COUNSELORS MAY BE THE MOST OVERLOADED AND UNDERAPPRECIATED EDUCATORS IN SCHOOL. WHY WE NEED THEM MORE THAN EVER.
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“Outnumbered counselors may be the most overloaded and underappreciated educators in school. But we need them now more than ever.” (p. 36)
A big welcome to the incoming class of students. We’d love for you to be part of the “convos” here at Ed. magazine, so let us know what you think of the content and pitch us your story ideas once you’ve had a chance to settle in. For example, do you have an amazing classmate whom we should know about? Are you starting an interesting new student group? Is there an issue in education that you think should be covered in these pages? Reach out at lory.lou@harvard.edu.

It’s nice when it feels like an entire issue of the magazine is well received, but truthfully, there are often certain articles that you want to make sure people don’t miss more than others. From our summer 2019 issue, we were really happy to see that two articles were not only getting comments on Facebook and Twitter, but they were also getting shared between educators working in the field. Our story “Be the Upstander” about the free app that killedbully.Ed.M.17, created to help teachers address microaggressions in the classroom was one of those articles. The story was shared and commented on by educators like a middle school art teacher in Moscow, Idaho, who talked about downloading the app and using it at her school. Another exchange between two educators in Arizona was similar, discussing ways they might incorporate the app in both their middle and high school classes. Similarly, our piece by Katie Bacon, “It’s Not Just a Job, It’s a Profession,” which looked at what it would take to transform our perception of pre-K education in the United States, also had a lot of shares and comments, mostly from teachers. One preschool teacher wrote, “I love this article!” followed by another writing, “Me too. We’re important!” Another teacher pointed out that this line of thinking — elevating the profession — isn’t new, but that until the pay structure changes for teachers, the quality of pre-K education won’t change. A teacher in Boston wrote that she sometimes regrets choosing this as her profession, “but then I remember the positive changes that I am blessed to have affected in other peoples’ lives and am grateful that I am an educator.” She wrote that she keeps going “despite the naysayers, poor pay, and sometimes difficult circumstances.”

In the fall of 1993, the magazine, then called the Alumni Bulletin, devoted its November issue to work being done by faculty, students, and alumni for young people at risk. At the time, the Risk and Prevention Program (now Prevention Science and Practice), developed by Professor Robert Selman, was just starting its second official year but already partnering with programs in dozens of schools, health centers, and human service agencies in the greater Boston area. Included was a collaboration with the Judge Baker Children’s Center at the Ohrenberger School in Boston. There, Ed School students, directed by CAROLINE WATTS, ED.M.’97, ED.D.’03, interned as “pair counselors,” helping young people see through the eyes of others. The story included: “Along a low, brown concrete building, sandwiched in between two middle-class housing developments, fronted by a scrubby playing field and a parking lot, the physical features of the W.H. Ohrenberger Elementary School in West Roxbury belie the energy and personality of the students and staff within it.”

“On a purely superficial level, Ohrenberger seems much farther from the Harvard Graduate School of Education than its 13 geographical miles. A look inside, however, reveals that Harvard Ed School students have become an important part of the Ohrenberger community. As a partner in the Judge Baker/Ohrenberger Partnership Program, HGSE has become an essential link in Ohrenberger’s student support services network for the 600 students enrolled in grades K through 5. “Randy Costanza will tell you that. Last year, Randy took part in pairs counseling, a Partnership Program service offered to fourth and fifth graders who need special support in developing positive, nonviolent peer relationships. A shy boy with an anxious but eager grin, Randy was especially fond of his pair counselor, BILL McINTYRE, ED.M.’93. On his second day at school this year, Randy stuck his head into the Partnership Office to ask, “When does pairs start?”

IT WAS A HEADLINE in Education Week that stayed with me: “1.7 Million Students Attend Schools with Police but No Counselors, New Data Show.” I knew that the caseload for school counselors around the country was high, with many responsible for hundreds of students every day, but I had no idea that some schools didn’t have any counselors at all. This seemed unbelievable. This horrible news came at about the same time that Senior Lecturer Mandy Savitz-Romer was finishing her latest book about counselors, Fulfilling the Promise. In the book, Savitz-Romer, director of the Prevention Science and Practice Program, acknowledges that the ratios aren’t nearly what they should be, but she also added that just solving the numbers problem wasn’t enough — the whole field of school counseling needs to be reimagined. This issue’s cover story on school counselors tries to look at all of the ways counselors are outnumbered: big caseloads, increased student needs, being tasked with non-counselor duties, and not knowing how to advocate for themselves or the profession.
Follow the Dark Horse

A LOOK AT THOSE WHO BLAZE THEIR OWN TRAILS AND HOW THIS NEEDS TO APPLY TO STUDENTS

STORY BY LORY HOUGH

When Lecturer Todd Rose, Ed.M.’01, Ed.D.’07, cofounder of Populace and the Laboratory for the Science of Individuality, was struggling in school as a teen, his father gave him advice that had a big impact on him then: Find out what motivates you and stay close to that.

This advice came into play again, more recently, when Rose set out to write a book that looks at people who achieved success despite not following the “standard formula” for doing well. A fast-food worker who taught herself about galaxies and stars and became a noted astronomer. A bar owner who pivoted midcareer and became a successful tailor. What Rose found is that these dark horses, the winners no one saw coming, became successful by doing exactly what Rose’s dad suggested — they found their motivation and then did something with it on their own terms.

What he also discovered interviewing a range of people for Dark Horse is that there isn’t one defining character trait all dark horses share, like a desire to be a rebel. Instead, he found one common thread: Dark horses are fulfilled.

How does this translate to students? Unfortunately, Rose says, “we spend a lot of time telling children what they should care about and very little time helping them discover that for themselves. That has to change if we are serious about helping our children live meaningful and fulfilling lives.”

Rose says that too often, schools — even schools that have moved toward a personalized approach to learning — still make the mistake of framing the value of personalization as more of the same definition of “succeeding.”
H
ow often have we heard someone say, “She’s a fast learner,” implying with their statement that faster means smarter? After studying how the brain learns, ANITA ROHANI ET AL. had a feeling that this assumption, which is built into our cultural understanding, just wasn’t right. So they tested it out on a group of ninth graders for her dissertation. Rouhani, vice president and cofounder with her husband, Ali, of Hex Learning, recently spoke to Ed about her findings, the myth of the average. The myth is that faster students will be consistently faster throughout the semester or across different subject matters. The answer is no.

Why is this assumption problematic? Describing someone as a “fast learner” or “quick to get it” is intended to suggest that the person is smart, because we have bought into this idea that speed tells us something about ability. What my study reveals is that the assumptions that we perpetuate in our language, and have built into our standardized educational systems, are not actually true. By leaving these assumptions in place, we are artificially constraining students. We are creating barriers to learning, and perpetuating the belief that not all students are capable.

Is this thinking common? This assumption is so commonplace that in order to get more time on exams you need to be identified as having some kind of “learning disability,” which implicitly suggests you are deficient or less capable than other students. If we believed that all students are capable, why would we place hard time cutoffs when it comes to learning and require labels to give extended time if speed doesn’t matter, what does it? My analysis showed that time wasn’t the predictor — mastery was. When students are allowed to master material, they perform better in the course. That seems obvious, almost too obvious to need a study to tell us this, but if it’s so obvious that mastery is key, then why aren’t all of our schools adopting models of mastery learning? Why haven’t we done away with rigid fixed-pace instructional environments?

What’s the connection to the myth of the average? This research was actually born from thinking about the myth of the average. The myth of aver-
age highlights that individuals are jagged, meaning they have multiple dimensions that cannot be reduced to a single score or number and that they change over space and time. This incredible human variation is natural and normal and is very important. And yet the way that we have standardized education assumes that slow students are inherently less capable, and giving an average amount of time for the average student to learn is sufficient — the smart students won’t need all the time, most students will be fine with the amount of time they are given, and slow students are deficient learners so they need to be labeled as “learning disabled” in order to get more time. If we believe that speed and ability are not coupled — that slower students are just as capable as faster students — we wouldn’t use time limits to determine ability in schools or on exams like the SAT or ACT. In fact, the way we use time in schools would look dramatically different.

