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After years of social gains and with bright futures within reach, why are things *still* so difficult for middle school girls?

Girlhood



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Contents

Winter 2019



“You can’t generalize on nationality. I’m not a threat.”

NAJWA ELYAZGI, ED.M.'19

Intro.

4

NEWS + NOTES FROM APPIAN WAY

Libyan student faces a travel ban, p. 4 □ DACA works p. 6 □ Disrupting the gender binary, one mani at a time, p. 8 □ High school journalists find a place to share stories, p. 10 □ Recess returns with knitting needles, p. 15 □ The making of Senior Lecturer Junlei Li p. 16 □ What Tina Grotzer, Ed.M.'85, Ed.D.'93, is reading, p. 18

JASON GROW

Features



20

Girlhood

In many ways, girls have made great gains. So why then are things still so difficult for them once they hit middle school?

STORY BY LORY HOUGH

JONATHAN KOZOWYK; WALTER SMITH; LAURENT CILLUFFO

Departments

CONVO. — READER FEEDBACK2
GRAD. — ALUMNI NEWS + NOTES43
DEVELOPMENT49

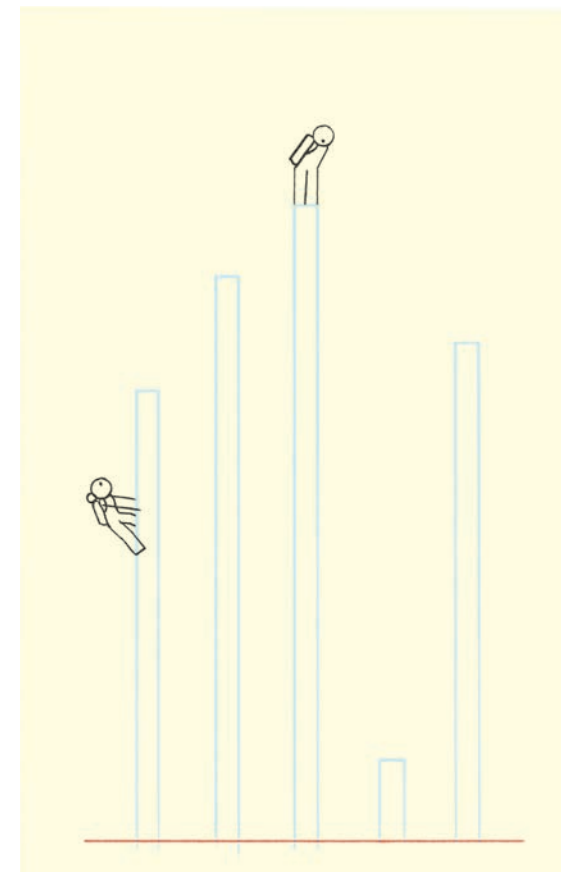


28

Monumental Effort

A public boarding school provides a home away from home for some of D.C.'s most at-risk students.

STORY BY MIKE UNGER



36

School Assignment

How Boston's bold attempt to increase equity and reduce student travel time by giving families smarter options didn't quite work.

STORY BY PROFESSOR NANCY E. HILL

Convo.

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



1 It's the story that keeps on connecting. "The Other Self," written by [EDY JULIO, ED.M.'18](#), for our summer 2018 issue, continues to get thoughtful comments from readers. One reader, from Zimbabwe, wrote, "It's important for us, as educators, to understand the 'cultural' influences that our students have. In my context, in Africa, I have worked with children from war-torn countries. We underestimate the effects of trauma, what is then regarded as 'normal,' as well as the general human need to survive through behavioral adaptation." Another reader wrote, "As a tenacious advocate of student voice, I've found that children, adolescents, and adults often don't realize the complexities that live inside them; the selves that go undiscovered until they have the opportunity to write, responding to pieces of themselves they've never questioned, producing multiple identities and choices related to how they have or can experience the world."

2 One of the wisest comments we received about the "Student Activism 2.0" story in the fall 2018 issue: "Vote!"

3 Have you ever wondered which *Ed.* stories have been read online the most? We decided to track the magazine from January to December 2018 and come up with a top 10 list. Some of the stories that made the list didn't surprise us — everyone loves to read about troublemakers and being bored, right? And with the election grabbing lots of media attention this year, the federal government story coming in at number 2 made sense. It also didn't come as a surprise that seven of the 10 stories were recent, from issues published during 2017 and 2018. What was surprising is that three of the stories that made the list are not recent — from 2012 and 2015. Without further ado, here are the top 10 most-read stories during 2018:

- | | | |
|----|--|---------------|
| 1 | THE TROUBLEMAKERS | (WINTER 2018) |
| 2 | WHEN IT COMES TO EDUCATION, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS IN CHARGE OF ... UM, WHAT? | (FALL 2017) |
| 3 | BORED OUT OF THEIR MINDS | (WINTER 2017) |
| 4 | WHAT'S WORTH LEARNING IN SCHOOL? | (WINTER 2015) |
| 5 | NO MORE SINK THE SUB | (WINTER 2017) |
| 6 | THE OTHER SELF | (SUMMER 2018) |
| 7 | DO MIDDLE SCHOOLS MAKE SENSE? | (FALL 2012) |
| 8 | POOR, BUT PRIVILEGED | (SUMMER 2017) |
| 9 | ARE YOU DOWN WITH OR DONE WITH HOMEWORK? | (WINTER 2012) |
| 10 | PARENT, ADVOCATE | (SUMMER 2018) |

THE ONE TIME PIE DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

In our last issue, we made a mistake in using a pie chart to display fourth-grade reading assessment information by race. As you may have noticed, our numbers really, really added up!

Past Tense









In the magazine's fall 1991 issue, Carol Gilligan, a former professor at the Ed School and co-director of the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology, Boys' Development, and the Culture of Manhood, wrote "Joining the Resistance: Psychology, Politics, Girls, and Women." Here's a brief excerpt:

"Like a film running backwards, women teaching girls arrive at the moments of our own resistance and come up against our own solutions to the problems of relationships which girls face. Then as women, we may encounter our own reluctance to know what we know and come to the realization that such knowledge is contained in our own bodies; and may discover that we have succumbed to the temptation of model perfection by trying to be perfect role models for girls and thus have taken ourselves out of relationship with girls — in part to hide our own imperfection but also, perhaps, to keep girls from feeling our sadness and our anger.

"Women teaching girls may also discover that we are harboring, within ourselves, a girl who lives in our body, who is insistent on speaking, who intensely desires relationship and knowledge, and who, perhaps at the time of adolescence, went underground or was overwhelmed. It may be that adolescent girls are looking for

this girl in women, and feeling her absence or her hidden presence. And it may be that women, in the name of being good women, have been modeling for girls her repudiation, teaching girls the necessity of a loss or renunciation... Perhaps there is a new cycle that, once beginning, will break up an old impasse in women's development and affect men as well. If women and girls can stay with one another at the time when girls reach adolescence, girls' playfulness and irreverence may tap the wellsprings of women's resistance. And women, in turn, taking in girls' embodiment, their outspokenness, and their courage, may encourage girls' desire for relationship and for knowledge, and teach girls that they can say what they know and not be left all alone."

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TONY LUONG

ISTOCK

Behind the Cover

Lory Hough, Editor in Chief



My son started middle school two years ago, so I know a lot of middle school families. Since then, I've been swapping stories with parents: Which sixth-grade teachers are tough. How complicated the school schedules seem to be with rotating days and off-team classes. We've talked about super-heavy backpacks and what level of independence makes sense at this age. Much of the talk has been ordinary, the regular conversations many parents and caretakers of adolescents have. But I also noticed that some friends — gutsy women with great jobs who are leaders in our city — had stories about daughters struggling to fit in or feel good about themselves. Some of the stories involved social media — group chats that left a daughter crying or a fun Instagram photo that made a girl wonder what she had done wrong to not be included. In person, I noticed once-spunky girls who suddenly seemed extra self-conscious. Hadn't we gotten past this, I thought? With everything we know about adolescent development and gender, why were girls still struggling? ●

Intro.

NEWS + NOTES FROM APPIAN WAY



Locked In

WHEN A TRAVEL BAN KEEPS YOU FROM GOING HOME

STORY BY LORY HOUGH

NAJWA ELYAZGI, ED.M.'19, arrived in Boston on August 22, after spending the summer, reluctantly, 450 miles away in Virginia. It had been three months since she had graduated from George Mason University. Her original plan had been to go home after graduation — to her parents' home in Tripoli, the capital of Libya. She was beyond excited to attend a cousin's elaborate six-day wedding and be there for her sister when she had her baby. She was going to go on hajj, a pilgrimage to Mecca.

"I was expecting a cheerful summer," she says.

But none of that happened. In June, with her bags packed and awaiting one form from the Department of Homeland Security, Elyazgi learned that the United States Supreme Court upheld President Donald Trump's right to ban people from certain countries from entering the United States. One of those countries was Libya. Elyazgi knew that if she flew home after graduation, she might not be allowed to come back to the United States to start her year at the Ed School as part of the Human Development and Psychology Program.

It wasn't the first time her ability to pursue an education in the United States had been in jeopardy. In January 2017, while on a layover in Turkey on her way back to George Mason after the holiday break, Elyazgi was stranded at the airport.

"The same day, the travel ban was approved," she says, referring to the first travel ban Trump imposed for citizens of Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and Libya. She was not allowed to board the plane to Dulles International. →

When a federal judge temporarily blocked Trump's ban a few days later, Elyazgi hastily booked another flight back to Virginia to finish her last few months as an undergraduate.

Now at the Ed School, she is again in limbo.

"I can stay in the United States legally; I just can't leave," she says. She also can't have relatives or friends from Libya visit her — visitor visas for Libyans are not being granted to the United States. More than likely, when she graduates in May, she'll have to repeat what she did at her George Mason graduation: During the ceremony, while in her cap and gown, she'll have to FaceTime with family and friends in Tripoli.

"It's a sacrifice," she says, "but I've been waiting to be part of Harvard for a long time, so I couldn't refuse the chance."

One thing isn't in limbo: She knows that after she graduates from the Ed School, she will — finally — head home. She already has a job lined up with the Ministry of Education, which offered her scholarships to attend George Mason and Harvard after she earned the highest grade point average among all Libyan students the year she graduated from high school.

"I will be working on designing a better education system," she says. "Right now the system is very old-fashioned, based on memorizing information. Classrooms have boards and chairs only, and the curriculum is dense but dry and hard to grasp. I will be working with colleagues on designing a new education system for the long term and modifying the current one for immediate application."

Until then, Elyazgi is happily settling in to her second semester after a warm welcome to campus.

"I was embraced with love and care even upon my arrival to Cambridge," she says. "I have received emails full of support and help from all the faculty members at the Ed School, as well as many of my peers. Upon my arrival, everyone from the Office of Student Affairs to all my professors welcomed me and made me feel like I am home and not alone. I wish that every Libyan student receives the same greetings as I, and sees the true American manners. We come here to get an education. You can't generalize on nationality. I'm not a threat."

WISE WORDS

**“The Greeks wrote about it.
Shakespeare wrote about it.
It's in the Bible.”**

Senior Lecturer **RICHARD WEISSBOURD, ED.D.'87**, director of the Making Caring Common Project, on a powerful emotion that parents can help kids deal with: jealousy. (*The Washington Post*)

Why DACA Works

IMMIGRANT STUDENTS WITH DACA STATUS HAVE AN EASIER TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD, STUDY FINDS

STORY BY GRACE TATTER

TODAY, IF you're a young immigrant who received Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status, you may be working an internship. You may be applying to medical school. Or you may be planning a trip to see a cousin get married this weekend. But next month, or next year? It's all uncertain.

President Donald Trump ordered the end of DACA more than a year ago. Since then, its survival has relied on court decisions, with members of Congress unable to come to an agreement on immigration reform. The most recent court decision to extend DACA's period in purgatory came in August, when a Texas judge ruled that DACA can continue for now — although he warned it will likely be deemed illegal in the long run.

And yet, even while its future is uncertain, DACA's results are not. When it comes to helping the immigrant students who have used the program transition to adulthood, DACA works, according to newly published research from Professor Roberto Gonzales, who has been chroni-

cling the effects of the policy since it went into effect in 2012.

The Findings

Gonzales and his co-authors describe adolescence for undocumented immigrants as “a waking nightmare,” a time when young people realize that the goals they had thought possible are, in fact, out of their reach because of their immigration status. He described this uncomfortable awakening in his 2015 book, *Lives in Limbo*. When DACA began, it unlocked previously unavailable rites of passage to students who immigrated to the United States without documentation. For students able to gain wider access through the program, the nightmare was largely over.

To understand more about the program's impact, Gonzales and his colleagues analyzed interviews, conducted in 2015, of 408 beneficiaries of DACA, ages 18–32, about their experience with their new immigration status and how it affected their transition to adulthood — things like being able to work.

The interviewees discussed how, once they were documented and given access to new jobs and spaces, they were more secure in their identities. DACA allowed previously undocumented youth to obtain drivers licenses, open bank accounts, and get jobs that gave them financial independence, rather than the low-wage, dead-end jobs that undocumented immigrants are often forced to take. Having DACA status came with other benefits, too, like a greater sense of belonging.

Among recipients who were older than 21 when they became DACA holders, the program allowed them to pursue dreams deferred. Younger students were able to stay on the trajectory enjoyed by their documented peers, heading toward the types of job opportunities that would allow financial independence.

“DACA in the short term is, I think, inarguably the most successful policy of immigration integration we've had in the past three decades. It's provided a boost to immigrants and their families,” Gonzales says.

But for all its speed in helping students integrate into society and achieve independence, DACA has limitations.

For one, its benefits have not been felt to the same degree across the United States. Local context shapes both the legal limitations and the daily experiences that immigrants and undocumented people have. In another paper, Gonzales and his co-authors note that DACA recipients who live in places like New York, where DACA recipients can get a tuition break to state schools, have entirely different experiences than recipients who live in places like Georgia, where they are legally prohibited from receiving in-state tuition, and are in fact banned from attending some postsecondary institutions.

