores were not.

Will there be follow-up research?

Our results are encouraging, but just one study. We are in the early stages of a field experiment where teachers or schools, randomly assigned to the treatment group, would change how they allocate class time, while other teachers or schools continue their current approach (the control group). If anyone reading this is interested in participating in such an experiment, reach out. □

Heather Corn is a writer based in Ohio. Her last piece for Ed. looked at cARTie, the nonprofit mobile art museum bus created by CLARE MURRAY, ED.M.'20

Phase Two: The Reach

Reach Every Reader on their impact and the project's next phase Story by **Ryan Nagelhout**

When Reach Every Reader was launched in 2018 with the lofty goal of ending the early literacy crisis and improving reading outcomes for children in the United States, researchers adhered to a simple refrain about the project's aims: serve science, serve people.

A partnership between the Ed School, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Integrated Learning Initiative, and the Florida Center for Reading Research and College of Communication & Information at Florida State University, Reach Every Reader is now reaching the end of its first phase, which included work in 47 states reaching more than 58,000 children, 28,000 educators, and 7,000 parents and caregivers through research studies and offering public resources.

Each team in the partnership tackled a different aspect. At the Ed School, Professor James Kim's READS Lab partnered with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District in North Carolina to develop the Model of Reading Engagement (MORE), a set of tools focused on improving students' ability to read for understanding in science, social studies, and English.

"The message from our study is that it's not just reading, it's reading complex nonfiction text. That's the reading crisis in America," says Kim. "In order to help kids do that, you need to have all those basic skills, but you really have to build background and vocabulary knowledge. And that's what our program did well."

Kim worked as an adviser with the district before Reach Every

Reader began, but the grant that funded Reach Every Reader allowed for MORE's development and implementation. The MORE program features a "spiral" curriculum about science topics that builds upon itself as students matriculate from first to third grade.

The research showed improvement in third grade reading comprehension as well as math testing, which Kim described as a "really exciting" transfer of skills Reach Every Reader hopes to replicate in other districts during its next phase. The project recently received a federal Education, Innovation, and Research grant that will allow MORE programming to expand into 100 different school districts around the country in the next five years.

Kim described a student's reading ability by third grade as a "very sticky indicator" of a variety of student outcomes, which is often why those metrics garner so much focus.

"If you're not reading proficiently by third grade, you're more likely to drop out of high school, you're less likely to be college and career ready," Kim says. "There are all kinds of downstream consequences of not being ready to read. But you can't solve the problem in third grade, you have to start earlier."

The urgency of the literacy crisis was only amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in the middle of MORE's research phase. That crisis — and the impact the pandemic had on learning loss and schools struggling to help students — presented the team with a choice: continue to provide the intervention to just the treatment group, as

planned, or disrupt the original research focus and offer it to all students in the district. Kim and his team chose to help all students.

"When you have extreme circumstances like the pandemic, you're faced with more extreme choices," says Senior Lecturer **ELIZABETH CITY, ED.M.'04, ED.D.'07**, Reach Every Reader's executive director. "We landed on, 'We're going to serve people, and then we're going to figure out how to serve science from there.'"

City raved about the MORE team's ability to be "nimble" in responding to the pandemic's challenges, a "beautiful example" of the tension that comes with putting research into practice.

"One of the hardest things in academia is to have really rigorous research that actually gets into practice and makes a difference for learners," says City. "We were able to do incredibly rigorous research and also help people in real time. I think Jimmy's team is our very best example of that."

City noted the "enormous amounts of work left to do" in the field, but also working to scale the MORE programming in new school districts is a huge step forward for the project's next phase. She pointed to something a Reach Every Reader colleague from Florida State likes to say about the work as it enters year six.

"Phase one was about the reader, and phase two is about the reach," City recited. "Really trying to understand what's going to work for every reader is phase one. Now let's get the reach." □

"The message from our study is that it's not just reading, it's reading complex nonfiction text. That's the reading crisis in America."

PROFESSOR JAMES KIM



Truth, Be Told

Why one student's work to combat media misinformation is personal

Story by **Ramiro Hernández, Ed.M.'24**



Leaving the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas for undergrad five years ago was, in many ways, one of the most challenging moments of my life. As a first-generation college student, second-generation immigrant, and former ESL student, I had no clue how to navigate the world outside of my border town. It was scary to move somewhere I had never been before, but I couldn't give up the full-ride scholarship I had just gotten at Swarthmore College.

Living thousands of miles away from home, I painfully watched the area I was born and raised in gain national attention. High-ranking politicians were suddenly riled up about a "border crisis," calling for endless amounts of money to fix issues that, in my 19 years of living a 10-minute drive away from México, I had never experienced — and yet somehow these politicians claimed to know my home better than I did, even though many of them had never so much as visited.

As I witnessed my home become politicized for agendas that had nothing to do with my people's best interests, I also began to see many folks from home buy into these politicians' campaigns. It was disheartening to see people that deeply loved and cared for our border town share social media posts that were flat out untrue, but truth seemed not to matter because the effects of these misinformation campaigns were successful regardless. Many of those politicians won their elections based on lies and half-truths.

Seeing all of this happen while not being physically present was

difficult. To know that my people were being systematically deprived of resources and opportunities that would enable them to influence national conversations, to hear others with no connection to our border speak about us, speak for us, that was my driving force, the reason I committed to the work of nurturing my community's own agency and self-actualization.

Since my freshman year of undergrad in 2019, I have worked with 15 plus national nonprofits and community development groups, leading various projects aimed at bettering the conditions of immigrant communities across the country. I've worked with the Biden transition team to increase representation in political appointments; published an international, bilingual reporting project with the Pulitzer Center that focused on deported U.S. immigrant veterans; and advocated on Capitol Hill for federal-state partnerships in increasing access to higher education.