“The way we use time in schools would look dramatically different.” – Lory Hough

No Need for Speed

STUDY SHOWS THAT FASTER ISN’T NECESSARILY BETTER WHEN IT COMES TO LEARNING

STORY BY LORY HOUGH

Illustration by Brilley Reifnyder

Professor JAL MEHTA and SARAH FINE, Ed.M.’13, Ed.D.’17, authors of IT COMES TO LEARNING, ISN’T NECESSARILY BETTER WHEN STUDY SHOWS THAT FASTER, point out that students who progressed through the course more quickly did not perform better, nor did the students who took longer. There was no meaningful relationship between time and performance. Some students who did well in the course took a long time while others did not. Also, students who did well in the course the took a long time while others did not. Also, students who did well in the course.
METCO, Evaluated

GRAD CONDUCTS FIRST FORMAL STUDY OF 50-YEAR-OLD SCHOOL INTEGRATION PROGRAM

I
n 1966, Boston-area parents and school administrators joined together to launch a busing program to help desegregate schools by bringing students of color from Boston’s predominantly black and Latinx neighborhoods to schools in white suburban communities.

Since then, the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, or METCO as it is better known, has been one of the longest continuously running voluntary school integration programs in the country, growing from a few hundred students in its first decade to more than 3,000 annually today.

It has long been touted as a success story, but in more than 50 years, the program had never been formally evaluated.

When Ann Mantil, Ed.M.’10, Ed.D.’18, arrived in Boston, she had never heard of METCO. But after teaching in predominantly African American and Latinx elementary and middle schools in Oakland, California, and Washington, D.C., she became interested in public school diversity and the relationship between school composition and student outcomes. Coming to the Ed School, she was looking to acquire the tools to evaluate interventions designed to close achievement gaps and then communicate those results back to practitioners. She was surprised to learn that METCO had served thousands of students without ever being formally evaluated.

She knew this was her project.

With the help of Professor Richard Murnane, Mantil secured permission to access METCO records from 1998 through 2013, including 118,000 state standardized test scores from 36,780 students in METCO and Boston Public Schools (BPS).

“The short-term outcomes I analyzed were MCAS math and English language arts scores in grades 3–8,” Mantil says. “I also looked at longer-term outcomes including on-time high school graduation and immediate enrollment in college.”

She found that METCO students have much better on-time high school graduation and college enrollment rates than students of similar demographics in Boston’s public schools, including charters. METCO students had a four-year graduation rate 30 percentage points higher than their BPS and charter school peers. The college enrollment rate of METCO students was also 30 percentage points higher than BPS students and 11 percentage points higher than charter school students.

The evidence of the program’s impact on MCAS scores, however, was mixed. METCO students performed higher on average than their BPS peers in English language arts and writing, but not in math, and charter schools outperformed METCO students in all three subjects.

Overall, the report paints a picture of a program that is worth the sacrifice for students, who often endure long commutes to attend schools far from home and are sometimes the only students of color in their new schools.

Since completing the study, Mantil has conducted briefings for state leaders, the METCO board of directors, and METCO superintendents and district directors. The Boston Globe published a front-page article about the results. She also found that during the years analyzed, METCO lacked a clearly defined student selection process, relying mostly on first-come, first-served. Thanks in part to her research, the program is starting to shift to an online application and a random lottery.

Now a postdoctoral research associate at Brown University, Mantil continues to study integration and school diversity.

“Voluntary integration programs like METCO, although rare, are one way to do this. There is more work to do in estimating the causal impacts of these programs, but I view the results of my study as encouraging.”

ANDREW BAULD IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO ED.
S T U D E N T S are filing into your classroom and you hear them talking about a musician they all know. One is singing the chorus to the singer’s newest hit, and you realize you not only don’t know the song, but you have absolutely no idea who the singer is. JAY LEBER, ED.M.’99, digital producer for The Current, a music show on Minnesota Public Radio, shares five tips for educators interested in staying in tune with their students’ musical tastes.

> Read the news. “Even with everything else going on these days, the best mainstream national news sources are still finding room for insightful music coverage. Music publications like Pitchfork and Rolling Stone also offer plenty of food for thought and can help you separate a forgettable fad from a meaningful trend. Many also offer podcasts if your ears have more time than your eyes.”

> You don’t have to wear a flower crown to go to a music festival. “Festivals are a great way to hear what people are getting excited about, and they’re low risk: On a large lineup there’s likely to be something you enjoy. Increasingly, the biggest festivals are making live video part of the package, so you can even attend vicariously.”

> Keep an open mind. “Your students don’t like everything, and you don’t have to either! Just give their music a chance, and tell them what you think. It is important to keep in mind that you might have to relax any strict rules around language — not necessarily in the classroom but with respect to your own ears. Ideas about what kinds of words and expressions are appropriate evolve over time. Give your students’ music a fair chance, and share your honest opinion. After all, open exchange is what learning is all about, and what music is all about, too.”

> Keep cool steps to:

1. **Keep Up with Your Students’ Music**

   - Ask them. “When it’s appropriate, let your students pick the playlists for classroom listening. Try incorporating music into coursework: Ask your students to write about their favorite songs as an essay topic, or examine the lyrics as poetry. Strike up a conversation by asking your students what they’re listening to, and check it out later. Maybe they’ll even turn the tables and ask what you’re into.”

   - Find a cool radio station. “Radio is still an unbeatable source for carefully programmed music with commentary by knowledgeable hosts who can make the tracks more accessible than an algorithmic stream. Local stations are great, but remember you’re not confined to your dial. Virtually every station has an online stream, and many have their own apps. Also, every major streaming service has curated playlists and ‘radio’ functions that let you dive deeper on genres and artists that pique your interest.”

   - Read the news. “Even with everything else going on these days, the best mainstream national news sources are still finding room for insightful music coverage. Music publications like Pitchfork and Rolling Stone also offer plenty of food for thought and can help you separate a forgettable fad from a meaningful trend. Many also offer podcasts if your ears have more time than your eyes.”

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   - Keep an open mind. “Your students don’t like everything, and you don’t have to either! Just give their music a chance, and tell them what you think. It is important to keep in mind that you might have to relax any strict rules around language — not necessarily in the classroom but with respect to your own ears. Ideas about what kinds of words and expressions are appropriate evolve over time. Give your students’ music a fair chance, and share your honest opinion. After all, open exchange is what learning is all about, and what music is all about, too.”

> Coach Marty West, or just Coach as he’s called, jokes that when he and his family moved in 2014 back to Massachusetts from Washington, D.C., where he was on leave from HGSE working for Senator Lamar Alexander, he was tricked into coaching his older son Quinn’s Little League baseball team. “Quinn had played in D.C. but, because he was new to this league, was assigned to a team well below his ability level,” says West, a professor and self-professed Yankees fan. When he requested that Quinn be moved up, the commissioner said yes, but if — and only if — West agreed to coach. “I’ve since learned this is a common strategy to get more parents involved. I’m of course glad that it worked.”

   This year, West is also coaching his younger son Sam’s team, the Giants. The hardest part of the job, he says, is staying organized. “There’s a lot to keep track of: scheduling and reserving fields for practices, getting the gear to and from the field, making lineups, tracking the weather for cancellations, reporting scores.” Easily the best part of the job “is getting to know the players individually, working with them to identify specific goals for improvement, and seeing and celebrating their progress.”