What's more, the federal government still blocks DACA recipients from receiving federal financial aid. It offers no relief to students' family members and offers the students themselves no path to citizenship. This means that the opportunities DACA has conferred can be a mixed blessing, especially in places where

local and state governments are focused on restricting immigration. In California, undocumented immigrants can obtain professional licenses and drivers' licenses, even without DACA. But in states like South Carolina or Georgia, a DACA beneficiary might be the only person in their family authorized to work or even drive.

“This is a double-edged sword,” Gonzales says. “In one way, you can see that DACA has benefited not only the little over 800,000 [DACA beneficiaries], but also their family members. In other ways, it's really tethered DACA beneficiaries to their families. It's added another layer of burden.”

An Uncertain Future

Right now, the status of DACA itself is precarious. Gonzales is beginning another round of interviews to see how the current climate around immigration is affecting DACA recipients. They started seeing a shift as anti-immigrant rhetoric from the 2016 presidential election became reflected in federal policy.

“Some of our respondents didn't reapply for DACA in certain areas and they're strained in ways they weren't before, especially thinking about that double-edged sword and their responsibilities to their families and their worries about their family members,” Gonzales says.

While the courts decide the fate of DACA, and Congress decides whether or not to create federal legislation that would reform immigration, a lot is left up to state and local policymakers, who can pass laws that make it easier for immigrants to thrive.

“The climate is also really important,” Gonzales says. “You've got an opportunity for schools and community institutions to play a really important role in creating places of belonging, providing opportunities, providing resources, for immigrant students and their families.”



READ REPORT: [GSE.HARVARD.EDU/ED](https://gse.harvard.edu/ed)

Right on the Nail

A TEACHER DISRUPTS THE GENDER BINARY STARTING WITH A FABULOUS MANI

STORY BY JOSHUA JENKINS, ED.M.'15



8 **A**S A CHILD, I liked pink, played dress-up in my mother's skirts, dressed as the wicked witch from *The Wizard of Oz* on Halloween (twice), held my pinky out for chocolate milk — the list goes on. I also liked biking, camping, fishing, and playing in the dirt. Still, the cost of my affinity for pink and playing dress-up, despite my affinity for things we typically associate with “boys,” reductively cast me as the “sissy boy,” which resulted in social punishments like exclusion and bullying. That’s how the hegemony of the gender binary works: You’re not “normal” if you’re a boy and you like some “girl” stuff. As an adult, I learned to fake it when I felt I had to but started to wonder, why should I?

My aim is not to guilt teachers who have relied on the binary of gender; it is invasive and takes work to act outside of it. How often might we hear “boys against girls in today’s spelling game” and not question it? However, it is these subtle aggressions that

silence queer and questioning kids (like me all those years ago). Without education around gender and sexuality, we will continue to raise children, who, like me, are always on guard about how much they can be themselves. I see my own students on guard about the colors they can like and the games they can play, and that is not the reality I want our children living in.

At school one day, a student made up an excuse for why the toy in his pocket was purple. A group of fourth-graders had loudly commented on my bright pink sneakers, pointing to one another. “Look at him wearing girls’ stuff!” Hearing how engrained the gendering of colors and clothes was made me realize how much we needed to disrupt the gender binary if we ever hoped it might indeed get better.

Starting with me.

As I reflected on my teaching practice and my position as a queer educator, I realized that I was hiding authentic parts of

myself at school. For example, I enjoy a nice manicure and playful paint job but had never dared to do it since I assumed it would create unnecessary attention. This was a lost opportunity to be a model for queer youth who are looking to see adults living happily or to be someone at school who will support them.

So last June I had my nails painted rainbow polka dots for PRIDE month. The mani was quite the conversation piece. Many gave compliments, and an equal number had questions. Some second-graders said, “Boys can’t have painted nails!” When I told them that people can style their hair or wear whatever clothes they feel comfortable in and flashed my nails, most agreed. The next day, one student who was insistent boys could not paint their nails came to me and said, “I guess you’re right. I saw a boy on the train with green nails!” My nails suddenly played two roles: personal enjoyment and teaching tool.

So far this school year, the headlines have already shown a fourth-grader who committed suicide after coming out. Queer visibility is important. So, this school year, my nails are fabulously painted, and for the first time in my career, a photo of my partner and our two dogs sits on my desk. I am disrupting what is “typical” gender performance, and thus I stand out as a queer educator for students who may be queer or questioning. On the other hand, my outness is a window and a conversation starter for others to learn more. It is one action I can take, one nail in the coffin (okay, 10 nails), to help disrupt the binary of gender that pervades some of our practices in schools. But just as important, I’m a happier teacher when I look down and see my nail art. It feels like me. In teaching, we talk a lot about modeling. I finally feel like I’m modeling “be yourself.”

JOSHUA JENKINS IS AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER IN NEW YORK CITY.

JULIET BIAGI, ED.M.'15



AIE Conversations

More than 100 educators from the Arts in Education community gathered in early October for a two-day summit to paint, create, and continue the conversations they had — and cherished — when they were students on Appian Way. Much of the talk revolved around questions such as: What role should artists play in the fight for justice? How will these responses impact the system where artists operate? And how do we really move the needle?



Photograph by Chris Mueller

High School Insider

HOW ONE ALUM, WITH THE HELP OF A MAJOR NEWSPAPER, IS GIVING STUDENT JOURNALISTS AND WRITERS A PLACE TO SHARE THEIR STORIES

STORY BY LORY HOUGH

MOLLY HEBER, ED.M.'18, knew she was working with talented students when they picked apart her resume during a job interview.

Heber was in her last semester at the Ed School, finishing classes in the Education Policy and Management Program. She was trying to land a job as the project lead for *High School Insider*, a journalism project started by the *Los Angeles Times* that gives students an online platform to publish their work.

"I was interviewed by two rounds of students before I ever met a permanent staff person at the *Times*," she says. "It was the only job I interviewed for where they put young people in front of the interview process. They took it very seriously." That included giving her advice on her resume.

Now eight months into the job, Heber has fully become part of what's called "the fam." She says it's an exciting time to be supporting young journalists.

"Many of our students who contribute say they don't have an outlet at their schools," she says, citing the decline in school-sponsored newspapers. Some schools have switched to digital only. "The students think no one is reading the digital school papers." Publishing on the *High School Insider* site, under the *Times* banner, widens readership and reach significantly.

Giving young people a platform to be heard gets to the heart of why the project was started, Heber says, and high school students are responding. Since the project began in 2014, more than 3,000 students have contributed.

"It's an era where young people are finally feeling heard, or trying to be heard," Heber says. "The point of the program is to do just that — let students feel they have a voice and can share their perspective. I don't think we do that enough in classrooms or in the general world. If you read the pieces students have written, most have really powerful perspectives about what's going on in the country and the world."

For example, a student wrote a piece while her school was in the middle of a lockdown.

"This student didn't know why they were on lockdown," Heber says. "The teacher wasn't in the room to tell them. They didn't know if there was an actual shooter. This student took notes as she was in the situation then wrote the piece later. It was so terrifying for her. With *High School Insider*, there's an opportunity for young people to share what's going on in their lives."

Students can get involved in two ways: individually or as part of a journalism or English class. Heber sets them up with a WordPress account, and they contribute pieces to the site, including

news stories, fiction, cartoons, and videos. Two college interns, both alumni of the program who are now pursuing journalism careers, lightly edit the pieces for typos and to fit Associate Press style, which the *Times* follows.

"The interns might reach out to a writer and say, 'here are three ways you could improve this,'" Heber says, but student journalists really drive the work. The exception is when a teacher takes this on as a class project. "The teacher will work more closely with students, helping them fine-tune their pieces before they get published." Even then, stories are "unfiltered and unadulterated."

The project also hosts a youth journalism conference, a student advisory board, and a paid summer internship for eight students at its California offices. Eventually, Heber wants to help teachers find ways to teach media literacy. Until then, she says a highlight of her job is going into classrooms to introduce students to the project.

"I love seeing the one or two kids who hang on to every word I say or hang out after to ask a question," she says. "I'm looking forward to seeing those kids slowly start to post their stories and then grow into leaders of the program itself. That means they're moving from finding their own voice to learning to share it with others and then to becoming advocates for youth voices more broadly."

5 EASY STEPS TO:

Helping Early Childhood Educators De-stress



WONDERING HOW early childhood educators can de-stress and not burn out? With the help of the MindfulEC project, which she started with two Harvard Kennedy School students while at the Ed School, former preschool teacher **EMILY WIKLUND, ED.M.'18**, offers five tips.

► **Recognize the struggle.**

“Many career fields are stressful, but the teaching profession stands out because it sits right at the intersection of high demand and low professional support. Part of that professional support relates to pay. The average wage for early care providers is just above \$10 per hour. Another part relates to professional learning opportunities, training, and time for planning and self-care. Teaching, partic-

ularly teaching young children, is also demanding in a physical, emotional, and intellectual way that too often goes unrecognized and inadequately supported. And teachers must be prepared to respond, often on their own, to so many different scenarios during the day, and the resulting fatigue can lead to burnout.”

► **Recognize when other teachers are at their break-point.**

“Many of the symptoms of burnout or unhealthy stress may not be obvious to others, but signs of fatigue, difficulty concentrating or attending to tasks, edginess and irritability, sadness, or detachment and isolation could indicate that a teacher is having trouble. Frequent unexplained or illness-related absences can be a definite sign that something

is wrong. Disengagement from the teaching community or in the classroom can also be a sign that it’s time to check in.”

► **Find community. Now.**

“At MindfulEC, we strongly believe that social networks and relationships provide an essential role in preventing or addressing stress. Teachers who have access to a community of support have a go-to system for affirmation, reflection, and solidarity. They have someone or a group of people they can talk to after a stressful day, and in talking they might get ideas about how to respond next time or simply some positive acknowledgment that things will be okay.”

► **Reconnect to intention.**

“Ask yourself why you wanted to become a teacher in the first

place. What have you always loved about working with young children and their families, and what are the short- and long-term goals for your work? Find meaning in your work.”

► **Take time for yourself.**

“It’s important to develop a daily self-care practice or habits that bring calm between (inevitably) stressful moments. This can include yoga, mindful walking, or even mindful eating, which includes noticing and savoring textures and flavors. During the school day, which can feel hectic, teachers can find quiet spots during breaks, engaging socially with colleagues over lunch or at the end of the day. Self-care and strong community bonds aren’t luxuries; they’re essential components in providing quality experiences for children.” **LH**

Illustration by **Cristina Spanò**

STUDY SKILLS

Daniel Haack, Ed.M.'19

When **DANIEL HAACK** was growing up on a dairy farm outside Madison, Wisconsin, dreaming of becoming an actor or director or TV news host, he was also always writing. Screenplays and short stories, mostly. They were always epic — fantastic tales where his superheroes went on sweeping adventures. It makes sense then that his first book, *Prince & Knight*, published last May, would be the same kind of story — but with a twist.

Modeled after a traditional fairy tale, in Haack’s book, a prince roams the countryside with his parents looking for a fair lady to marry. In the process of trying to defeat a dragon threatening his village, the prince meets a knight who helps him when he falls, and the two quickly realize they are perfect for one another.

Haack, who has spent the past few years heading up marketing for StoryBots, a digital learning program for kids that includes a popular television show on Netflix (and for which Haack won an Emmy), isn’t the first author to write an LGBTQ-friendly picture book for kids. But, he says, most don’t feature people.

“A lot of other books in this space have animals as main characters — penguins and bunnies,” he says. “One of the main things I decided before I wrote the book was that it was going to have human characters.”

Human characters show kids from gay families that their parents “are just as capable of being the brave hero and worthy of being in love” as anyone else, he says. He also hopes that these universal, accessible themes of love and adventure resonate with kids who don’t know anyone who identifies as LGBTQ (or at least anyone who has come out to them). “It’s just as powerful for those kids as for someone who sees a family member in the stories.”

Although *Prince & Knight* (and a second book coming out in the spring, *Maiden & Princess*) are still considered “unique” fairy tales because of their twist, he hopes this isn’t always the case.

“One of the coolest things for me in this process has been seeing how many straight parents are buying the book for their kids,” he says. “I’m really excited for the point where the books offering nontraditional leads become a dime a dozen and aren’t so defined by the lead characters.” **LH**

Photograph by **Jonathan Kozowyk**

The Story of the Unlikely Children's Book Author

STORY BY ANDREW BAULD, ED.M.'16

ONCE UPON A time there was a professor. His name was Fernando Reimers. Professor Reimers lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He taught at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He spent his days working with students and writing many books for adults.

But at home, Professor Reimers had an idea. He wanted to write a book for children. He decided the book would be about a very special friend of his named Filomena.

Filomena, the parakeet.

REIMERS, ED.M.'84, ED.D.'88, has



spent a career focused on innovative global education policies and programs as a professor at the Ed School and director of the International Education Policy Program. He's also a prolific writer and editor, producing more than 20 books, plus scores of journal articles, on the importance of developing 21st-century skills in students.

So it came as a surprise when Reimers' latest writing wasn't on global education, or for adults, but a personal story about his 12-year-old parakeet.

"I can't explain why I did it," Reimers says on what drove him to write a picture book. "I remember sitting at my kitchen table with 60 papers to grade early in January and wondering how the bird saw the world. I began to write this story from the bird's point of view. This simple act made me very happy."

From that initial question emerged *The Story of Filomena*. It's the first in a trilogy featuring an observant blue parakeet that joined the Reimers household as a pet for his two young sons.

In the book, as in real life, the boys have grown up and left the figurative nest, leaving Filomena behind with Reimers and his wife, [ELEONORA VILLEGAS-REIMERS, ED.M.'84, ED.D.'88](#).

The simple story includes several surprisingly high concepts for a children's

book. Reimers speaks to Filomena in both English and Spanish, something he says he did to show readers a bilingual home.

The main themes of the first book are observation, empathy, and perspective. As Reimers writes through Filomena's voice, "You can learn a lot about the world if you observe and listen. Observing is not just looking or seeing, and listening is not just hearing. To observe you have to think about what you see and hear. You have to ask questions."

Reimers says some of what he's learned in his career has found its way into the story, including the focus on early literacy and intergenerational observation that came from a book he published last year.

"Language development and literacy are so important to participate in society in inclusive ways," he says. While those topics might be appropriate for graduate students, it could be a bit heady for young readers. But Reimers has had the best test market, sharing *Filomena* with faculty colleagues who in turn have shared the book with their children and grandchildren.