This work is ultimately what led me here, to the Harvard Graduate School of Education and to the Poynter-Google News Initiative Misinformation Student Fellowship program. As a fellow, I spent my first semester of grad school at Harvard simultaneously working with *La Esquina TX*, publishing Spanish pieces on policy and immigration misinformation. Though the fellowship was only a semester long, I remain committed to equity work through my other roles at the Harvard Kennedy School's Bloomberg Center for Cities and the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy. I am currently creat-

“

I think that cynicism is a great resource for the people who want to protect the status quo. And when you think about climate change you cannot protect the status quo.

”

CHELSEA CLINTON, speaking at an Askwith Forum in February focused on climate change and childhood health. Clinton is co-chair of the Clinton Foundation



Ramiro Hernández

ing a portfolio of equity leadership strategies for municipal implementation and researching the effects of nonviolent misdemeanor prosecution on vulnerable populations.

As I get closer to graduation this May, I feel blessed that I get to directly influence and advocate for the needs of my people; but I also know the work is far from over. Though I know I will never have all the answers, I remain grounded in the words tattooed on my body: “Where life is precious, *la vida es preciosa*.” The butterflies inked on my skin, the cactus heart, the Mexican Eagle with bluebonnet flowers around it — my tattoos are reminders that I am the result of the folks

that came before me, of their willingness to cross borders and rivers to create a better life.

That’s my driving force, really. I remain deeply committed to this work, to the work of bettering the social conditions of marginalized and underrepresented communities across the country, because our truths know no borders; they transcend them, just like my folks always have. □

RAMIRO HERNÁNDEZ, ED.M.’24, is in the Education Leadership, Organizations, and Entrepreneurship Program. He was one of 10 Poynter–Google Misinformation fellows working in local newsrooms on projects aimed at curbing the spread of misinformation



The ABCs

6 Students Share Who Inspired them To Be Here This Year

ILLUSTRATION BY HELENA PALLARÉS

A.

Ishita Shailesh Deshmudre, Ed.M.'24

LEARNING DESIGN,
INNOVATION, AND
TECHNOLOGY

ARZU MISTRY, ED.M.'08, my undergraduate mentor, inspired me to be here. Four years of experiencing her inexhaustible wisdom and warm dedication toward my life-long learning showed me that my educational experience had just begun. The more I learned from her, the more questions I had. Finding a guru that you feel deep devotion towards is rare. I set out to find similar inspirational figures at HGSE and I found them not only among faculty, but also peers, enriching my experience beyond expectation.

B.

Megan Palmer, Ed.M.'24

HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT AND
EDUCATION

I wouldn't still be in school without Mandy Farhoodi-Moberger, assistant director of Human Development and Education. She has supported me through my nontraditional time at HGSE. From beginning the 2021 school year with major surgery, to adopting a baby, to taking a yearlong break, to now, navigating more medical complications, Mandy continues to cheer me on, provide resources, and give much-needed pep talks. So here I am, graduating in May 2024 because she helped me navigate Harvard at every turn.

C.

**Hanzhang Zhao,
Ed.M.'24**LEARNING DESIGN,
INNOVATION, AND
TECHNOLOGY

My parents have inspired me to be at HGSE this year. Their support and encouragement have fueled my dedication to the field of education. Through the opportunities they provided, I have understood that transforming education is fundamental to transforming the world. Aligned with HGSE's motto, "Learn to change the world," as a learning designer, I am passionate about leveraging my skills to craft personalized learning tools tailored to the diverse needs of learners, thereby narrowing the gap and advancing educational equity.

D.

**Evetty Satterfield,
Ed.L.D.
candidate**DOCTOR OF
EDUCATION
LEADERSHIP

Rooted in introspection, at 26 years old, I envisioned a future where my academic achievements translated into substantial societal impact. Discovering Harvard's Ed.L.D. Program, I saw a pathway not just to enrich my career but to genuinely influence the world positively. This ambition fueled a decade of purposeful choices, aligning my professional journey with my aspirations. Today, on the verge of becoming Dr. Evetty J. Satterfield, my journey embodies the profound impact of self-inspiration and dedicated ambition.

E.

**Mariama Wurie,
Ed.M.'24**LEARNING DESIGN,
INNOVATION, AND
TECHNOLOGY

I was inspired to come to HGSE by my two sisters, my mom, and my maternal grandmother. They are fierce advocates and organizers for women and girls' access to our rights, education, health-care, livelihoods, excellence, and above all else, fun. They often tell me and show me how to strive for what makes me happy, whilst contributing something positive to the world.

F.

**Marc Claude,
Ed.M.'24**EDUCATION POLICY
AND ANALYSIS

I credit my decision to pursue a graduate degree in education at Harvard this year to my father, Marc Clervil Claude. Coming from a lineage of farmers in Haiti, he left his hometown 40 years ago to become the first teacher in his family. My father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease two years ago in Canada. His amnesia motivated me to honor his legacy through public service and education. I have inherited my dreams from him, as he has passed on to me his love for mentoring. Coming to Harvard is a tribute to the global community of educators my father belonged to.

THE SNAP

In late February, some members of the HGSE Black Student Union posed outside Longfellow Hall wearing their Harvard Kente sweaters.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DANTE LUNA







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**“If you’re in high-poverty urban schools, it’s atrocious,
it’s really devastating. Kids are just not coming to school.”**

**EYAL BERGMAN, ED.M.'14, ED.L.D.'21,
SENIOR VP, LEARNING HEROES (SEE PAGE 6)**