   But what’s his secret to running a practice that doesn’t leave kids, especially the younger ones, feeling bored? “Easy. West says. “Make sure that they don’t spend too much time standing around.”
Got Data? HOW PARTNERSHIPS MAKE IT EASIER FOR DDC STUDENTS TO GET MUCH-NEEDED DATA FOR RESEARCH

STORY BY LORY HOUGH

O f the hallmarks of student research, especially for doctoral students, is having good data to back up findings. But getting your hands on that data, especially when it involves asking — sometimes begging — an already overworked state agency or school district to help out, can be difficult.

Students like Ph.D. candidate KIRSTEN SLUNGAARD MUMMA, ED.M., have seen this up close. Before I was a graduate student, I worked in the central offices of a charter school network in Chicago Public Schools,” she says. “I understand firsthand what we each need in order to succeed.”

“I fully recognize that one person and one entity will never have all of the answers, and the most effective way to translate education is to deeply engage all stakeholders. My goal is to understand the needs of my aunts, uncles, adult cousins, teen cousins, and baby cousins. We need to understand what we each need in order to help one another. We need to understand the implications of decisions on one another and for the collective good.”

“My summer placement has helped me fulfill the responsibilities of researchers, paving the way to partnerships. These experiences have given me the opportunity to learn how to cultivate and fulfill the responsibilities of research partnerships, and I hope they will make me a much better research partner going forward in my career.”

Jocelyn Rodriguez, Ed.L.D.

The spreadsheet that Ed.L.D. student Jocelyn Rodriguez opens on her laptop in Gutenkunst Cafe is impressive, but not because it contains data that will help her as she starts her second year in the doctoral program. It’s impressive because it includes information that’s even more important: the birthdays, anniversaries, phone numbers, and email addresses for 156 aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, siblings, and grandparents.

“My family,” she says, “is my greatest driving force. For most of her life growing up, family was also the core of her community, especially when seven family members resided with one another. The way I see the education sector is a family reunion with at least 150 people. Every other November they hold a family reunion with at least 150 people. ‘Our grandparents were incredibly invested in bringing us all together,’ she says. ‘There’s a huge sense of responsibility for one another and for the collective good.’ The way I think found its way into her work, most recently as director for the Early Childhood Institute at the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, Inc., in New York. ‘I consider myself a consumer of insights of people,’ she says. ‘I fully recognize that one person and one entity will never have all of the answers, and the most effective way to translate education is to deeply engage all stakeholders. My goal is to understand the needs of my aunts, uncles, adult cousins, teen cousins, and baby cousins. We need to understand what we each need in order to help one another. We need to understand the implications of decisions on one another and for the collective good.’”

“My summer placement has helped me fulfill the responsibilities of researchers, paving the way to partnerships. These experiences have given me more confidence pursuing new research partnerships, and I hope they will make me a much better research partner going forward in my career.”

Rodriguez by Water-short
When it comes to educating parents about parenting and child development, the perspectives of early childhood educators and parents are crucial. However, studies show that many parents already know about the importance of early education. In one study, the percentage of parents who were aware of the value of early education was impressive. The study also found that many parents felt that they needed more information about early education. However, another study showed that many parents were not aware of the value of early education. This suggests that there is a need for more effective communication about the importance of early education. The study also found that many parents felt that they were not given enough information about early education. This suggests that there is a need for more effective communication about the importance of early education. The study also found that many parents felt that they were not given enough information about early education. This suggests that there is a need for more effective communication about the importance of early education.
Born and raised in California, Christina Vil-
larreal, Ed.M.’05, ended up exactly where she
one day imagined she’d be: working in schools as a teacher (in middle
school and high school), principal, and then pro-
fessor. Villarreal spoke to Ed. about her warrior
mother, the joy of teach-
ing middle schoolers, and why she’s known as
V or Dr. V or V your students?
I’ve been blessed with a number of beloved nicknames growing up. In middle school, my friends called me Shortcake (yes, spelled with a skeleton shaped by my lived
experience as young, mixed-race woman). In high school my friends called me Tina-
shortcake (yes, spelled with 10 options for next steps. They
had been using the udl frame-
work in her schools when she was 11th grade history teacher,
my 11th grade history teacher,
who decided you’d be called V or Dr. V or V your students?
What childhood memory has
had a lasting impact on you as an adult?
I carry the painful and important memory of losing my mother
to cancer at a very young age. She
had been diagnosed with lung
cancer at a very young age. The
doctors told her she had very little time to live and that she should just
focus on trying to “enjoy” her life. I remem-
ber her refusing this advice and saying, “How can I enjoy my life
when I am living behind my husband and kids?” So she fought. Hard. She made a choice.
Rather than spending her last few months on a beachside, she underwent extreme chemotherapy in New
York. She then agreed to an experi-
ment in Japan, which actually started to work for a few treatments. …The day after my
father’s 11th birthday, we flew to Japan
for Dr. V” here as a way to honor them and
the stories are not established overnight.
It’s also why, since being di-
agnosed with the learning dis-
order in high school, years after
struggling to read and write and
stay on top of her homework, Bry-
non has come to understand the
importance of providing all stu-
dents with multiple ways to learn
and express what they know. It’s
why she started using the Uni-
versal Design for Learning (udl)
approach with her special educa-
tion students after struggling,
on her own, to create it unique
lessons. And it’s ultimately why,
after transitioning from math to
writing, she decided to go with
Lory Hough
Liz Byron and some of her former students in the Boston Public School system where she taught math and art and helped them raise money for laptops.
ON MY BOOKSHELF

Kaia Stern, lecturer on education and co-founder and director of the Prison Studies Project

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY READING?

Dietrich Brubacher’s Letters and Papers from Prison.

FAVORITE BOOK YOU’RE CURRENTLY TALKING ABOUT?

An interest in truth telling, faith, and religion

FAVORITE PLACE TO CURL UP WITH A GOOD BOOK?

In a patch of sunlight.

WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE BOOK TO ASSIGN TO CURRENT STUDENTS AND WHY?

Words because it inspires us to think about transformation in new ways.

MOST PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO HEAR YOU’VE NEVER READ...

Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Culture. "There is as much reason for excitement as caution as we turn our attention to the specific changes in the evolving reading brain that are happening now and may happen in the next few short years," she writes.

THE ALLIANCE WAY

Tina Owen-Moore

She opened the first school with a curriculum of being completely bully-free. When that first school was closed, she founded the Alliance School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, having been bullied herself but also being more than that. "Almost everyone has a story about a time when they were bullied and didn’t want to go to school," she writes. In The Alliance Way: The Making of A Bully-Free School. The book is both a guide for educators and others who care about creating safe schools and a case study of how all schools can be accepting, inclusive, and academically challenging. "What we do at Alliance," she writes, "can be done anywhere."

Listen to Owen-Moore on the Harvard EdCast: gse.harvard.edu/edcast

THE LOST EDUCATION OF HORACE TATE

Vanessa Siddle Walker

In this nearly 500-page nonfiction book, National and Emory University Professor & former NAACP leader Horace Tate tells the story of a network of heroic black educators in the South who helped lay the groundwork for Brown v. Board of Education and the civil rights movement, including providing the money, the data, and the plaintiffs for the famous case. In writing her book, Siddle Walker says, "My hope is that this account assists a new generation to see what it might otherwise have missed."

Listen to Siddle Walker on the Harvard EdCast: gse.harvard.edu/edcast
OUTNUMBERED

They have unbearable caseloads. They’re often asked to monitor hallways and fill in when a teacher calls in sick. They are usually the first to go during budget cuts. What is it going to take for us to reimagine the pivotal role of school counselors in the lives of students?

STORY BY JULIA HANNA ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN STAUFFER
When Russia launched Sputnik in 1957, the unmanned satellite struck a cold chord of fear in the U.S. government and the country at large.

Public schools — the training grounds for those who would build an answer to Russia’s first salvo in the space race — were suddenly a sound strat- egic investment to safeguard the nation’s strength and security. The following year, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the National Defense Educa- tion Act into law, funneling millions of dollars of government funds into scholarships and programs to encourage the study of science, mathematics, and foreign languages.