"One of the wonderful things when you have a community of colleagues is people step up and give you ideas," Reimers says. One of the fans of *Filomena* is Professor Catherine Snow's 7-year-old granddaughter, Juliet

Baum-Snow, "a very critical reader," he says. "She gives me wonderful feedback."

Former students have also responded positively. One visited recently from Mexico, bringing Filomena drawings from their children. "You've made it when your former students' children make art like that," Reimers says.

Other fans have shared the book, which has been translated into 10 languages, in classrooms and other educational settings. There are also 10 schools in six countries in which older students read the books to younger students. The second book in the series, *Filomena's Friends*, came out last summer; the third in December. Reimers laughs that his family members are his biggest fans but are also quick to remind him that he lacks children's lit credentials. That's exactly what makes writing *Filomena* such a joy, he says.

"Like any creative process, we're only partially aware of the forces that get us to do what we do. I want to do something I've never done and learn everything about it," he says. "It makes me feel like a child."

ANDREW BAULD, ED.M.'16, IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO ED.



READ MORE: [THEADVENTURESOFFILOMENA.SQUARESPACE.COM/](#)



TANYA YASTREBOVA



Tony Jack, Knitter



When Assistant Professor Tony Jack's partner got tired of being asked to knit things for him, she made a smart decision: She taught him about purl stitches and casting on so he could make things himself. ■ Reflecting on his first attempt, he says, "I was so nervous that I would mess up. She had to get me a vodka spritzer." ■ That was Christmas 2017. Since then, Jack has started listening to *CraftyPlanner* podcasts. He frequents Gather Here and other craft shops. He thinks about color combinations. In fact, he's gotten so into knitting that he's no longer afraid to pull out the needles and yarn in front of others, especially when he's traveling, which he does often as he crosses the country sharing his research on low-income college students. ■ "Flight attendants recognize me now," he says. "One of the flight attendants told another, 'Our friend in 1B is a knitter,' when she recognized me but could not place my face immediately. I also have people come up to me in the airport to ask me what I am making." ■ So far Jack has knitted scarves, his latest in pastels, but plans on tackling a blanket and washcloths. Eventually he'll try his dream project: a quilt. ■ "We bought a sewing machine for the house and have a crafting corner in the loft," he says. "That will take some time though. I want to get knitting down pat before switching." LH



READ OUR FEATURE ON JACK FROM THE SUMMER 2017 ISSUE: [GSE.HARVARD.EDU/ED](#)

THE MAKING OF

Senior Lecturer Junlei Li

People are often influenced by the teachers they had growing up. Junlei Li certainly was, but in the “if I ever teach, I won’t teach that way” kind of way. He did become a teacher, after a circuitous route that started with computer science and ended with him finding Mister Rogers as an adult. Now at the Ed School, Li talked to Ed. about working at the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media, *Les Mis*, and staying simple.

Where were you born?

I was born in Shanghai, China. It was during the tumultuous final years of the Cultural Revolution. My parents, like millions of young college students, were in government-mandated exile in distant farmlands. I grew up in different places and different households largely separated from one or both of my parents. I came to the United States when I was 16.

What’s a childhood memory that had a lasting impact on you later as an adult?

As my living situation fluctuated as a young child, the one continuity that stayed in my life was listening to nightly radio broadcasts of Western classics over dinner. Few people had TVs back then in China, and there were only a few radio stations (like the early days of radio broadcasting in America). This was how I got to know *David Copperfield* and *Les Misérables*. I identified with the experience of the displaced orphan who relied on the kindness of neighbors, teachers, and distant kin. So it was natural that my wife and I decided to adopt two children, and I spent a lot of my professional life working and learning in orphanages.

What’s a childhood memory that had a lasting impact on you as a researcher and educator?

I have the vivid memory of sitting in class in fourth grade as a teacher stood on the raised teaching platform haranguing the entire class for misbehavior or incompetence. I remember thinking at that exact moment that someday I hope to teach, and when I do, I would be the opposite of whatever I was experiencing. Later, I realized that I don’t quite have the stamina to be a full-time K–12 teacher. However,

I love teaching and working with grown-ups.

What did you want to be “when you grew up”?

It was either a physicist (both my parents are, so all the dinner stories they told me were about Madame Curie, Albert Einstein, Richard Feynman) or a teacher (both my parents also taught during their exile and after their return).

Why major in computer science?

As a stereotypical Asian immigrant child, I was expected to major in something like computer science. But I loved the humanities. My parents thought that humanities were not for immigrants like me with a limited grasp of language and culture. Their proof was that I got a B freshman year in psychology 101, which tarnished my otherwise all A/A- transcript. But the real reason is probably related to my childhood desire to teach. One thing I learned from computer science is how to debug a complex system that is not working. That’s part of what I do now with child-serving social systems.

You first discovered *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* as an adult?

When one grows up in a country of more than one billion people, and one is taught by family and society that the only way to distinguish yourself from the other billion is to be exceptional, there isn’t much room to accept “being themselves.” That, of course, was Mr. Rogers’ message. He would say that no one can truly learn and grow without being accepted and welcomed for exactly who they are. It was a shock to my system to hear that message, but it certainly has made a huge difference in the kind of parent I strive to be.

He became your role model.

Fred Rogers was one of the great-

est communicators on behalf of children and families. He could talk about any thorny issue with almost any audience and help people to see and feel what children and families need. He was my role model to find and communicate what is “deep and simple” in work and life in a world that noisily screams “shallow and complex.”

This “deep and simple” idea led to the Simple Interactions program you started.

Fred Rogers’ motto for his own work was “deep and simple is far more essential than shallow and complex.” I wonder, What is deep and simple about each of us who are passionate to make gentle the life of this world for children, families, and communities? We can always remind ourselves, and those around us, to look for the deep and simple amid all the shallow and complex that surrounds us.

You kept the name of the program, Simple Interactions, simple.

Yes. We don’t want people to think they have to be experts in order to interact with children well. Also, while we aim for relationships, the only thing we really have control over is how we interact in every moment. And the plural form of “interaction” means that we all develop based not on one Hollywood-style moment, but the patient, incremental accumulation of positive, humanizing interactions.

Finish this sentence: I love what I do because...

... my hope for the world is renewed each time I get to see, film, show, and talk about what helpers do for children and families through simple, everyday human interactions.



LISTEN TO AN EDCAST WITH LI ABOUT SIMPLE INTERACTIONS: [GSE.HARVARD.EDU/EDCAST](https://gse.harvard.edu/edcast)

JUNLEI LI



EdCast, Round Two

In our winter issue three years ago, we listed some of the most interesting leaders in education (and beyond) who were interviewed on the Ed School’s podcast series, the *Harvard EdCast*. With at least 250 interviews now under its belts, we thought we’d highlight some of the popular podcast’s more recent and memorable guests.

▶ Nicole Hockley, founder, Sandy Hook Promise	2/7/2017
▶ Jesse Jackson, civil rights activist	2/23/2017
▶ Tommy Chang, then-superintendent, Boston Public Schools	4/26/2017
▶ JOHN MERROW, ED.D.’73, former <i>PBS News Hour</i> education correspondent	8/17/2017
▶ JOHN PERROTTI, C.A.S.’85, director, Massachusetts Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ students	8/28/2017
▶ John King, former U.S. secretary of education	11/15/2017
▶ Cornel West, professor, philosopher, activist	1/25/2018
▶ Elmo, lovable <i>Sesame Street</i> icon	2/7/2018
▶ Dr. Ruth Westheimer, therapist, sex educator	2/14/2018
▶ Carol Dweck, professor, mindset guru	3/15/2018
▶ Minnijean Brown-Trickey, one of the Little Rock Nine	6/20/2018



TO LISTEN TO THESE AND MORE: [GSE.HARVARD.EDU/EDCAST](https://gse.harvard.edu/edcast)

Missing Something?

It’s not easy to stay on top of all the news stories out there, despite our best efforts. We get it. So we decided to give you a list of recent pieces on the Ed School’s web page (gse.harvard.edu) that you may have missed but should circle back and read. Trust us.

▶ The Power of Conversation

JENNY WOO, ED.M.’18, created a fun card game for parents, caregivers, and teachers to use to help support children’s social-emotional learning.

▶ Building a Strong School Culture

Associate Professor Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell offers six steps that principals can use to help shape a school’s culture.

▶ The Magic of Bluelaces Theater (video)

MELANIE GERTZMAN, ED.M.’18, talks about Bluelaces Theater Company, which she founded to bring immersive, multi-sensory theatrical experiences to audiences with autism and other developmental differences.

▶ Preventing Sexual Harassment at School

This collection of pieces from the Usable Knowledge initiative looks at how schools and families can navigate issues of gender equity and consent and help young people learn about healthy relationships.

▶ A Four-Day School Week?

A look at what’s gained and what’s lost when school districts give students and employees every Friday off.

▶ 8 × 8: Bold Ideas from Faculty (videos)

For the fifth year in a row, faculty have 8 minutes to present their research and their work to brand new students at orientation.

WISE WORDS

“I’m very optimistic about what I’m seeing around the country.”

In a Q&A, Senior Lecturer KAREN MAPP, ED.M.’93, ED.D.’99, discusses how more school districts are recognizing the importance of deep partnerships between families and school staff. (*The 74*)

ON MY BOOKSHELF

Tina Grotzer, Ed.M.'85, Ed.D.'93, Principal Research Scientist

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY READING? *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. It is the story of a young girl, Liesl, growing up in a foster family in Nazi Germany. She steals books, each of which are significant to her learning. It chronicles her growing awareness of the broader political context, including why her foster family is hiding a man of Jewish faith in their basement. It is hauntingly written and compelling in how it juxtaposes Liesl's innocence, hope, and resilience to the horrific events of the time.

WHAT DREW YOU TO IT? My mother grew up during World War II in Nazi Germany. She was four years old when the war started and so was oblivious to the broader events around her. With nine children in her family and her father in hiding to avoid Nazi orders to join the army, her parents focused on trying to feed them. During my own childhood, I struggled to understand what the war meant for my mother growing up but also felt guilt that my grandparents didn't do more. The book has helped me to consider what they understood from day to day and how it differed from what we know looking back.

FAVORITE BOOK TO ASSIGN TO YOUR STUDENTS? *Fires in the Minds* by Kathleen Cushman. It is an important reminder that while we focus so heavily on designing curriculum for kids, giving them agency and trust can yield incredible outcomes.

FICTION OR NONFICTION? This is hard to answer. I read a lot of nonfiction because it fuels my work. I find it hard to stay put because I have conversations in my head with the author and often end up wanting to write. I love reading Atul Gawande because the ideas are compelling, but the narratives are powerful and engaging like fiction.

FAVORITE PLACE TO CURL UP WITH A GOOD BOOK? The hammock, where I can hear the birds and insects all around me.

NEXT UP: *Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration* by Keith Sawyer. I am really interested in concepts related to "group flow" and the dynamics that enable it. So much of what we focus on and reward in the world relates to individual accomplishment; we have yet to develop structures that fully explore or recognize the power of collaboration and collaborative flow.

TEACHERS BRIDGING DIFFERENCE: EXPLORING IDENTITY WITH ART

Marit Dewhurst

In her new book, **MARIT DEWHURST, ED.M.'03, ED.D.'09**, a professor at City College of New York, looks at the ways that educators can use art to better understand how our different identities tied to race, class, culture, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and nationality shape who students are and how they move in the world. She writes, "The ability to understand our students, their families, and their communities is imperative if we aim to facilitate empowering learning experiences."

Harvard
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Press

CHILDREN AT THE CENTER

Betty Bardige, Megina Baker, and Ben Mardell

Calling themselves tour guides, authors **BETTY BARDIGE, ED.D.'83**, and Project Zero researchers and investigators Megina Baker and Ben Mardell give readers an inside look at Boston Public Schools' early education programs for preK and kindergarten students, including how the program was built in the city, early results, examples of success, and challenges and barriers faced. But the book isn't all theory and policy — the authors eavesdrop in classrooms, at community events, and during staff meetings for the city office that oversees the programs. *Children at the Center* not only tells the story, but, as the authors write, "shows the program in action," too.

Harvard
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Press

USING GRAMMAR TO IMPROVE WRITING: RECIPES FOR ACTION

Sarah Tantillo

In her third book since graduating from the Ed School, **SARAH TANTILLO, ED.M.'91**, offers what may seem like just a grammar instructional manual but is, she says, "secretly a book about how to teach students how to write clearly." And that matters because writing clearly seems to be a problem for many students, she says. Tantillo doesn't waste time with the easy-to-follow book, starting with a critical chapter for instructors called "What should we STOP doing?" and including sections on helping students who are not at grade level, factors that affect how well we write, and what we should be teaching from kindergarten through high school.

BEFORE SHE SLEEPS

Bina Shah

Described by *Kirkus Reviews* as "a novel that is in explicit conversation with *The Handmaid's Tale*," *Before She Sleeps* by journalist and writer **BINA SHAH, ED.M.'94**, focuses on a world devastated by war, the Virus, and gender selection, where young women are sent to indoctrination camps, forced to become mothers, and required to take on multiple husbands. Men hold all the power. There are the resisters, of course, the women who live in a hidden collective called the Panah, women who refuse to be wives and instead go underground in order to be free.

TRANSFORMATIVE SCHOOLING

Vajra Watson

VAJRA WATSON, ED.M.'01, ED.D.'08, director of research and policy for equity at University of California Davis, writes about the ways that schools can become more racially inclusive. As a case study, the book follows efforts made over five years by the Oakland Unified School District to join forces with community organizers, teachers, parents, religious leaders, neighborhood elders, and students to launch the Office of African American Male Achievement and attempt to disrupt underachievement. "Altogether," Watson writes, "a school district and a community joined forces to resurrect possibility."



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

Ed.
Winter
2019



GIRLHOOD

After years of social gains and with bright futures within reach, why are things *still* so difficult for middle school girls?

STORY BY LORY HOUGH
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONATHAN KOZOWYK



Last

September, *The New York Times* came out with a story with a promising opening paragraph that made me happy: “Girls have been told they can be anything they want to be, and it shows. They are seizing opportunities closed to previous generations — in science, sports, and leadership.”