Included in those provisions was expanded funding for counselors, a profession with roots dat- ing back to the turn of the 20th century that initial- ly focused on vocational guidance before evolving back to the turn of the 20th century that initially focused on vocational guidance before evolving and problem solve. So perhaps it comes as no surprise that coun- selors. And counselor caseloads can be impossibly high, exceed- ing the recommended number by hundreds of students. Only three states — Ver- mont, New Hampshire, and Montana — currently meet the ratio of 250 students per counselor sug- gested by the American School Counselors Associ- ation (ASCA), with the national average standing at 457-to-1. (Arizona is currently the highest, at 907- to-1.) Finally, school leadership doesn’t always un- derstand the fundamental role counselors can play in the life of a school and its students, instead over-loading them with test proctoring, hall monitoring, and a host of administrative duties, all of which eat away at precious time with students. Counselors have pushed through and adapted to this reality — the way they do — making the most of available time and resources to meet students’ needs. But the situation is far from ideal. “We’ve put counselors in an impossible position,” Savitz- Romer says. “These are people who love students, they care about education, they’re warriors for so- cial justice. Their aim is to be the academic conscience of the school, and yet the structures aren’t always there for them to fulfill that goal.”

The National Defense Education Act, which President Dwight Eisenhower (left) signed into law on September 2, 1958, stated that “the Congress hereby finds and declares that the security of the Nation requires the fullest de- velopment of the mental resources and technical skills of its young men and women.”

The drumbeat to reassess how to strategically deploy these trained professionals is growing loud- er, however, as leadership at the state and national levels tunes into the cost-saving, data-driven differ- ence counselors can make in the lives of students across the country. It has the potential to be anoth- er Sputnik moment of evolution for the profession, but it may require counselors to take on yet another task, this one completely unfamiliar — that of advokating for themselves.

Tucked into a residential street of Boston’s Hyde Park neighborhood, New Mission High School is home to 460 students in grades 7–12. Some students are taking AP exams and state standardized tests this morning, so Valduvino Gonçalves has already made the rounds to ensure all is going smoothly. After a two-year internship at New Mission as a graduate student,
he’s been at the school for five years, working with one other counselor who focuses exclusively on shepherding juniors and seniors through the college application process. Now, settled into his office with guidance director KELLY JONES KYLLER, ED.M’07, C.A.S.’14, he tells us on how his role has grown to encompass an increasing number of administrative tasks. Because this is his first job out of graduate school, he’s glad for the experience and increasing responsibility. Yet it’s a little ironic that he’s doing very little face-to-face counseling, he says: “I feel like much more of a coordinator. I could easily sit here all day and say, ‘Take a ticket.’

The school is fortunate to have partnerships with local nonprofits that provide support to students—from financial aid advising to summer internships. But someone has to see the counselor. And Gonçalves is it. In fact, he has a student support team meeting scheduled with representatives from various organizations in another hour, right after he meets with a parent whose son’s grades, he says: “I can meet with a student all year, and it won’t be until the following school year that an observable improvement is seen.”

What we have right now is a system with a narrow perspective on what it means to educate students,” she says. “We’re hammering the same nail harder, instead of considering how to open up our approach in a way that fully supports all people. The shortage of counselors is a symptom of that issue.”

“In general, the work that counselors do is not well understood,” says CLAUDIA MARTINEZ, ED.M.’13, C.A.S.’14, a counselor at Boston Latin Academy with a caseload of 280 seventh graders. That’s especially true of the social-emotional domain. “If a student fails or passes, that’s very tangible. But the magic of the conversations, of making someone feel seen, cared for, and valued, is harder to put into concrete terms.” And it takes time, she adds: “I can meet with a student all year, and it won’t be until the following school year that an observable improvement is seen.”

He’s been at the school for five years, working with one other counselor who focuses exclusively on shepherding juniors and seniors through the college application process. Now, settled into his office with guidance director KELLY JONES KYLLER, ED.M’07, C.A.S.’14, he tells us on how his role has grown to encompass an increasing number of administrative tasks. Because this is his first job out of graduate school, he’s glad for the experience and increasing responsibility. Yet it’s a little ironic that he’s doing very little face-to-face counseling, he says: “I feel like much more of a coordinator. I could easily sit here all day and say, ‘Take a ticket.’

The school is fortunate to have partnerships with local nonprofits that provide support to students—from financial aid advising to summer internships. But someone has to see the counselor. And Gonçalves is it. In fact, he has a student support team meeting scheduled with representatives from various organizations in another hour, right after he meets with a parent whose son’s grades, he says: “I can meet with a student all year, and it won’t be until the following school year that an observable improvement is seen.”

What we have right now is a system with a narrow perspective on what it means to educate students. We’re hammering the same nail harder, instead of considering how to open up our approach in a way that fully supports all people.

**“WHAT WE HAVE RIGHT NOW IS A SYSTEM WITH A NARROW PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT IT MEANS TO EDUCATE STUDENTS. WE’RE HAMMERING THE SAME NAIL HARDER, INSTEAD OF CONSIDERING HOW TO OPEN OUR APPROACH IN A WAY THAT FULLY SUPPORTS ALL PEOPLE.”**

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS (BELOW)
about 200 seniors she’s looped with since their freshman year, a low caseload that puts her in a coveted minority. Number aside, Wood also mentions the support of a blanket Haviland, the district’s director of counseling support services, as a significant factor in her job satisfaction and effectiveness.

As cited in Savitz-Romer’s Fulfilling the Promise, Haviland sees her job as “getting anything out of counselors’ way that would prevent them from being successful with students” while providing support in the form of advocacy, collaboration, curriculum development, grant writing, and data-driven practices. Those supports come with expectations, but Wood says she is also given freedom to shape her work to the needs of her students, whether that means leading a boys’ leadership group coupled with one of the school’s campus safety officers or collaborating with the school’s social worker on a lunch-time grief group.

“My work is in alignment with the ASCA framework of academic, social-emotional, and postsecondary,” Wood says, “yet each of those domains is so huge — how you support a student academically could be a full-time job in itself. One of the challenges is thinking strategically about counselor capacity and how to build programming and supports with the needs of the school.”

That’s certainly true for Suja Chung, Ed.M’12, CaS’15, the only credentialed school counselor serving a student population of 5,000 students at Huntington Beach High School in Huntington Beach, California. (Chung does work alongside a team member who oversees the school’s college and career center.) She has an annual touchpoint with each student, where she introduces herself and familiarizes students with requirements for graduation and college readiness, as well as postsecondary options and school resources; beyond that, Chung relies on data to determine which students to prioritize. “Now that I’m in my second year here, I’ve seen how it can work and where I have a more limited ability to check in regularly with students.

That love comes through again and again in talking to other counselors, like Lauren Alexander, Ed.M.’14, CaS’15, who says she is drawn to the “moody” quality of her 135 students in grades 6 to 8 at Bayside Academy in San Mateo, California, just outside of San Francisco.

“Students at this age have two halves,” she reflects. “In some ways they’re like little kids, but they’re also at this interesting point of figuring out who they are and who they want to be.” Sometimes, she continues, they just want to talk and ask random questions (for example: “Will I have acne forever?”). The openness of those moments might not happen as easily if she was seen as a disciplinarian, Alexander adds, which is why she appreciates her administrative team’s effort to keep her out of that role as much as possible. And Alexander supports them in turn: “I try to be seen by staff, not stay hidden in my office,” she says. “It’s easy to be seen as just for students. You want to be a collaborator and consultant for your teachers.

Those connections are an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to creating needed awareness.

“THEIR AIM IS TO BE THE ACADEMIC CONSCIENCE OF THE SCHOOL, AND YET THE STRUCTURES AREN’T ALWAYS THERE FOR THEM TO FULFILL THAT GOAL.”

Mandy Savitz-Romer (below)

support for counselors, Savitz-Romer says. “If you’re a teacher, and you don’t know what counselors do, it appears that much of the work is done with students one on one behind closed doors,” she says. “In that case, a teacher wouldn’t know to call on a counselor to say, ‘Would you mind observing this particular student in class? Because I’m really struggling with him or her.’ My commitment is to training counselors to do their work effectively, but also to training the people who work with them.” High caseload numbers are often cited as one of the biggest roadblocks to counselor reform, she notes, and they do play a clear role. But it’s really the structures around counselors that can be the biggest lever for change.

Those structures include administrative support at the school, district, and state levels that frees up counselors from testing and other administrative tasks to do the work they’ve been trained to do, as well as relevant professional development opportunities and performance assessments tailored to counselors, not just teachers. One encouraging trend can be seen in the increasing number of states that have passed legislation mandating that counselors spend at least part of their time with students and no more than 20 percent on administrative tasks. But there’s still much to be done. In more than half of U.S. states, counseling isn’t even mandated or is mandated only at the high school level; licensing requirements differ from state to state; and only some have effective office of school counseling, which can make it difficult to roll out statewide policies that a counselor impact Duarte demonstrated on the district benefit even one counselor can provide ultimately makes a difference.

“Creating systemic change will require counselors to play against type. “We’re not born tottoos,” Duarte says. Yet her experience in California as a grant project director shows how effective document- ing and advocacy can be in obtaining increased funding. In a presentation to her district’s superintendent, Duarte outlined the number of suicide assessments, bullying reports, and child services reports she completed in the last 21 days while working at her school as the sole counselor for 900 seventh and eighth graders. Much like Martínez, she could call on a school-based crisis team that has significant reductions in students who were failing classes through a series of relatively simple interventions. Her advocacy increased the number of counselors working in her 11-school district from two to seven — although the additions were not re-funded after she left. “I was so frustrated and upset,” Duarte says. “Then, after a year of increased absences and suspensions, they did reinforce the counselor’s.” Presenting data and building a case for the benefit even one counselor can provide ultimately made a difference.

Colorado’s School Counselor Corps Grant Program offers a statewide case for the kind of counselor impact Duarte demonstrated on the district level. Signed into law in 2008, its purpose is simple — to increase the availability of effective counseling in diverse, economically marginalized middle schools and high schools through four-year grant cycles, with the goal of increasing graduation rates as well as the percentage of students who continue to postsecondary education. Updated and renewed in 2016, the program has been awarded a $16 million grant to support 79 schools in the 2010-2015 cohort kept nearly 3,000 at-risk students in school and helped many more students go on to college.

As reported in 2016 by Colorado’s Department of Education, that means every $1 invested resulted in a $2 to $4 savings to taxpayers when the potential costs in lost income taxes and increased spending on social services typically associated with a high school dropout were considered.

“That’s the craziest return on investment, even,” Savitz-Romer says. “Why would anyone not do it?” Colorado’s program has received national coverage in the press, and there are other signs — maybe not Spartak-like in their drama and size, but promising nonetheless — that the counselor role is slowly getting the attention and funding it so urgently needs.

In the second term of Barack Obama’s adminis- tration, former First Lady Michelle Obama’s Reach Higher Initiative centered on encouraging more students to focus on postsecondary educa- tion and highlighted the part counselors play in helping students realize that goal. In her final public remarks as first lady, Obama tearfully addressed a roomful of school counselors. “You see the promise in each of your students,” she said. “You believe in them, even when they can’t believe in themselves, and you work tirelessly to help them be who they were truly meant to be.”

That self-knowledge is fundamental to all other learning, too, with direct ties to success by any measurable standard.

“If students don’t have someone they can talk to about existential, identity-focused issues during the time they’re developing and changing the most, how can you expect them to learn geometry?” asks Alexander. “How can you expect them to learn to write a five-paragraph essay if all they can think of is, ‘I’m gay and I can’t tell my mom?’ It’s hard to learn any of this if you don’t feel you’re put together as a person. Counselors are people whose specific job it is to help you learn how to be a person.”
A CLASSIC PROBLEM: THE PUSH TO MODERNIZE READING LISTS IS CHALLENGING TRADITIONAL DEFINITIONS OF LITERATURE. SURPRISE: NOT EVERYONE IS HAPPY ABOUT IT.

STORY BY JILL ANDERSON
ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID COWLES & ALISON COTÉ
Fall 2019

books that many believe all high school students should be studying. The problem is that what was once defined as “common” — middle class, white, cisgender people — is no longer the reality in our country. Unfortunately, Mason says, “making a case for new literature by different authors of color, authors who are not cisgendered, or even just female authors” is a challenge.

LIZ PHIPPS SOEIRO, ED.M.’19, an elementary school librarian in Cambridge, realized the canon’s power after returning to the White House 10 Dr. Seuss books donated by First Lady Melania Trump in 2017. In a now viral blog post explaining her reasons, she wrote about disappearing school libraries, policies that work against underprivileged communities, and how although considered a classic, Dr. Seuss was “steeped in racism and harmful stereotypes.” People responded harshly through personal attacks and threats on Soeiro and her family.

“It’s more complex than ‘I want to throw Dr. Seuss away,’” she says, disputing the charge that she hates Dr. Seuss. While attending a children’s book conference 10 years ago, she saw no diverse books being highlighted and asked the book vendor why, only for the question to be dismissed. It forced Soeiro to think more deeply about inequities, realizing that books — even the most beloved — are part of systemic issues. “Knowing the history of this country and the history of our educational system really puts into sharp focus just how urgent it is to have representation in our books, stories, narratives, and media that we share with children,” she says.

Literacy experts have long called for more representation in children’s literature. In 1965, literacy champion Nancy Larrick’s Saturday Review article, “The All-White World of Children’s Books,” noted how millions of children of color were learning from books that completely omitted them.

Then, nearly 25 years later, children’s literary expert Rudine Sims Bishop reiterated children’s need for mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors in books to “understand each other better” and “change our attitudes toward difference.” As she wrote in the 1990 publication Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom, “When there are enough books available that can act as both mirrors and windows for all our children, they will see that we can celebrate both our difference and our similarities, because together they are what makes us all human.”

Yet, in the past 24 years, multicultural context, according to book publisher Lee & Low, represents only 15% of children’s literature. Despite national movements like We Need Diverse Books and DisruptTexts, and despite a growing number of diverse books, only 7% are written by people of color.

With every new book English teacher JABARI SEL- LARIS, ED.M.’17, introduced to his eighth graders, Shawn had something to say: “This is lame.” “This is wrong.” “Are you serious?” At first Sellars dismissed the reaction as 13-year-old Shawn just not liking to read.

After all, the book selection for Sellars’ Washington, D.C., class resembled the lists used in a lot of American schools. The Iliad. Romeo & Juliet. The Book Thief. Lord of the Flies. So when Shawn suggested alternative titles — demonstrating how well-read and interested he truly was — Sellars realized he had a different problem: All we’re reading are books about white people.

In a quick attempt to offer something different, Sellars turned to another genre rarely used in schools — a comic book — only to fail again when students identified in the Astonishing X-Men another white male protagonist. Having grown up cherishing the classics, like many English teachers, Sellars hadn’t strayed too far from the influential and often very “white” literary canon — the books and texts considered to be the most important.

It’s been more than 50 years since literacy experts first stressed the need for more diverse books in the classroom, and yet reading lists look surprisingly the same as they did in 1970.

“People teach what they’re comfortable with, so the choices become this narrow realm of what you like and what you’re familiar with,” says Senior Lecturer PAMELA MASON, M.A.T.’70, ED.D.’75, who directs the Ed School’s Language and Literacy Program. Moving away from the classics toward more diverse books can stretch “people’s imaginations and pedagogy,” she says, but it can also reveal how educators aren’t equipped for that change.