And then I read the second paragraph: “But they’re also getting another message: What they look like matters more than any of that.”

The piece came on the heels of a slew of recent research that showed a rise in depression and anxiety and a dip in confidence for girls, especially as they enter middle school. Friends were telling me stories about their struggling daughters, particularly around social media and feeling left out. Around the same time, a group of us saw the movie *Eighth Grade*, about an apprehensive 13-year-old girl enduring the last week of middle school. As we left the theater, several of the women immediately started talking about their own middle school experiences — how uncomfortable they felt, how horrible it was. They talked about scenes that resonated with them.

I remember thinking: Wait. Have things really not gotten better for girls? My friends were in middle school 25, 30 years ago. As *The New York Times* article pointed out, girls today are seizing opportunities previously unavailable to them. They are more likely to sign online petitions and volunteer. They are doing better academically, outperforming boys in English and language arts, and often in math. Women outnumber men in college, especially women from low-income and minority families. Kayla, the protagonist in *Eighth Grade*, was smart, creative, and kind.

So why was she also painfully awkward and seemingly friendless? Why haven’t things gotten better for middle school girls? And why, I wondered, are we still having these conversations?

I started talking to academics and developmental psychologists. To guidance counselors and parents, to friends and coworkers and middle schoolers. I pulled out some of my books from the early 1990s, when I first dipped into this subject, when girl struggles were first being studied in depth. When headlines in *The New York Times* read, “Confident at 11, Confused at 16.”

Almost no one I talked to, including Bo Burnham, the director of *Eighth Grade*, was surprised that despite the progress made — the better grades,

the better opportunities — middle school girls were still suffering. Some even felt it was getting harder.

“I’m not surprised, no,” Burnham says. “There’s been a lot of progress made, but the cultural pressures are still insane. And culture is what leads you at that age, I think.”

Especially, it seems, for girls. “Girls in middle school are hitting the culture in very ferocious ways,” says **NIOBE WAY, ED.D.’94**, a professor of developmental psychology at New York University and author of several books, including *Deep Secrets*.

It’s more like a collision, actually. Although girls and boys are both affected negatively as they move into adolescence, boys tend to lose their way later, and often in less self-directed ways. (This, I know, could be its own feature story.) For girls, the transition to middle school is usually when they start to grasp what society really expects from females.

Burnham saw this when he was prepping for his movie, as he watched hundreds of adolescents’ vlogs online. Girls tended to talk about their souls, boys about things like video games.

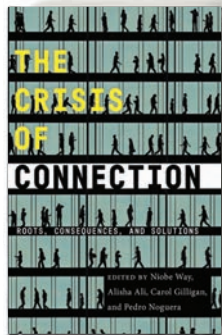
“I think our culture forces girls to ask deeper questions of themselves earlier than boys,” he says. “I feel like our culture asks boys ‘What do you like to do?’ and asks girls ‘Who are you?’ I think there’s an immense interior mental pressure put on girls, so ‘deep’ is kind of their starting point. You can’t not be deep when you’ve been buried. It’s also a very specific time in life, and girls are mentally and emotionally maturing a bit quicker at 13 maybe.”

LYN MIKEL BROWN, ED.D.’89, a professor at Colby College and author of several books on female development, says part of this is “the kind of increased perspective-taking that happens at early adolescence, where girls start to see how others see them and the importance of performing as the right kind of girl.” Who they once were when they were 8, 9, 10 — confident, sure, spunky, even bossy — “isn’t okay, and what they thought was true is no longer true.”

Simone de Beauvoir wrote about this in *The Second Sex* back in 1949: “Girls who were the subjects of their own lives become the objects of others’ lives. Girls stop *being* and start *seeming*.”

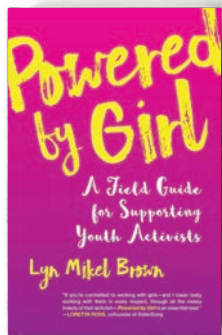
The pressure that comes from this understanding, this transition from subject to object, disorients — and changes — many girls as they move out of elementary school and into middle school. In 1991, when the groundbreaking study *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* was released by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), 60 percent of elementary-age girls said they were happy the way they were; 67 percent of boys said the same thing. By middle school, those numbers had dropped for both genders, but significantly for girls overall: to 37 percent, with 56 percent for boys. (The report found that black and Latinx girls fared much better: 59 percent of black middle school girls said they were happy the way they were;

RESOURCES



The Crisis of Connection: Roots, Consequences, and Solutions (2018)

EDITED BY NIOBE WAY, ALISAH ALI, CAROL GILLIGAN, AND PEDRO NOGUERA



Powered by Girl: A Field Guide for Supporting Youth Activists (2016)

LYN MIKEL BROWN

“I think there’s an immense interior mental pressure put on girls, so ‘deep’ is kind of their starting point. You can’t not be deep when you’ve been buried.”

BO BURNHAM, DIRECTOR, *EIGHTH GRADE*



54 percent for Latinx girls.) Unfortunately it hasn't gotten better. In 2018, pollsters from Ypulse and the Confidence Code for Girls found that between the ages of 8 and 14, girls' confidence levels fall by 30 percent. At the lowest point, at age 14, boys' confidence is still 27 percent higher than girls'.

Professor Martin West found similar confidence drops for girls when he surveyed 400,000 California students to see how social-emotional learning develops from fourth grade to senior year. While girls have a higher level of self-management and self-awareness compared to boys, he found that their self-confidence begins lagging in sixth grade and only starts to increase in high school — almost the opposite of boys that age.

“Boys' confidence in their ability to succeed academically peaks in sixth grade and then declines steadily through 11th grade,” West says, citing the report, “but the total drop in confidence between fourth grade and eighth grade for boys is less than one sixth as large as the drop for girls. And girls' confidence continues to fall at a faster rate than that of boys through 11th grade.”

It's why we start hearing once self-possessed girls saying “I don't know,” in contrast to boys, who start to say, “I don't care.” (In fact, Way writes in her new book, *The Crisis of Connection*, boys do care, especially about friendships, which more resemble the plot of *Love Story* than *Lord of the Flies*.)

Brown made the “I don't know” connection while she was studying gender issues at Harvard in the late 1980s and early 1990s with former Ed School Professor Carol Gilligan. She was also working on a seminal book, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*.

“Girls were wondering, Is it safe to say what I really think? I'm not sure. Better to hedge my bet and play ignorant,” Brown says. “We heard a big increase in ‘I don't know’ responses at early adolescence from girls who were pretty open and outspoken just a year earlier.”

This struggle to stay connected to their selves, to say what they think and feel, has been referred to as girls “losing their voice” although Brown prefers a different word to describe this major transition.

“I like ‘crisis’ rather than ‘loss of voice,’” she says. “We found girls really struggle and often resist at this time, and they don't lose their voices as much as they take them underground.” This “crisis of connection,” as Brown and Gilligan call it, forces girls to make a choice.

“Can they stay with themselves and what they feel and think and know and go out of sync with the world,” Brown says, “or get in sync with the world but not with themselves?”

When this happens, the struggle can be too hard for girls to understand at this point in their development, Mary Pipher writes in *Reviving Ophelia*. “They become overwhelmed and symptomatic.”

One way this shows up: anxiety and depression. A 2017 study in the journal *Pediatrics* found that between the years 2005 and 2014, adolescent depression rose steadily, but particularly for girls. For boys, the prevalence of a major depressive episode increased from 4.5 percent in 2004 to 5.7 percent in 2014. For girls, it increased from 13.1 percent to 17.3 percent.

CHESSIE SHAW, ED.M.'98, a counselor in Massachusetts, sees the anxiety at her middle school, especially once girls reach seventh grade.

“Seventh grade is when I have seen some girls start to question their academic abilities and intelligence. This is especially true in math and science. It's also when a lot of anxiety and self-harm behaviors come to light,” she says. For example, “I definitely see the most cutting in seventh grade. It's often around feeling that they aren't doing well enough in school or that they aren't ‘good enough’ in some way.” By the end of eighth, some girls regain their confidence, “however, for another smaller group, it's when real mental health difficulties start to entrench — suicidal ideation and attempts, experimenting with alcohol and drugs and sex.”

She sees a lot less of this self-destructive behavior with girls of color — a pattern that is consistent with the 1991 AAUW research. “There is definitely relational aggression between girls of color, but it doesn't appear to result in as much anxiety and self-doubt as in white girls,” she says. “Students of color who participate in the Metco program” — a Massachusetts program that sends kids from underperforming to higher-performing school districts — seem to “have a strong support group in each other. I wonder if this outside-of-school support group is what, in part, shields them from some of the depression.”

So is it actually harder to be a middle school girl today? Rachel Simmons, author of *Odd Girl Out*, thinks that in some ways it is, in part, paradoxically, *because* of the gains women and girls have made.

“We hope for girls to be smart and brave and interested in STEM fields, but we still expect them to be sexually attractive and have a witty and appealing online presence,” she told *ParentMap* in 2018. “No matter how many achievements they accrue, they feel that they are not enough as they are.... We haven't really upgraded our expectations; we've just added on to the old ones.”

These expectations pile on the pressure. “Add this ‘role overload’ to the fact that girls continue to need to please others first and be likable,” Simmons says. “Girls are still raised with a psychology that is trained to think about other people before themselves. This all is a real recipe for unhappiness.”

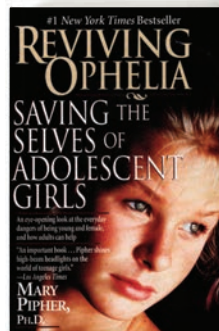
The 2018 Ypulse Confidence Code poll found that more than half of teen girls feel pressure to be perfect, while three in four worry about failing. Between ages 12 and 13, the percentage of girls who say they're “not allowed” to fail increases by a stag-



Deep Secrets: Boys' Friendships and the Crisis of Connection (2011)
NIOBE WAY



Raising Their Voices: The Politics of Girls' Anger (1998)
LYN MIKEL BROWN



Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls (1994)
MARY PIPHER



“Girls in middle school are hitting the culture in very ferocious ways.”

NIOBE WAY, ED.D.'94

gering 150 percent. Included is the pressure to physically look a certain way. In a survey of 1,000 young people by Plan International, about three-quarters of girls 14–19 said they felt judged as a sexual object or felt unsafe as a girl. Half said they had heard boys making sexual comments or jokes about girls every day. One third said they heard similar comments from men in their families.

As **CATHERINE STEINER-ADAIR, ED.M.'77, ED.D.'84**, a clinical psychologist who has written extensively on body image and eating disorders, told NPR in 2018 after the *Pediatrics* depression study came out, women and girls are “still continually bombarded by media messages, dominant culture, humor, and even political figures about how to look — no matter how smart, gifted, or passionate they are.” Celebrities are fat shamed. Supermodels are told by presidents they are no longer 10s. Entertainers like Beyoncé are dubbed “fierce” but never look anything but amazing and sexualized.

JOEY WADDY, ED.M.'13, C.A.S.'14, a counselor at a preK–8 school in New Orleans, says girls don't always know what to make of these images.

They are “struggling to match the person they felt they were or wanted to be with the examples of celebrities and social media influencers,” he says.

Brown says these powerful messages hit girls just as their own bodies are changing physically.

“While boys' bodies become larger, associated with strength and power, still in our culture girls' bodies become associated with risk and constraint and warnings,” she says. “Don't walk home alone at night. Don't be alone with boys or drink with boys; be sure you know what's in that cup; be the sexual gatekeeper; don't dress like a slut. Adults at home and school give once-outspoken, often gender-bending preteen girls messages about how to behave in order to be liked and fit in, how not to come off as mean or bitchy, how to avoid harassment and assault or getting written up by the dress code.”

Boys get rules, too, she says, but the rules don't constrain in the same “relentless” way. “Even the best advice they get — be polite, be respectful to girls, know your developing physical power, don't hurt others — isn't close to the same policing girls receive. It also assumes their power in the world.”

Which brings us to what truly *has* changed for middle schoolers since we were kids: social media. Given that girls spend more than 90 minutes a day on social media, compared to boys at 52 minutes, according to Common Sense Media in 2015, it's not surprising that reports have surfaced citing the negative impact social media could be having on adolescents, especially girls. Beyond the reports, it's also what I'm hearing from friends helping their kids navigate technology. There are fewer complaints from parents with boys. They're

there, but more have to do with playing *Fortnite* and less about the anxiety that develops after reading group texts that border on bullying or feeling left out after looking at photos on Instagram. Feeling excluded certainly isn't new, but back when I was that age, if you weren't invited to the mall, you rarely found out, or you found out days after. And perhaps most crucial: No one else shared your humiliation because only the people involved knew about the slight (or perceived slight). Nowadays, seeing photos online of your friends at Starbucks without you is immediate and very public. All of your other friends see it, too. Cell phones, writes Simmons, have become the new bathroom wall.

EMILY WEINSTEIN, ED.M.'14, ED.D.'17, an Ed School postdoctoral fellow who studies the digital lives of young people, says this has a real impact on adolescent relationships.

“Teens in my interview studies describe how the real-time nature of social apps means that a Friday night can be immediately ruined,” she says. “If you learn by word of mouth on a Monday that your friends hung out without you, you probably still enjoyed your own weekend. In contrast, learning about exclusion in real time on Instagram can doubly disrupt your social connections because it makes you feel disconnected from the people who left you out and it can interfere with your experience of connecting with the people who you're actually with.”

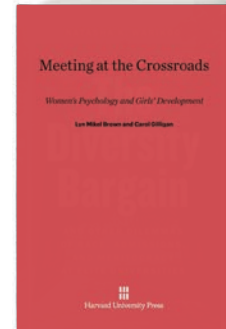
Today's apps are also more demanding than they were, even just a few years ago. As Burnham told NPR when talking about his early career making YouTube videos, “When I was on social media, it was, like, MySpace, which was, OK, post a profile picture of yourself and list some of your interests and list your friends. And now it's Instagram, Twitter. ‘What do you look like? What are you thinking?’” he says. “Those are really baser, deeper, stranger questions. And the way kids interface with it, I think, changes the way they feel about the world and themselves.”

Shaw says this goes beyond just feeling left out, especially with everyone curating what they post online by picking only their best photos or altering photos with fun, flattering filters.