The canon has long been revered in public education as representing the “depth and breadth of our national common experience,” Mason says, the books that many believe all high school students should be studying. The problem is that what was once defined as “common” — middle class, white, cisgender people — is no longer the reality in our country. Unfortunately, Mason says, “making a case for new literature by different authors of color, authors who are not cisgendered, or even just female authors” is a challenge.

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Reloading the Canon

Looking for new books to offer your students that might offer other perspectives? Us too. So we asked PAMELA MASON, M.A.T.'70, ED.D.'75 ( ), senior lecturer and director of the Ed School’s Language and Literacy Program (along with librarian Adrienne Almeida) and JABARI SELLARS, ED.M.'17 ( ), middle school English teacher in Washington, D.C., for some new ideas. Here’s what they recommended:

iverse authors), who gets awarded (mostly white au-
tural, and religious minorities. But even as teachers

In a diverse classroom, it can be hard to make a case for change.

The Namesake (Jhumpa Lahiri). Still, she knows

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Considering that the American student population is now 50% nonwhite, the need for that mirror — or opportunities for children to see themselves and navigate a more diverse world — seems more pressing. Much like Sellars’ students, children notice the lack of representation surrounding them. English teachers interviewed for this story, particularly at middle and high school levels, described how students complain about representation, cultural relevance, and boredom in text. Those complaints, especially boredom, signal to Mason a greater need for variety in the classroom.

The solution seems obvious: Add more books that represent C纹理的 issues, gender diversity, people of color, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities. But even as teachers speak out about the need to diversify the curriculum, there can be roadblocks to making it happen. For example, there’s a diversity gap in the book publish-
ing industry regarding who gets published (mostly white authors), who gets awarded (mostly white au-
rs), and which books make it onto school vendor booklists (mostly white creators). Add in the fact

Even when teachers have the support of school ad-

ingers, funding, and autonomy over book se-
lection, they still might feel lost.

“Some teachers might think, ‘I want to diversify the literature,’ but don’t know what to do with it,” says Lecturer WER JACOBS, L.A.E.M. ’86, ED.D. ’99, a former

English teacher who retired this summer as direc-
tor of the Ed School’s Teacher Education Program.

“They need to understand the multiple contexts —
cluding background knowledge and lived experi-
ences — that both they and their students bring to
their reading and interpretations of those texts.”

This lack of understanding could explain why an elementary teacher of color from Virginia who attended a literature institute last year at the Ed School reported that she had discovered that other teachers in the school, who were predominantly white, weren’t using the more representative books she pushed for in the school library.

“It’s a mistake to think having the books gives people the tools to teach the books,” Dobbs says. In her role training teachers, she sees that many want to have conversations about diverse books but don’t know how. “We don’t have evidence that teachers can close that gap independently.”

Mason noticed similar apprehensions among educators, prompting her to create two profession-
al learning experiences — an online module called Culturally Responsive Literature Instruction and its companion workshop on campus, Advancing Culturally Responsive Literature. Both programs, offered through the Ed School’s Professional Education program, focus on instructional literary practices that support and value the many identities present in the 21st-century classroom.

Last fall 35 educators, mostly teachers from the United States, gathered on the Ed School campus for a weekend spent learning how to bring new texts into their classrooms. There was plenty to discuss, like how to vet new books and develop a diverse curriculum to more predictable topics about meet-
ing standards. (Common Core doesn’t identify re-
currence to more predictable topics about meet-

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**Adrienne Almeida and director of the Ed School’s Language and Literacy Program (along with librarian Adrienne Almeida) and JABARI SELLARS, ED.M.’17 ( ), middle school English teacher in Washington, D.C., for some new ideas. Here’s what they recommended:**

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- **America: The Life and Times of America Chang** (Gabby Rivera)
- **Anastole and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe** (Benjamin Alire Sáenz)
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**CHRISTINA DOBBS, ED.M.’06, ED.D.’13**

**VICKI JACOBS, C.A.S.’80, ED.D.’86**

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**PAMELA MASON, M.A.T.’70, ED.D.’75**

**JABARI SELLARS, ED.M.’17**

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1. **Mishia Moreau: Spilled-Milk Man** (Jason Reynolds)
2. **Prince of Cats** (Ron Wimberly)
3. **Some People, Some Other Place** (California Cooper)
4. **Song of Achilles** (Madeline Miller)
5. **Swearing or Sworn: A Diane Alexander Retelling** (Lesa Cline-Ransome)
6. **The 57 Bus** (Dasha Slater)
7. **The Marrow Thieves** (Cherie Dimaline)
8. **Their Eyes Were Watching God** (Zora Neale Hurston)
9. **The Promise of Change: One Girl’s Story in the Fight for School Equality** (Jo Ann Allen Boyce and Debbie Levy)
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11. **Your Black Friend** (Ben Passmore)

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2. **Between the World and Me** (Ta-Nehisi Coates)
3. **It’s Not Like It’s Secret** (Misa Sugiura)
4. **Finding Langston** (Jarrett Krosoczka)
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Fear can be a powerful deterrent to making change in the classroom. When adding diverse books and reading, Schubert and Sellars already know the tricky scenarios — how to address stereotypes or not being able to answer a student’s question — that might keep teachers away from the work. In a lot of ways, learning how to understand and discuss difference with students connects back to the need for diverse books in the first place.

“In our nation, we haven’t been good at learning how to talk across differences in a respectful way,” Mason says. “And that is supposed to be the fabric of our democracy.” When you add in the fact that teacher training hasn’t always included work about race and identity, or even about addressing cultural assumptions, it becomes easy to see how adding diverse books to the curriculum can seem like treacherous territory.

New books come under scrutiny even though they often contain similar elements as classics. For instance, consider the racialized language in Huck- leberry Finn, or the treatment of disabilities in Of Mice and Men, or even the sexual content in Romeo & Juliet. But those books still maintain a place in classrooms around the country, whereas new books like The Hate U Give get challenged as “anti-copy” and for profanity, drug use, and sexual references, according to the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom. The book also happens to deal with racial injustices and police brutality, written by a black female.

“It’s kind of odd that we don’t have a problem giving students of color books written by dead white men, but we get a little queasy when we give white students literature written by African American au-
thors, Latinx authors, transgender authors, Asian American authors,” Mason says. She suggests that, rather than banning books, we instead lead students through a balanced analysis of literature.

As educators try to diversify texts in their class-
rooms, they need thoughtful intent when choos-
ing which books are appropriate or in determining the methods to teach material. Without that clear purpose, Jacobs fears teachers get lost, along with students, in the text. That purpose also helps safe-
guard against backlash when you know why you’ve selected certain work.

“A lot of people will see a brown child on the cov-
er of a book and think that’s enough,” Soeiro says. But it’s not. “We have to look critically at the a-
cency of that child, who wrote the book, the dominant narrative in the book. It takes a lot of work.”

It’s work, say educators like Soeiro and Dobbs, that teachers need to do.

“If all you read is one book by an author of color and five books a year by dead white guys, how does that shape your ideas about how stories get told, who they’re about?” Dobbs says.

In some ways, we already know. Today’s educa-
tors and students still exist in a canonized world, where prized books both teach and constrain us.

“An inherent part of developing culturally res-
sponsive instruction is coming to terms with our narrow view of literature,” Sellars says. “Making our classes culturally responsive may mean bring-
ing in new texts and media, which means teach-
 ers will relinquish their position as experts. Many teachers are hesitant to introduce a new text, or even teach an old text from a different perspective, because doing so doesn’t allow them to rely solely on previous lesson plans and teaching strategies.”

After Sellars’ student made him see his “blind spots,” he could have kept everything the same. It would have been easier. But he spent the summer rethinking the reading list. The following year his eighth graders read newer, less canonized books: Ultimate X-Men, Persepolis, Black Boy White School, and excerpts from The Song of Achilles. The experi-
ence moved Sellars from what he describes as just talking about being culturally relevant to actually doing the work.

Mason believes a new culture of teaching lit-
erature will emerge, one classroom success at a time, as long as we chip away at the lingering no-
tion that diverse books aren’t worthy of teachers’ time and attention.

“When teachers learn about the cultural assump-
tions that made them leery about including new, multicultural literature, then learn how to teach the books, that sets them off in a stance of strength and knowledge. Then they have a couple of successes in the classroom,” Mason says. Describing the poten-
tial for that success to then snowball among fellow teachers, she adds, “Another teacher tries with their support, and they get successful too, and the new book starts to become part of a larger repertoire of literature to share.” When confronted with a book from the canon, it becomes, “We have to teach that book again on this theme?” Well, here are some other options that might be worth a try.”
WHAT’S THE PLAN?

WHAT IF EVERY STUDENT HAD THEIR OWN EDUCATION PLAN?
THE EDUCATION REDESIGN LAB’S NEW SUCCESS PLANS ARE LIKE IEPs,
BUT FOR ALL STUDENTS.

STORY BY LORY HOUGH
ILLUSTRATION
BY HARRY CAMPBELL
When Stefan Lallinger was teaching in a middle school in New Orleans, he saw firsthand the impact that the outside world was having on his students. It was just a few years after Hurricane Katrina had devastated the city, and the effects of that devastation were still being felt, particularly with families.

“A lot of the issues we were dealing with were related to all of the things happening to students outside of school,” says Lallinger, now in the Ed School’s Ed.L.D. Program. “Students who couldn’t get to school, students who couldn’t pay for uniforms anymore or get them washed, homelessness. There was also a huge rate of post-traumatic stress from Katrina.”

And violence, unfortunately, was also endemic in New Orleans at the time.

“My of students’ lives were touched by violence, whether it was close family members or acquaintances who were shot or shot and killed,” he says. “The trauma of this level of violence on children is hard to describe, but for some of my students who experienced such tragedies, focusing on school and academic work felt trivial in comparison to what they were going through outside of school. I would also add that it is not just murder—all types of violence can be traumatic, and many neighborhoods simply weren’t safe after Katrina.”

Even regular activities, such as walking to the store or catching the bus, required you “to ‘have your guard up,’” he says.

Lallinger had worked hard to build strong relationships with his students, and so he sometimes knew what was affecting them before they even set foot in his classroom. But not always. And that made it hard to teach and hard to know why a student was zoning out or struggling with homework.

“There are likely dozens of cases of critical life events or circumstances that we did not know about, and for some students, being able to connect the dots with what few resources did exist in the city, or refer them to our school psychologist or counselor...could have made a huge difference in their lives,” he says.

Unfortunately, most schools don’t have a clear, planned way to connect those dots. Some teachers, like Lallinger, go deeper with their students, but for many teachers, the dots in a student’s life are piecemeal—a student here, a student there. Schools also know, at least to some extent, what’s going on with students who are on IEPs or 504s or flagged as at risk or needing extra help.

“Often, schools say, ‘We’ll give help to the kids who are posing the biggest challenges.’ But what about the rest of the students?” says Mary Walsh, a professor at Boston College and founder of City Connects, a Boston-based nonprofit that helps schools connect with local resources. “The quiet student who can’t see the big picture? We could have made a big difference for that child if we had discovered this earlier.”

For the majority of students, these discoveries never happen.

“We’re not doing good school when we don’t address these other things,” says Ellen Wingard, director of student support in Salem [Massachusetts] Public Schools. “We need a clear system to organize the work.”

This is exactly what the Education Redesign Lab’s By All Means (BAM) initiative is exploring, along with a core group of eight cities and towns, through something called Success Plans. “It’s something like IEPs, but for all students, not just those receiving special education, and encompassing a lot more. These individual, personalized learning plans take into account the barriers students are facing, such as not getting enough sleep, or stress, or going through a divorce, as well as positive-thinking information about a student such as goals, summer plans, and favorite activities. This information, gathered at the beginning of the school year from teachers, families, and directly from students (depending on the age), is combined with the typical academic data schools already collect—grades, reading level, and absenteeism records, for example. Together, the combined academic and nonacademic information helps create a full picture of every student, who is then matched—and this is key—with services and opportunities not only in

![STEFAN LALLINGER](image)

**“Often, schools say, ‘We’ll give help to the kids who are posing the biggest challenges.’ But what about the rest of the students?”**

Mary Walsh

**SUSTAINABLE**

- This system needs ongoing financial and staffing support.

**SECURE**

- Security of student information should be a top priority on all digital platforms that are used to hold and share data.

**INFORMATION-DRIVEN**

- Use data to assess how the services are working and monitor what supports children could need.

**CROSS-SECTOR**

- This work involves partnering with a large swath of organizations, from schools to mental health centers to after-school programs to summer meal services.

**ACTIONABLE**

- Plans should lay out what supports are needed and how families can help their children access them.

**EQUITABLE**

- Moving away from the one-size-fits-all factory model of schooling, plans should make sure disadvantaged students receive access to services their more privileged peers might already have.

**STUDENT-CENTERED**

- Students and their families should be at the center of all conversations. They can help drive these plans, including setting goals large and small, both academic and nonacademic.

**COMPREHENSIVE**

- Plans should address holistic needs such as nutrition, mental health, and/or physical supports as well as academics, and should be frequently updated as kids grow and mature.

**PERSONALIZED**

- Support should be different and targeted to each student’s unique needs.

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In Carbondale, Illinois, in the Unity Point School District, Superintendent Lori James-Gross and her team of teachers and counselors are starting phase one with all eighth graders in an effort to assess students as they transition to high school. As a small district in a rural part of the state, they work with connecting data on their own. When they discover that a family is struggling to buy groceries or a student is looking for a part-time job, they rely heavily on the connections staff members have made in the community. Funding is in-kind, through the district.

Providence, Rhode Island, where Lallinger is the site coordinator, is starting with students in three pre-K classes in one school. Similar to Salem, the city is partnering with an outside organization to collect and oversee data. Because they wanted to make families a huge priority in the process—they actually refer to them as Family Success Plans—Providence leaders chose to partner with Lifespan Community Health Institute, a nonprofit that already been screening families in hospitals and clinics throughout the state and had a robust data collection system in place.

Louisville needed to “do something totally different,” Lewy says. They didn’t want to just go into a school and pick one class or grade. Instead, they are going to focus during phase one on a few thousand second to fifth graders already involved in a summer enrichment program. Not only will certiﬁed teachers teach reading and math “in a more fun way,” says Lewy, but at the same time, “they’ll also see what wraparound services they can give to those same kids.”

Phase one in the Chattanooga–Hamilton School District in Tennessee includes K–8 students in eight schools and a partnership with City Connects, and grew out of an existing initiative launched in 2004 called Chattanoogan 2.0, which was meant to address education and workforce challenges in that city. “We had been working on these issues for a couple of years when we joined the By All Means initiative,” says Keri Randolph, a current E.D.D. student who serves as the Chattanooga site coordinator. Prior, she was an assistant superintendent for instruction in the district. “It’s a call that started in 2016 in our business community. We had workforce needs we couldn’t ﬁll while also wanting to do what was needed for kids.” At the same time, says Randolph, poverty was an issue. In 2017, according to the U.S. Census, 22.4% of people and 18 under in the country lived in poverty, exceeding the U.S. average for that age range of 17.9%. This, at a time when “the social safety net in some communities has eroded,” she says. As a result, the district was seeing kids with more needs and a growing recognition that schools alone couldn’t help them. “Kids are in school more of their time. It’s what happens in that other 80% that makes a huge difference. As good as we make schools, that can only go so far.”

“Kids are in school 20% of their time. It’s what happens in that other 80% that makes a huge difference. As good as we make schools, that can only go so far.”

BERKELEY, ED.L.D. 1975, who helps RAM coordinate all of the sites. “Louisville has nearly 100,000 students, which is one of the largest district in Kentucky: Unity Point [in Illinois] is tiny, with about 710. We have scrappy to corporate in taking these Success Plans and making them successful.”