“Of course selfies are designed to make the subject look in their best light,” she says. “Seeing a picture online can feel even worse than if the uninvited happened upon them in person.”

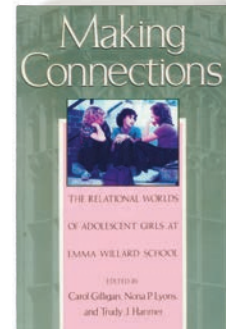
Social media also allows people to say and do things they might not in person.

“The alleged ‘beauty’ of social media is that you can be anything and anyone,” Shaw says. “However, how it plays out for most kids is feeling it's OK to say and do lots of things one would never do in real life. Most boys would never ask girls to lift up their shirts in real life. However plenty do online. Most girls would never say such mean things about a classmate to their face, but they do online.”



Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development (1992)

LYN MIKEL BROWN
CAROL GILLIGAN



Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at the Emma Willard School (1990)

EDITED BY CAROL GILLIGAN,
NONA LYONS, AND TRUDY HANMER



The Second Sex (1949)

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR



Eighth Grade features Elsie Fisher, who was nominated for several awards, including a Golden Globe for best actress.

There are also a lot of veiled insults and inside jokes that get shared, she says. “Because the poster has a much larger audience on social media, any little mean joke can balloon into a much bigger event and can quickly go from involving five or six girls to almost the whole grade. There are also lots of group texts with sometimes up to 50 kids on them. Kids will delete and block each other and say mean things to each other constantly on these chats. When a parent or I say something like, ‘Just take yourself out of the chat,’ they won't. The chat is too much a part of their social life. If they left it, they feel like they wouldn't have any friends, so they endure the comments and constant fights.”

As one mom of two middle school daughters acknowledges, giving up popular apps isn't easy.

“I believe that Instagram is evil for middle school, and yet I understand that not having access to social media can hamstring a teen socially,” she says. Although her eighth-grader's coping strategy when she sees photos and feels left out is to put the phone away, she can't seem to stay away. “Oftentimes she just blindly scrolls through liking everyone's stuff because that is what you are supposed to do and how you get likes back,” she says. “She also rarely posts her own pics. Her profile is nearly empty. It's too stressful for her, and her fear of rejection or embarrassment is intense. I get that; I'm the same way.”

Another mom reluctantly agreed to let her daughter get an app called musical.ly, which lets users make videos set to music. She thought she was shielding her from Instagram and Snapchat issues.

“I can remember one morning when she was getting ready for school. I went in to check on her and she was sitting on her bed in tears,” she says. “As we talked and I dug deeper, I realized she had been on musical.ly, seeing a girl in her grade making a video.” To her daughter, this girl was perfectly dressed with hair and makeup just right. Her daughter “went on about how she didn't have cute clothes or wasn't as pretty or fit or popular as this girl. As a mother, this broke my heart.” And all of this happened before the school day even started.

Social media itself isn't to blame for how girls today are feeling. I know that. It's not the apps themselves that are the problems — it's how they are being used. I also know they can be used in positive ways, especially for girls who normally feel silenced. Elsie Fisher, the actress who plays Kayla in the *Eighth Grade* movie (and who was in eighth grade when the movie was filmed), told *Vulture* last summer that while the Internet gives space to cyberbullies, it also gives space to people who don't feel confident taking space.

“It can be used for amazing things,” she says.

After I watched *Eighth Grade*, I thought about the spaces that Kayla created: floating through

school, nervous and self-conscious, and at home, alone, confidently making self-help videos. Was this ability to create two selves a bad thing?

Burnham doesn't see it that way.

“There certainly is something sad about not being able to embody the ‘you’ you want to be in real life,” he says, “but I'm glad Kayla has a place where she feels comfortable being confident, or pretending to be confident, which to me is just as good. I think we adults often think of the Internet as a place where kids are severely judged, which is true, but it is also often the only safe space kids have to express themselves honestly, whatever that word means.”

Weinstein agrees with Burnham.

“My interpretation was that Kayla was figuring out who she wanted to be, and she was in the process of learning how to express that identity,” she says. “While Kayla didn't initially feel comfortable raising her voice in offline settings, her YouTube channel provided an outlet to start practicing. And then this practice did transfer to her offline life. Remember the karaoke scene?”

In that scene, which Burnham has said he consistently likes the most, Kayla volunteers to sing karaoke at a birthday pool party with the cool kids that her dad basically gets her invited to. It was her triumph, her resister moment, her time to resurface her voice, even if she was ignored by the other kids.

And that brings us to the good news for middle school girls: Things often start to get better by high school. “When I ask teens and young adults if they ever feel left out related to their social media use, one vein of responses I hear is that they used to feel this way, when they were in middle school or new to social apps,” Weinstein says. “Even older high schoolers describe the experience as something that was more of an issue for their past selves, back before they figured out who their true friends were or how to navigate FOMO — fear of missing out.”

And there are definitely resisters — the girls who collide with culture after elementary school but find a way to stay confident and sure. The girls who don't go underground, or at least find a way to burrow back. As Brown says, “They're [Parkland activist] Emma Gonzalez. That's who they're looking to. They're not playing the game. And although girls and women are still making their way through inequitable systems,” the system is shifting of late with the #MeToo movement and the Women's March.

Waddy sees more resistance now, too.

“The one encouraging thing I've seen is more and more of my students becoming passionate about these types of social justice issues,” he says.

And, as Brown points out, “more than ever, we see women having one another's backs, and that's a huge shift. Girls are watching and trying to make sense of it all. The important thing is that they see there are different perspectives and points of view and that the power is shifting. That's freeing.”



Effort Monumental



A public boarding school provides a stable home away from home for some of D.C.'s most at-risk students.

STORY BY MIKE UNGER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY WALTER SMITH

It's dinnertime at the Langmaids.



Just four of their eight girls are home on this Thursday night in October, so things are relatively calm. Relatively.

Home is a third-story suite at Monument Academy, the charter boarding school in Washington, D.C., where Paul and Joy Langmaid work as house parents. Their “kids” are seven middle school girls with varying levels of social and emotional challenges from some of the poorest sections of the city, and their own 3-year-old daughter, Micaela. When I walk into the home — the term that’s purposefully used at Monument — I’m greeted by Paul and the family dogs, Midas and Lucy. In the kitchen, where there’s debate raging over whether to prepare ravioli or something, as one of the girls puts it, less “gross,” I say hi to a seventh-grader, who ignores me and retreats into the bedroom that she shares with a roommate. Langmaid excuses himself and follows her. A few seconds later they emerge, and K. (her first initial) walks up to me with her right hand extended.

“Nice to meet you,” she says, a shy smile creeping onto her face.

Such is life at Monument, an innovative school that is attempting to educate — in all senses of the word — some of Washington’s most traumatized children. More than 80 percent of the school’s 130 students have been involved in the child welfare system — including foster care or temporary removal from their homes — at some point in their lives, and data show that they are half as likely to graduate from high school on time as their peers. On average they have attended at least three schools prior to Monument, but none of them has attended a school *like* Monument, where the overwhelming majority of students live during the week. (All students go home on the weekend, to their foster families, parents, or caretakers.)

“There aren’t many schools that work with this population of students,” says Head of School

DENISE MILES, ED.M.’05, who’s been at Monument since it opened four years ago. “We have the opportunity to really influence all aspects of a student’s life. When I was a high school principal, I often said if I could just rent the house across the street and give them a place that’s stable and quiet, where they can do homework and not have to worry about taking care of siblings or what’s going on in the neighborhood or anything else, then we could really move them further faster. Here we can be working on life skills with them, and they’re getting counseling, and house parents are doing academic support in the evening. They’re learning 24 hours a day.”

The lesson right now is one of socialization and manners. K. listens to Langmaid and alters her behavior both because he and his wife have established a culture of respect in the household, and because she wants to rack up core values points.

“We earn them by being kind to one another, being respectful to their daughter, the dogs, the house, and doing what we’re supposed to do,” another girl tells me.

When I ask about their favorite snack food, three girls answer in chorus: “Ice cream!”

Allowing kids to scarf down a bowl of cookies and cream after school is a brave move for any parent, let alone one living with a basketball team-worth of middle schoolers.

“They know if they can’t handle their sugar, then they can’t buy ice cream anymore,” Paul Langmaid says. “We’ve had a couple of girls that tried and failed, and that’s okay.”

MONUMENT ACADEMY is the brainchild of Emily Bloomfield, an economist who served as an elected member of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education, and later on the D.C. Public Charter School Board. It stemmed from a personal situation she encountered in which her aunt and uncle-in-law took custody of their two young grandchildren.

She wondered what their futures would hold if they entered the foster care system or were adopted, so she began examining statistics. What she found horrified her. Students in the foster care system move homes one and a half to two times a year, destroying relationships with friends and teachers; they’re twice as likely to drop out of high school; and only 2 percent earn four-year college degrees.

“I thought that was not acceptable,” Bloomfield says. “Considering that roughly 25,000 kids age out of foster care every year [in the United States], and it will cost the government \$8 billion for the next six years of their lives, it’s a staggering waste of money but an even more staggering waste of lives. I began to think, Is this an inevitability?”

She started researching what does work for children in foster care, and discovered that personal-





ized education and a relationship with a caring adult are key. Life skills that they often miss, like cooking and financial literacy, also are important.

Bloomfield put together a white paper and shared it with educators, policy experts, and legal advocates around Washington. Her idea was based loosely on the Milton Hershey School, but unlike the renowned Pennsylvania institution, she designed Monument to be a weekday-only boarding school, in part to avoid the appearance of institutionalization, and in part to get buy-in from parents and caretakers. She and cofounder Marlene Magrino submitted the school's charter application in February 2014, and it was approved that May. After a year of planning the school opened for fifth-graders in August 2015. It's added a grade each year since, and now has fifth through eighth. As a charter school, it receives extra financial support from the city, and is around 90 percent publicly funded.

According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, about 3.2 million students attend 7,000 charter schools in 44 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Despite that, says **KAY MERSETH, M.A.T.'69, ED.D.'82**, a senior lecturer at Harvard and former director of the Ed School's Teacher Education Program, the popularity of charter schools has been waning in recent years.

"There was tremendous growth, and they've run into a little bit of a buzz saw with people suggesting that they're re-segregating the schools," she says. "I get pretty frustrated with the criticism because the good ones are trying to provide an alternative for kids who have lousy choices."

That was exactly Bloomfield's aim. Creating Monument outside of the charter school framework would have been an impossibility, she believes.

"Charter schools are meant to be places where you can incubate an idea and try a really new thing," she says. "We never could have done this in a traditional public school setting because of the whole idea of boarding and using our budget in such discretionary ways. Our first year we did so much revising of schedules, job descriptions, programming, all these things that are really hard to do when you're working in a more [rigid structure]. We could be really nimble."

Bloomfield envisioned a school that enrolled a high number of students in foster care, but there's been a movement in Washington away from placing kids into that system. In June 2016, D.C.'s Child and Family Services reported 1,020 kids in out-of-home placement, compared to 1,676 four years earlier.

"Some of the outcome data around foster care is shocking because you think, Oh, if we get the kids out then they're going to do better," says **SHANE MULHERN, ED.M.'02**, Monument's president. "But unless they're in physical or sexual jeopardy in terms of abuse, it's better to keep them with the parents. They do far better. The reality is family is family.

There's an important skill to be gained by having to navigate the family dynamic."

H OUSED IN A FORMER elementary school less than two miles from the U.S. Capitol, Monument has already threatened to outgrow its physical space. Narrow halls mean students (70 percent of whom are male) are sometimes too close for comfort, which can lead to confrontations. Despite the fact that words like "kindness" and "mindfulness" are painted on the otherwise sparsely decorated white hallway walls, violence is a reality here. Mulhern was punched by a student last year. Another tried to stab Miles with scissors.

"Adolescents in general know exactly where your buttons are and will poke them on purpose to elicit a response," Miles says. "But our kids are especially skilled at that and often are looking for the conflict because that's what they're used to."

Still, both stress that aggressive behavior is a manifestation of trauma, not the core of who a child is. Dealing with disruptive situations, even in classes that average only 12 students, is difficult. Staffing has been among Monument's biggest challenges.

"Finding people who can do this kind of work is tough. It is not how teachers have traditionally been trained," says Mulhern, who previously worked at the U.S. Department of Education as director of the Investing in Innovation Fund. "Part of my job is developing partnerships and residency programs where we can have individuals come in and build their capacity to create a pipeline for ourselves, but

"I get pretty frustrated with the criticism, because the good ones are trying to provide an alternative for kids who have lousy choices."

also a pipeline where folks can go do this in other schools. But I don't have a simple answer in terms of the people and the training. We are living in it and figuring it out."

As Mulhern gives me a tour of the academic space, after-school activities like sports, dance, cooking,

and chess are taking place. During the week, Monument students almost never stop learning. Among the staff of more than 100 are 11 on the well-being team, which provides behavioral, emotional, and therapeutic support. In addition to their academic curriculum, every student at Monument receives two hours of weekly instruction on mindfulness, emotional regulation, and distress tolerance.

In the third-floor student wellness lounge, complete with beanbag chairs, an exercise bike, and colorfully painted walls, Mulhern stresses the importance of the school's psychologists, counselors, and social workers.

“There’s so much we don’t know in terms of supporting students who have had adverse life experiences,” he says. “Running a \$1.5 billion initiative at the Department of Education is a cakewalk compared to this. It is humbling every day. But I have never worked with a more talented, committed group of adults. This team and what they do on a day-to-day basis and what they’re willing to do for children, they’re the heroes of this work.”

Because the school is relatively new, lots of outcome data is not available. But its 85 percent retention rate is impressive considering its enrollment is more than 50 percent special needs, as compared to about 12 percent in most other charter schools, Mulhern says. Homelessness is also a growing problem. Perhaps as a result of gentrification in Washington, about 35 percent of Monument’s students this year are homeless (which includes living in a hotel, shelter, or with relatives).

“These kids have experienced a lot of trauma in their lives, so the challenge is creating a structured academic environment that caters to their specific challenges because trauma presents differently in each individual student,” says Zenon Mills, who teaches fifth- and sixth-grade special education. “I had a student who, the first time he saw me, said I was his favorite teacher ever. I have another student who, no matter what I do, it’s incredibly difficult for me to connect to him on a one-to-one level. He needs a lot more social reinforcement. And that’s pretty standard — seeing that kind of spectrum.”