In Salem, where Wingard works, phase one includes running Success Plans for all pre-K-8 students in the district. The district got a jump start before the Success Plans initiative ofﬁcially began when it partnered two years ago with City Connects, which has been doing similar individualized learning plan work and wraparound support in other districts since 2005, including Boston. The organization trains a leader in each school to collect and coordinate the data.

In the fall, we meet with the teacher and talk about every child for about an hour and a half. Behavior, health, family, social-emotional, and tell me what you think are the strengths,” says City Connect’s Walsh. “A teacher usually has a plan for every child already. We do the same for the nonacademics. You put those things together and you have a success plan.” The coordinator then ﬁgures out what wraparound services are needed for students and families—the latter something that already-strapped counselors, teachers, and principals have traditionally had to manage on their own.

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But first, says Lynne Saks, associate director of programs and research at the Education Redesign Lab, we must see every student as an individual. “In the fall, we meet with the teacher and talk about every child for about an hour and a half. Behavior, health, family, social-emotional, and tell me what you think are the strengths,” says City Connect’s Walsh. “A teacher usually has a plan for every child already. We do the same for the nonacademics. You put those things together and you have a success plan.” The coordinator then figures out what wraparound services are needed for students and families—the latter something that already-strapped counselors, teachers, and principals have traditionally had to manage on their own.
most never included the whole child," she says. "It focused on the academics pretty narrowly. We’re saying the rest of the child matters, too."

At Unity Point in Illinois, even school bus drivers and custodians are part of the Success Plan process, says James-Gross.

It starts with every eighth grader choosing an adviser — any adult in the school whom they feel comfortable with, including bus drivers and custodians. Each student meets with their adviser in the fall and talks about everything from grades and benchmarking assessments to how they like to learn to favorite subjects to what they want to achieve in life. As James-Gross points out, every kid, even the high-achiever, needs something.

"For example, many of our high-achieving students experience a lot of stress," she says, but don’t know how to talk about it. The Success Plan meetings offer this option.

All of the sites involved in Success Plans emphasize, however, that the plans aren’t only focused on the stressors in a student’s life, like feeling overwhelmed or a parent losing a job. They also tap into the forward-looking parts of a student’s life.

James-Gross says, "We also connect them to opportunities in the community," including sports, internships, and summer jobs.

For many kids, simply having an adult who isn’t a parent or caregiver who will fully listen to them can go a long way.

"They have one foot in little kids’ world, but they’re talking about what they should major in once they get to college," James-Gross says of her middle schoolers. "The conversations are telling. When they get an opportunity to really talk, they break down. Ultimately, our goal is for all students to be able to voice their strengths and interests and what he or she needs to be successful."

In Providence, where they are starting to use Success Plans with younger students, data comes from families. At the beginning of the school year, families fill out the standard pre-entry information packet, which is then coupled with interviews by social workers stationed at the school who ask questions such as: In the last 12 months, have any of your utilities been shut off? Are you worried about housing? Have you had to go without health care because you had trouble getting to a provider? There is also existing data, previously collected on many families, already in the LifeSpan system — a huge plus for the district, says Carrie Bridges, director of LifeSpan’s community health initiatives.

"The benefit is that we’re starting with a system that is already in place, very human-driven, that's already have hundreds of resources in the database that is already in place, very human-driven, that can be adapted to the schools," she says. "We already have hundreds of resources in the database and years of trend data that our families have already expressed a need for." Resources are even cnm-enabled, so if a student’s family is looking for a food bank, for example, but doesn’t have a car, the system can identify food banks near public transportation. "We can also look across all clients in the system and see trends. For example, over the past six months, maybe we’ve seen an increase in requests for housing in a certain part of the city."

This existing information, plus new information collected in school, is shared with school psychologists, nurses, counselors, and teachers, and turned into a tailored Success Plan.

S

uccess plans are intended to help students. But in districts where a dedicated site co-ordinator is tasked with overseeing the plans there’s also another big benefit for teachers, counselors, and families: The coordinators often have deeper Rolodexes when it comes to resources, making it easier to find free eye glasses for a family or a tutor for a struggling student.

Walsh has seen the need for this in the communities she has worked in.

"Our communities are service-rich, but schools don’t always have capacities to take advantage of them," she says. Neither do families. "There are many services and activities for kids that are beneficial that the parents or the students may not know about," she says. "My parents were immigrants. They didn’t know about services. One day, we saw a Girl Scout troop. They were dressed in green. My mother had the good sense to ask one of the adults why she was wearing a green dress. My mother learned. For me, it was terrific. I joined the Girl Scouts. As a result, I got confidence in myself."

Looking ahead, the goal for each of the By All Means cities and towns involved in piloting Success Plans is to eventually extend the initiative to every student in their district. Walsh, who has been involved in this kind of work for decades, says she can definitely imagine a day when this happens across the country in every school.

"It’s like early childhood. There was a time when quality early childhood was available for some kids but not all, and now it’s become the norm," she says. "Schools are hungry for a systematic approach to helping the whole child. When we talk to them, they say, ‘Oh yeah, that’s exactly what we need.’ The idea is ripe and right for children."

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ONE ON ONE: JEAN LAWLER

For 15 years, JEAN LAWLER worked in the classroom, teaching kids ranging from preschool to high school. She also served for several years in educational publishing, developing nonprint learning products on CD and video, and working as a consultant to Scholaric. She thought she knew what kids needed to succeed in school. But it was actually a move to the North Shore of Boston, where she started spending time at a local farm, doing yoga in her yard, and walking on the beach, that made her realize that what kids really needed was more exposure to things that soothed their souls. Lawler spotted a need for kids to have exposure to quiet activities and meditation, and worked to create Nonprofit.org, a four-part book series geared toward helping pre-K to third-graders slow down and consider how different experiences make them feel.

How did the activities that you were doing make you also be good for kids?

I started feeling better. Less stress, happier. I thought, what if kids had more exposure to these things, too? Simple things like taking a walk or doing yoga. What if kids could learn to self-regulate and be comfortable in silence. I started building these activities into my schedule, but these are things that aren’t always present in our lives or in school. There just isn’t time.

The books focus on four different experiences for kids to think about, what are they?

How time outside makes them feel, how the food they eat makes them feel, how quiet time makes them feel, and how media choices make them feel. Each one of these alone is powerful, but the combination of the four is really healthy for kids.

A lot of this focuses on helping kids be more aware.

Yes; being aware of your thoughts and realizing you are valuable. That you are the way for most people but it’s important. It means slowing down for moments in your life. I’ve heard teachers talk about having kids close their eyes for a moment and think about something they enjoy, like the playground or their kitty. It’s calms everyone down.

What’s next for the series?

I figured I’d write a children’s book. It was a goal I had, even back in college, to write the Grand American Novel. When those four topics surfaced for me as a real set of power tools, I thought, “Let me get these things out in print.”

Grad.
Harvard Ed.

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Next year, 2020, the Ed School will be celebrating its 100th anniversary. That’s 10 decades of debating, studying, expanding, and reimagining education, not only in the United States, but around the world. From our first dean, Henry Wyman Holmes, to our current dean, Bridget Terry Long, we have come a long way. As a way to honor all that we’re proud of and all that we plan on doing, the school will be celebrating with a year of centennial activities, events, and exhibits, both on campus and abroad. Starting next year, our social channels will help the community — our faculty, students, staff, and alumni — reconnect to the school and to one another. And the next issue of Ed (January 2020) will be a commemorative theme issue, devoted entirely to the centennial. We hope you get involved in helping us celebrate. The school is still working out all of the details, but keep an eye on our webpage (gse.harvard.edu) over the coming months for information. We’ll also need your help as we craft the next issue of the magazine. Look for information on the Ed site (gse.harvard.edu) on ways you can contribute, or you can send an email to the editor, Lory_Hough@harvard.edu.
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