“These kids have experienced a lot of trauma in their lives, so the challenge is creating a structured academic environment that caters to their specific challenges because trauma presents differently in each individual student.”

He credits the school’s boarding model for providing kids with a stable emotional and social environment that helps them in the classroom. When Mulhern uses his key card to open a door that leads to student life homes, it’s as if we’ve entered a different world. Paintings of palm trees line the walls; welcome home banners decorate front doors. The smell of Italian food wafts through the air.

Each home comprises a common open space that includes a living room, large dining table, and kitchen. Students share small bedrooms that have bunk beds and the bathrooms are also shared, dorm style. Paid house parents, who are usually a married couple (like the Langmaids) or two individuals, run the household. They have their own room and bathroom within the suite.

Coexisting with up to 10 middle school students is certainly not a job for those who lack patience. It can be exhausting and emotionally draining, but

also quite satisfying. Denise Miles started at Monument as a house parent.

“It took us several months to build the trust and the culture in our home to where they knew they were safe, they knew nobody was going into their bedroom to mess with them,” she says. “They could come home, relax, do their homework, do different activities. Once you establish that culture in the home, you see the decompression happen, and then you see it during the day as well.”

Perhaps not surprisingly, students who board more consistently tend to do better at Monument academically than their peers who don’t. (Boarding isn’t required, but it is strongly encouraged and widely done.) Students must read for 30 minutes each night.

J. is a seventh-grader in her third year at Monument. During the week she lives with the Langmaids, an arrangement she enjoys.

“I do miss my mom sometimes, but sometimes we argue and I think it’s better for both of us to have our own space,” she says.

That students shuttle between two worlds — Monument and their often less-stable home — creates a challenge for house parents like the Langmaids. Their rules and strict structure often don’t exist for the kids outside their home, making for a sometimes rocky readjustment period after the weekend. When the students arrive back on Sunday afternoon, they can be upset because they fought with a family member — or because they enjoyed their time at home and didn’t want to leave.

At Monument, the challenges for staff are huge; the jobs are so much more than nine-to-five. What makes it worthwhile?

“One of the students who was in my home is one of our brightest students,” Miles says. “He told me when he was in fifth grade, ‘My second-grade teacher told me I was the angriest person she’d ever met.’ He would upend furniture, run out of the classroom, and he was in fights constantly. He’s an eighth-grader now and hasn’t been in a single fight. They’ll be typical eighth-grade adolescent push-back, but there’s none of that aggression, for the most part” — attributed, she thinks, to the the small, close-knit atmosphere at Monument and to meaningful collaboration with his mother and grandmother. “He’s looking at selective high schools now and really sees himself as a student with the opportunity to do what other good students are doing, which is not the person that he was four years ago.”

At the Langmaids, K. has transformed in the hour since I arrived. She’s talkative and engaged in the conversation. As I prepare to leave, she thoughtfully thanks me for visiting her home.

“Thanks for having me,” I reply. “It was a pleasure meeting you.” Then homework continues.

MIKE UNGER IS A WRITER BASED IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



Denise Miles
HEAD OF SCHOOL



Emily Bloomfield
COFOUNDER AND CEO



Shane Mulhern
PRESIDENT

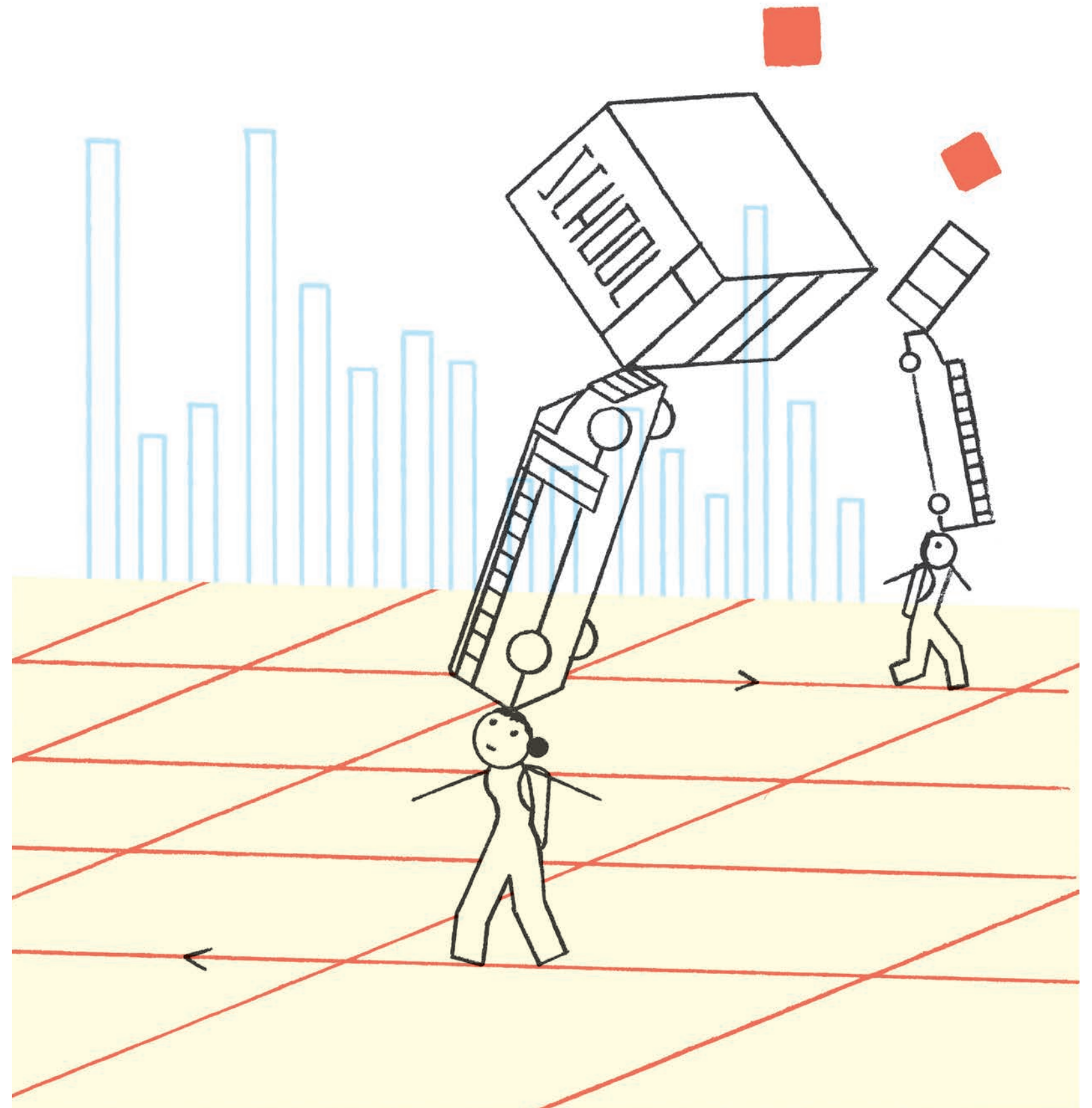
A Typical Day at Monument

7–7:30 a.m.	wake up, chores, and showers
7:30–8 a.m.	breakfast together as a home
8–8:25 a.m.	complete chores, goal setting, and head to advisory
8:30–9:10 a.m.	whole school is in advisory with members from well-being, operations, academics, and student life. Student groups are centered around DBT steps (dialectical behavioral therapy), such as distress tolerance
9:10 a.m.–3:30 p.m.	typical school day that includes lunch, recess, two electives, and core content classes
3:30–4:15 p.m.	dismissal, return to the homes, relax, have a snack, and prepare for the evening
4:15–7 p.m.	family meetings in the home for students, chores, and meal prep, while others attend extended-day activities outside of the home, including Girls on the Run, Lego League Robotics, Cooking Matters, and African dance
7–7:30 p.m.	dinner together
7:30–8:30 p.m.	homework, showers, chores, family meetings, or house activity together such as games, crafts, or time in the gym
8:30 p.m.	begin prep for bed and 30 minutes of nightly required reading
9:30 p.m.	lights out

How Boston's bold attempt to increase equity and reduce student travel time by giving families smarter options didn't quite work — but could.

STORY BY PROFESSOR NANCY E. HILL
ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAURENT CILLUFFO

“Good Schools Close to Home”



less experience, and higher teacher turnover, characteristics that make it difficult for children to receive an education that sparks creativity and critical thinking and prepares them for their future.

Like many districts, Boston Public Schools — after failed attempts to solve such segregation and inequities through busing policies — turned to “controlled” school choice policies to give parents the option to send their children to schools outside of their neighborhoods. Depending on how you look at it, this either put the onus on parents or it empowered them to select schools.

School choice policies are not new. They have been used as a means to provide families with school options that are not directly tied to their neighborhood of residence. At the individual family level, school choice policies enable all families to choose schools that match their interests and needs, especially providing lower-income families with options beyond the neighborhood school. At the district level, school choice policies can trigger market processes that help districts determine which schools are more or less attractive to families and to guide districts in replicating schools that work for families and that families want. With all school choice policies, parents make choices at the time of registration, often ranking several schools. When more parents choose a school for their child than there are seats available, a lottery system is employed to determine who gets desired seats.

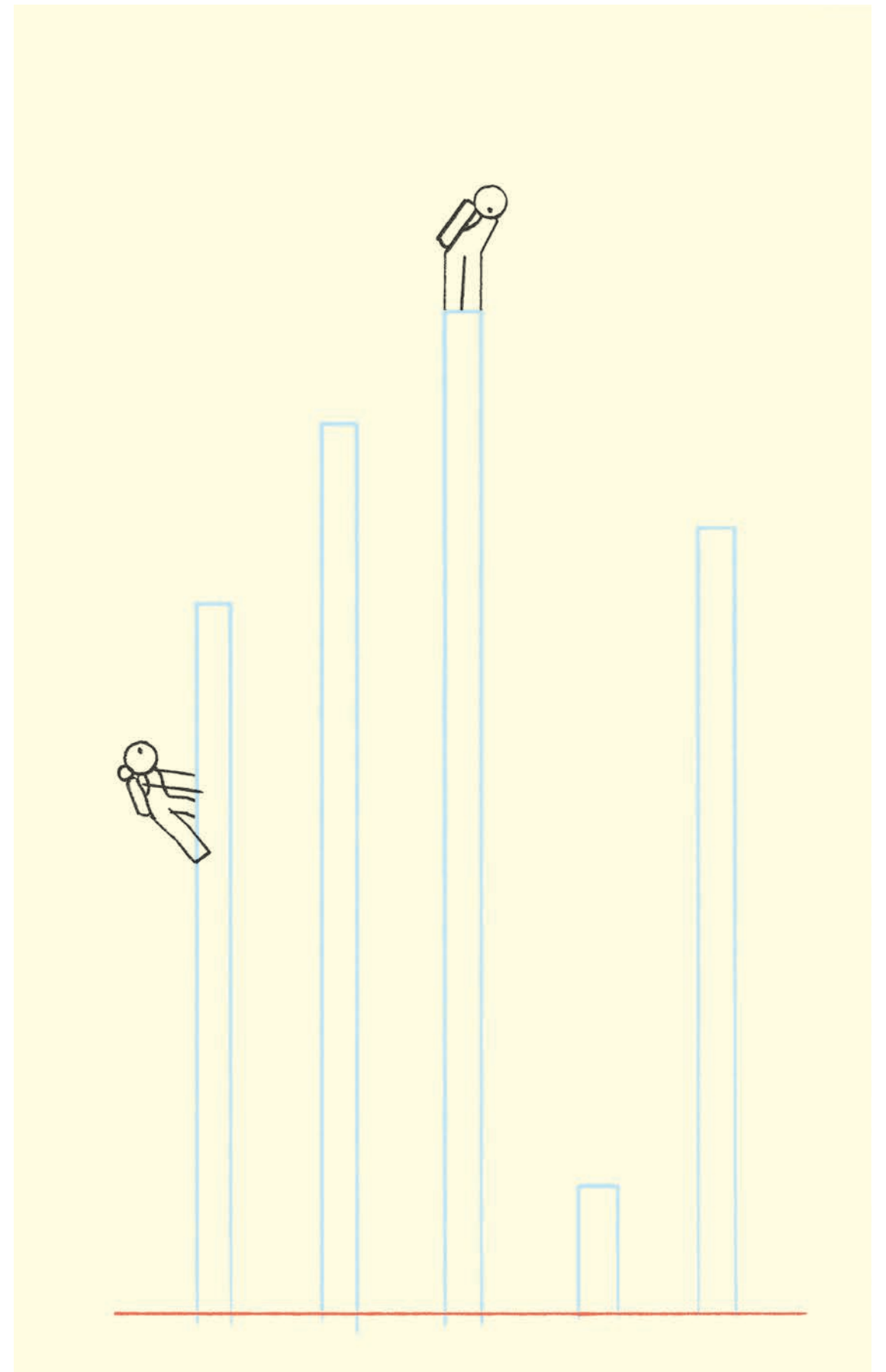
In practice, in a given school district, it is rare that market pressures are triggered through school choice policies that result in opening new schools at the rate or of the type that the market pressures demand. In the end, all students are assigned to a school. However, it may not be the school the parents wanted either in quality or in curricular emphasis.

There are at least two trade-offs that must be maximized for school choice policies to efficiently ensure access to high-quality schools. The first is transportation costs. The more options families have outside of their neighborhood, the further children will travel to school, with significant costs to the district for buses and significant burden to children and families in commuting time. Second, districts must balance the number of choices they give families. Giving families more options, when not all of the options are considered high quality, actually increases the likelihood that families will pick lower-quality schools and that their children will be assigned to



HOPE MABRY PHOTOGRAPHY

One major barrier is the persistent racial and socioeconomic inequities many families face in trying to access high-quality schools. And one of the primary drivers of inequities is the legacy of historic racial and economic segregation — and continued residential segregation today.”



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ARENTS WANT ACCESS to high-quality schools close to home. School districts and society at large want children to have access to high-quality education that prepares them to be good thinkers and to contribute to and succeed in society.

If we know what parents want and what society needs, why is this so hard to achieve for so many districts across the country?

One major barrier is the persistent racial and socioeconomic inequities many families face in trying to access high-quality schools. And one of the primary drivers of inequities is the legacy of historic racial and economic segregation — and continued residential segregation today. By the mid 20th century, schools in the United States were racially segregated in the South by law and de facto segregated in the North, with vast inequities in the quality and in the resources of schools that served blacks, compared to the schools that served white children. The landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* deemed such separate and unequal schools as unlawful. In fits and starts and with significant resistance and challenge, school districts began to inch toward desegregation, in part as a means to ensure equitable access to high-quality schools.

Today, however, cities across America remain largely segregated, residentially, along race and socioeconomic status lines. This has often resulted in continued de facto segregation across schools and significant inequities across race and socioeconomic status in access to high-quality schools. Nationally, Latinx youth now attend the most segregated schools, followed by blacks. The schools these students attend have fewer resources, teachers with

them, especially if these lower-quality schools are closer to home.

In Boston, the district’s original controlled choice policy, created in 1988, attempted to maximize choices for families. It divided the city into three large zones, and families could choose any school in their zone, plus any school that was within a mile of their home. While providing parents with many options beyond their neighborhood, it did not account for the costs of transportation, both as part of the district’s budget and in terms of the real burden for families. The costs and burdens of transportation were formidable. And even still, there remained significant racial and economic inequities in access to high-quality schools.

In 2012, Tom Menino, then mayor of Boston, expressed what many families were feeling — that families want “good schools close to home.” At Menino’s urging, Boston Public Schools set out, in a highly public process, to reengineer its school choice and assignment policy to maximize access to high-quality schools that are close to home. The new assignment policy, which went into effect in 2013 and is still in place today, was developed by researchers at MIT and was both a bold and clever attempt to increase equity and reduce traveling times. It created universal minimum access to high-quality schools based on quality rankings of schools on a four-tier system and proximity to families’ homes.

Simply, parents may choose from a list of schools that prioritizes quality and proximity. Based on a parents’ address, parents’ school options include the two closest Tier 1 (highest-quality) schools, the next four closest Tier 1 or Tier 2 schools, then the next six closest Tier 1, 2, or 3 schools. The list of school options is then rounded out with schools that are within a mile radius of the families’ home, schools with special programs, schools that siblings attend, and schools that the district calls “capacity” schools — schools that are larger, close to home, and often Tier 4 schools. These “capacity” schools can meet the district’s need to assign all students to a school. Each family’s list of school options is tailored to their address and to their students’ needs. This algorithm, called the Home-Based School Assignment Program (HBAP), is innovative; it attempts to maximize both shorter commute times and quality, with a goal of ensuring access to high-quality schools for everyone. By providing families with a smaller list of schools from which to choose and ensuring that high-quality schools are among the options, it assumed that families would pick the high-quality schools, and that students would be assigned to them more equitably. This policy was put into place in 2013 for the 2013–14 school year.

Four years later, Boston Public Schools invited my colleague, Northeastern University Associate Professor Daniel O’Brien, and me to conduct an independent evaluation through the Boston Area Re-

A View from Inside

MEG CAMPBELL, C.A.S.:’97, WAS A MEMBER OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE WHEN THE REVAMPED ASSIGNMENT POLICY WAS PUT IN PLACE. SHE SHARES SOME OF THE COMMITTEE’S THINKING, AND HER HOPES, AT THE TIME.

AS A LONGTIME BOSTON EDUCATOR, school leader, former Boston Public Schools (BPS) parent, and member of the Boston School Committee facing a vote to change how children had been assigned to district schools for more than 20 years, I couldn’t help but consider the opportunity before us.

In 2013, the lottery-based assignment system in place — where more than 120 schools were divided among three zones — had not changed in 20 years. On average, families seeking kindergarten seats faced more than 20 options for elementary schools of varying quality levels, some located near their homes, and some not.

The task of crafting a more predictable assignment system for families was placed in the hands of the mayoral-appointed external advisory committee, a group comprising 27 BPS stakeholders — parents, principals, teachers, students, and community representatives, as well as current and former school committee members. A new policy would allow the rare opportunity to directly respond to feedback from families across every neighborhood.

This feedback was critical in shaping support for the proposal to alter the existing three-zone assignment plan into a different, algorithm-based system where families would have greater predictability and more students would have shorter bus rides to their respective schools. Transportation issues in the BPS pose significant challenges and come at personal and financial cost. Bus rides were up to 60 minutes each way and, on particularly bad days, extended to 90 minutes or more with traffic or foul weather. Ten percent of the BPS school budget — in excess of \$100 million — was spent on transportation, among the highest in the nation.

These concerns carried great weight, as did the profound issue of variance in school quality across the district. In the midst of this process, a handful of community groups asked the school committee’s external advisory committee to postpone any assignment changes until all of the district’s schools were operating at comparable quality levels while others pushed us to move ahead with a system of assignment that would address the transportation and predictability issues first. To respond to these concerns, the new algorithm would provide each student with a “choice bucket” of schools ensuring that all students, regardless of neighborhood, would have access to schools rated at the top of a quality tiering system — regardless of distance — as well as schools closer to home. Nearly all members of the external advisory committee (20 out of 27) backed this proposal, which ultimately passed, but the charge to the district to improve schools lacking in quality was made clear by the external advisory committee and the school committee, which voted 6 to 1 to approve the new assignment plan on March 13, 2013.

Then-Mayor Thomas Menino joined with then-Superintendent Carol Johnson to ask the legislature for bold reform to jumpstart improvement in schools performing below optimal standards — granting principals greater autonomy, including hiring flexibility and longer school days. That legislation faced considerable resistance, including from the Boston Teachers Union, and it never came to fruition. As a result, our great hope for the schools to receive necessary interventions and support to make rapid improvement was not realized.

As Professor Nancy E. Hill notes in a recent interview on the Ed School’s website regarding her research on Boston’s school assignment plan, “The policy was successful in enrolling students closer to home. This was especially true for elementary school students. This improvement was largely driven by a reduction in the number of students who travel the farthest distances.”

But, she added, “This inequitable distribution of quality schools existed prior to the policy, but the policy did not improve upon it.”

It will take a sense of moral urgency combined with bold and brave steps at the city and state level to ensure that every child in Boston receives a high-quality education. We owe every child and family nothing less.

MEG CAMPBELL, IS THE FOUNDER AND HEAD OF THE CODMAN ACADEMY CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL IN BOSTON. SHE WAS A MEMBER OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE FROM 2012 TO 2016.

search Initiative on whether HBAP reduced inequities in access to high-quality schools and whether it achieved the goal of reducing travel times and distance for families compared to the former policy. That is, did it reach its goal of providing families with access to good schools close to home?

There were two main findings. First, HBAP shortened commutes for families. Gains in reducing distance traveled were largely achieved by shortening the longest commutes. However, despite the shorter distances, the policy did not recreate “neighborhood schools.” One might expect that shortening commutes means that children living in the same neighborhood are more likely to attend the same nearby schools. However, that was not the case. There were no reductions in the number of schools that neighborhoods sent their kids. This is likely due to several things. In one way, this is likely due to families picking schools that were closer to them, but not necessarily the same school as their neighbor. In another way, as competition for some neighborhood schools increased, students were assigned to schools further away. Lastly, because the benefits in commute times were largely due to reducing the longest commutes, rather than an overall benefit, only some students were attending schools that were closer to home or presumably in their neighborhood.

Second, and perhaps most important, HBAP did not increase equity in access to high-quality schools. In fact, in many cases, HBAP exacerbated existing inequities. In considering the number of high-quality schools families had access to across racial background and neighborhoods, blacks, Latinxs, and those living in predominantly low-income, ethnic minority neighborhoods had access to fewer high-quality schools among their options, compared to whites, Asian Americans, and those living in wealthier neighborhoods.

And not only were there fewer high-quality schools on the “choice lists” of blacks, Latinxs, and those living in low-income neighborhoods, but the high-quality schools that were on the lists tended to be smaller in size — they literally had fewer seats available.

What we found is that inequities in the *number* of high-quality schools and in the *size* of those schools among families’ choice options were only part of the problem.

Three characteristics of Boston neighborhoods also interacted to create the perfect storm of increased inequities under the new policy: 1) Boston neighborhoods are both racially and economically segregated; 2) Neighborhoods with higher concentrations of black and Latinx families have a higher concentration of school-age children; and 3) The locations of high-quality schools are not evenly distributed across Boston neighborhoods — that is, high-quality schools are more likely to be located in wealthier neighborhoods. Together, these factors —

combined with a policy that provides families with school options based on their residential address and distances around their residential address (their neighborhood) — resulted in *significantly* higher levels of competition for seats in Tier 1 schools for families in historically marginalized neighborhoods.

The result? Because of residential segregation along racial and ethnic lines, blacks and Latinxs had a quarter or a third of the practical access to top tier seats as their white and Asian American counterparts. They had fewer top tier seats among the school options to start with, *and* they had more children competing with them for those seats.

More concretely, families were equally likely — across ethnicity and neighborhoods — to choose a high-quality school as their first choice. However, black students, especially, were far less likely to be assigned to their first choice and as a result were more likely to be administratively assigned to a school their parents did not pick and were ranked at the lowest-quality tier. Blacks are severely over-represented in the lowest tier schools *and* under-represented in the highest-quality schools.

TAKEN TOGETHER, the results are disturbing, especially for a policy designed to *increase* equity.

As we’ve found, a controlled school choice policy that was designed to provide all families with high-quality schools, based on an equitable number of schools from which families can choose, only makes sense in a city that is not segregated residentially and for which the distribution of high-quality schools is more equitable across neighborhoods. Unfortunately, this is not true in Boston — or in most urban centers. Whereas the new policy had the good intention of increasing equity in access to high-quality schools, it neglected to account for the realities of variations in school size, in concentrations of school-age children across neighborhoods, and in the uneven distribution of high-quality schools.

Whereas our policy evaluation examined issues at the school and neighborhood level, we cannot lose sight of what this means in the real world. Today, real children living in Boston do not have equal access to high-quality schools. Real parents are trying to navigate a school assignment system and get

the best school they can for their children. Black and Latinx children, many of whom are already disadvantaged in other ways, face greater competition to get into high-quality schools. The deck is already stacked against many of these children, and this policy has made it harder for them to get the educational foundation they need to succeed.

Our identification of the problems associated with the policy points to logical solutions, many of which are underway. The easiest of the solutions is to fix the math: adjust the policy to account for competition for seats as an indicator for equity, rather than number of schools. We are already pursuing options to help Boston Public Schools adjust the algorithm to account for competition.

The underlying problem, though, is that a school choice and assignment policy alone cannot make much progress in solving inequities in access to high-quality schools when there are too few high-quality schools in the neighborhoods that need them. Rearranging school assignments without increasing the number of high-quality schools merely rearranges who has access to high-quality schools and who is left out. The harder and more important solution is to focus intensely and purposefully on increasing the number of—and widening the distribution of—high-quality schools across the district.

While this is a harder problem to solve, it is ultimately a problem we know *how* to solve. We know what high-quality schools look like. We know the kinds of schools we want children across our nation to attend.

High-quality schools are schools that show improvement in learning and *engagement* with learning. High-quality schools help students who have fallen behind, and they challenge students who have mastered material.

High-quality schools have rich and engaging curricula and extracurricular activities that support students' interests and identity development. They are encouraging youth to think creatively, critically, and synergistically, and to analyze and solve problems. High-quality schools have the ability to connect students and families to resources outside of school to help students come to school ready to learn.

High-quality schools have guidance counselors that help high school students not only plan for college, but also plan for meaningful careers that might not include college. They create spaces where students can make mistakes and learn from them—to fail a class and be able to take it again without closing doors to college opportunities based on GPA. High-quality schools are places where students are empowered to take leadership responsibility, become civically aware and engaged, and practice decision making so they are prepared to make tough decisions outside of school and into adulthood.

It has been difficult for districts to quickly replicate their highest-quality schools. Private

schools and charter schools often are more agile in their ability to experiment and replicate high-quality schools in urban neighborhoods. But, for charter schools especially, quality varies tremendously across schools, and it is difficult for parents to know how to navigate them, especially while they are also navigating the school choice process in a district like Boston.

And many charter schools serving lower-income black and Latinx youth engage in highly structured, often zero-tolerance behavioral policies that are not consistent with the kind of environment that promotes creative thinking and a restorative, redemptive orientation to behavior that we expect of high-quality schools. Although many of these highly structured schools may be able to produce higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates than their lower-quality public school counterparts, they are not providing independent, critical, and creative thinking skills and a sense of autonomy, as well as purpose-driven, goal-oriented thinking that will guide students through college and into a meaningful life.

The Boston Public School district implicitly and explicitly knows that high-quality schools are ones that have strong ties to their neighborhoods. This is why a key goal of the HBAP policy was to bring children closer to their homes and recreate neighborhood schools. Increasing the distribution of high-quality schools means that those schools can become embedded in the neighborhoods in which they are located, creating partnerships to support students and give them access to community service, internships, and valuable job training.

As the district is engaged in the BuildBPS initiative, where it is allocating significant resources to rebuild dilapidated schools and open newer schools with the goal of increasing the number of high-quality schools in the district, I hope the district will pay attention to the evaluation of the Home-Based School Assignment Policy and target those resources to the communities where there is greatest need, to create the kinds of schools where all of our children can thrive. I also hope districts across the country facing similar inequalities in access to high-quality schools will take a careful look at their policies to ensure equitable competition for seats. However, even more, I hope districts across the nation will redouble their efforts to increase the number of high-quality schools in the communities that need them. Doing so not only better serves the students in those communities, it better serves our nation, which needs our next generations of youth to be well educated and able to think globally, critically, creatively, and analytically—to solve the challenges that face us and to envision a better world.

NANCY HILL IS A PROFESSOR AT THE ED SCHOOL AND A DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGIST FOCUSED ON ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF RACE, ETHNICITY, AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS IN SHAPING PARENTING BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SHAPING YOUTHS' PLANS FOR THEIR FUTURE.



THE BOSTON AREA RESEARCH INITIATIVE (BARI) IS AN INTERUNIVERSITY COLLABORATION BETWEEN RESEARCHERS AND THE CITY OF BOSTON TO CATALYZE CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH THAT IS OF SCIENTIFIC IMPORTANCE AND POLICY RELEVANCE. DANIEL O'BRIEN, AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND URBAN AFFAIRS, IS CO-DIRECTOR OF BARI.

Grad

"If I have one strength, or two strengths, it's seeing a path forward and then empowering people who work for me to go down that path and work hard and execute well."

JEFF RILEY, ED.M.'99, DURING A HARVARD EDCAST IN 2015, WHEN HE WAS THE RECEIVER OF THE BELEAGUERED LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT IN MASSACHUSETTS. IN JANUARY 2018, RILEY WAS NAMED COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION IN THE BAY STATE FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF **MITCHELL CHESTER, ED.M.'88, ED.D.'91**, WHO HELD THE POSITION FOR NEARLY A DECADE.

Illustration by Evgeny Parfenov

IN MEMORY

1940-49

KATHERINE BOMBARA, G.S.E.'46
ELLEN DIMING, M.A.T.'47
NEIL ATKINS, M.A.T.'49

1950-59

LOUISE BEECY, ED.M.'50
JOSEPH SMITH, M.A.T.'53
GEORGE MOORE, ED.M.'54
PATRICIA PANTALEONI, M.A.T.'54
WILLIAM QUIMBY, M.A.T.'54
SANDRA FROMM, M.A.T.'55
JANE MONTGOMERY, ED.M.'56
BEVERLY MORRISON, ED.M.'56
ROBERT PICKETT, M.A.T.'57
ELIZABETH DRACHMAN, M.A.T.'58
MONIQUE SPALDING, M.A.T.'58
RALPH CHRISTENSEN, M.A.T.'59
FRANCES SMITH, G.S.E.'59

1960-69

ANTHONY NERI, ED.M.'60
RAYMOND WILKEN, G.S.E.'60
THEODORE LYMAN CLAPP, G.S.E.'61
LETITIA GRAYBILL, ED.M.'61
NANCY HUGO, M.A.T.'61
RODERICK JACOBS, ED.M.'61
ROBERT O'CONNELL, M.A.T.'61
EDMON LUKE JR., M.A.T.'62
FRANCIS SAND, ED.M.'63
ELEANOR SCHNEIDER, ED.M.'63
JEAN HOEGGER, ED.M.'64
WILLIAM EDY, ED.M.'65
SHIRLEY FRANT, ED.M.'65
JAMES MARKS III, ED.M.'66
MARYROSE ROGOLSKY, ED.D.'66
SARAH WHALEN, ED.M.'66
CHARLES O'REILLY, M.A.T.'67
SUSAN LLOYD, M.A.T.'68

1970-79

SERAH-ROSE LUKALO, ED.M.'71
BENNETT BARNES, ED.M.'72
CAROLYN EDWARDS, ED.D.'74
BARBARA LISTON, ED.M.'78
MARY RAWSON, ED.M.'78

1980-89

SHIRLEY BLOOM, C.A.S.'80
GAILA GULACK, ED.M.'81
MARK CANNER, ED.M.'82
ANNE COTTON, ED.M.'72, ED.D.'82
HELEN GLIKMAN, G.S.E.'82
DORIS NORMAN, ED.M.'83
ALIETTE VERNOOY, ED.M.'83

1956

Jane Roland Martin, Ed.M., recently wrote *School Was Our Life: Remembering Progressive Education*, based on stories and recollections from former students of the Little Red School House in New York City.

1973

Bill Littlefield, Ed.M., retired last summer after nearly 35 years in public radio, including 25 years hosting *Only A Game* on WBUR, the NPR affiliate in Boston. He is the author of several books, including *Take Me Out* and *Only A Game*. For 39 years, Littlefield taught English at Curry College, where he also served as writer-in-residence.

1976

Martha Minow, Ed.M., former dean of the Harvard Law School from

2009 to 2017, was named last summer as a university professor, considered to be Harvard's highest faculty honor. Established in 1935, university professorships allow faculty to teach and pursue research at any of Harvard's schools.

1978

Ruth Schwartz, Ed.M., is an associate professor at the Quinnipiac University School of Education, where she directs the Master's Program in Instructional Design. The focus of the program is on the design and development of effective digital resources for learning. She writes that she is still married to Jack Lew, a former United States treasury secretary from 2013 to 2017, and living in New York City.

Larry Stybel, Ed.D., is a licensed psychologist. A year after he graduated, Stybel founded Stybel Peabody Associates, Inc., a Boston-

based retained search, leadership development, and executive outplacement firm. He is a regular contributor to *Psychology Today*.

1979

Neal Baer, Ed.M., gave the Harvard Medical School Class Day Commencement address, "What Matters?" this past May 2018. He is the executive producer and show runner of the Netflix television series, *Designated Survivor*, which will premiere in the spring of 2019.

1981

Helaine Daniels, Ed.D., relocated to Lagos, Nigeria, to serve as dean of the new Africa Institute for Leadership and Public Administration.

1983

Betty Bardige, Ed.D., recently co-wrote *Children at the Center: Trans-*

forming Early Childhood Education in the Boston Public Schools, a Harvard Education Press book, with two members of Project Zero: Megina Baker and Ben Mardell. (See page 19.)

Peter Smith, M.A.T.'60, Ed.D., wrote *Free-Range Learning in a Digital Age*. (See page 47.)

1984

Norman Smith, Ed.D., president emeritus of Wagner College and Elmira College, was the recipient of the 2018 American Association of University Administrators' Trachtenberg Award for Outstanding Leadership in Higher Education. Smith was also a keynote speaker at the organization's annual leadership conference.

Dan West, Ed.D., published his memoir, *Causeway to a Bigger World*, in August 2018.

1987

Monty Neill, Ed.D., was awarded the 2018 Deborah E. Meier Hero in Education Award in November. Neill retired this past fall as executive director of FairTest: The National Center for Fair & Open Testing.

1988

Lynn Butler-Kisber, Ed.D., recently wrote *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Informed Perspectives*.

Elizabeth Fideler, Ed.D., published *Margaret Pearmain Welch (1893-1984): Proper Bostonian, Activist, Pacifist, Reformer, Preservationist* in 2018. Fideler is a research fellow at the Center on Aging & Work at Boston College and a trustee at the Framingham Public Library.

1990

Rick Hess, Ed.M., director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, recently pub-



In October, Ban-Ki Moon, former secretary general of the United Nations, dropped in on a class being taught by **FERNANDO REIMERS, Ed.M.'84, Ed.D.'88**. Moon was at Harvard for Worldwide Week, a weeklong celebration of the university's involvement throughout the world. Moon is a 1984 graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School.

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Professional Education



JILL ANDERSON

IN MEMORY

VICTOR MCKENZIE, C.A.S.'80, ED.M.'84
BRUCE STEPHENSON, ED.M.'89

1990-99

H. PETER AITKEN, ED.D.'91
ROBERT SNOW, C.A.S.'93
GWANG-JO KIM, ED.M.'84, ED.D.'94
DAVID KAHLE, ED.M.'96
MARGARET KEILEY, ED.M.'89, ED.D.'96
CHARLES BRYANT, ED.M.'98
THOMAS HAMMOND, ED.M.'98

2000-18

MARY BILLINGTON, ED.M.'12

1999

Brian Anderson, Ed.M., assistant professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago in industrial design was selected to be a fellow in the U.S.–Japan Creative Artists Program by the Japan–U.S. Friendship Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts.

2000

Rose DiSanto, Ed.M., was a *Communication Arts Magazine* design annual national juried competition award winner in the spring of 2018. She is the principal and founder of DiSanto Design in Philadelphia.

Heather Miller, Ed.M., recently published *Prime Time Parenting*. (See fall 2018 issue, page 8.)

2003

Nina Fiore, Ed.M., founded the Astoria Film Festival in Astoria, New York. She also launched a series of workshops on filmmaking, science, art, and engineering that are offered in the local schools.

Lynn Glixon Ditchfield, Ed.M., was awarded a Vision Fellowship to attend The European Graduate School's Division of Arts, Health,

and Society. As part of the fellowship, she is compiling, editing, and designing the *Creativity-based Curriculum Guidebook on Immigration*.

2004

Jeffrey Chan, Ed.M., is an assistant professor at Singapore University of Technology and Design. His book, *Urban Ethics of Anthropocene*, was published in 2018.

Manuel Rustin, Ed.M., teaches history, government, and economics in the Arts, Entertainment and Media Academy at John Muir High School. He also teaches a hip-hop studies course. He received one of five 2018 Teachers of Excellence Awards last spring by the Pasadena Unified School District.

Barbara Selmo, Ed.M.'94, Ed.D., was promoted to assistant vice president for graduate admissions at Lesley University in Cambridge.

Purnima Vadhera, Ed.M., joined the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Framingham, Massachusetts, this school year. She previously served as principal at Norwood High School, Maynard High School, and the Arthur D. Healey K–8 School, all in Massachusetts.

2005

Jake Kaufmann, Ed.M., was appointed this past summer as director of financial aid at Harvard College. He had been associate director of financial aid and a senior admissions officer since 2005.

Louie Rodriguez, Ed.D., is the associate dean of undergraduate education and an associate professor at UC-Riverside's Graduate School of Education. Last spring, he was also named chair of the school's educational leadership, policy, and practice program.

2006

Julia de la Torre, Ed.M., was named the first female leader of the Morristown Friends School in New Jersey. Previously de la Torre served as head of the upper school at Greenhills School in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and executive director of Primary Source, a non-profit focused on global education and citizenship.

Heather Harding Jones, Ed.M.'00, Ed.D., a senior program officer at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is moving to the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation as director of policy and public understanding.

2007

Mayme Hostetter, Ed.M., national dean for Relay Graduate School of Education, has been named its next president.

Zakiya Smith Ellis, Ed.M., a former senior adviser in the Department of Education and in the White House under the Obama Administration, was appointed secretary of higher education this past summer for the state of New Jersey.

2008

Caitlin Lowans, Ed.M., was named artistic director of THEATREWORKS Colorado Springs, a professional theatre attached to the University of Colorado Colorado Springs.

Vajra Watson, Ed.M.'01, Ed.D., recently published *Transformative Schooling: Towards Racial Equity in Schooling*. (See page 19.)

2009

Varina Bleil, Ed.M., took a new position as executive director of the Los Feliz Charter School for the Arts in Los Angeles. Prior, she was executive director of the American Youth Symphony, also in Los Angeles.

Ashton Clemmons, Ed.M., was elected to the North Carolina state legislature this past November.

Jackie Davis, Ed.M., published *DIY Circus Lab for Kids*, a do-it-yourself book on how to build a circus in your backyard. Davis is a movement education teacher and serves as executive director of the Flying Gravity Circus in New Hampshire. She is also a mime who worked at Disney and created a circus arts curriculum for Pine Hill Waldorf School.

Marit Dewhurst, Ed.M.'03, Ed.D., has a new book, *Teachers Bridging Difference: Exploring Identity With Art*, with Harvard Education Press. (See page 18.)

2010

Kristin Skare, Ed.M., founded the Boston Latvian Chorus in 2015. She is also the director of the Neighborhood Rocks Choir in Boston.

ONE ON ONE WITH PETER SMITH

PEOPLE ARE OFTEN PENALIZED based on how they learn, not on what they know, writes **PETER SMITH, M.A.T.'70, ED.D.'83**, in his new book, *Free-Range Learning*. Using real-life stories, Smith describes what he calls “knowledge discrimination” — this idea that knowledge is valued based on where you’ve learned something, not on how well you know it and can apply it. This past fall, Smith, a former Vermont congressman and founding president of California State University Monterey Bay and the Community College of Vermont, spoke to *Ed.* about life-learning and the status ladder.

Why do we undervalue personal learning but reward “only educational attainment”? There are a few exceptions to that rule. The simple answer, however, is that from the Reformation forward, the academy set the rules for what constituted academic quality and content. And when fewer than 10 percent of the population had baccalaureate degrees, most of the jobs available did not require what colleges were offering and, frankly, the economic gap between those with degrees and those without was far less than it is today.

And the job world has changed. The employment world has changed dramatically in the last 80 years, with increasing numbers of jobs requiring, through professional or legal means, specific degrees or certificates. There has been ongoing debate as to whether this trend was entirely necessary or simply a convenient way to “sort” people. As the “sorting” escalated, personal learning became, more explicitly, a casualty. Now, the “emerging revolution” is disrupting that traditional set of assumptions and the sorting system.

Talk a little about college-based learning. College has evolved from a privilege to a necessity in the years since the GI Bill was enacted. In this process, the degree increasingly became a “signal” to employers and other third-party observers that the holder had more advanced knowledge and capacity than the nonholder. And the “status ladder” within higher education further differentiated the quality signal. And, since there was no alternative way to determine quality at scale, the academic world’s status prevailed into the 21st century.

Isn’t it easier to “measure” a college degree? Historically, yes. And the “meaning” of a degree had cultural acceptance even though we all know

that there was a wide variation in quality within the academy. But as advanced knowledge becomes increasingly important in the 21st-century world, as the ways to gain knowledge and experience multiply exponentially, and as credible ways to validate learning are developed, the reputation and perceived value of the degree will be further disrupted.

You write that our society has an enormous amount of capacity that is being ignored. That is the consequence of knowledge discrimination. Consider these three things. First, we know that the average adult spends more than 700 hours a year in purposeful, non-postsecondary learning. That’s more than 10 hours a week. Second, we know that, on average, when learners have their prior learning assessed for advanced standing, they save more than a semester’s time towards the degree. Third, we know that approximately 90 million Americans have a high school diploma but no college degree or certificate. If we assume that a third of those people have at least one semester’s worth of knowledge and ability from personal learning, using semester credit hours, that is 360,000,000 credits worth of knowledge. Although awarding the credit would be a one-time deal, the economic value to the individual and the economy would be ongoing. Conjecturally, that untapped capacity constitutes billions of dollars of value that is withheld from the economy and the lives of the people involved.

Are things changing? That’s what *Free-Range Learning* is about. The early part of the book uses the words of learners who were left behind to describe the turning points in their lives that drove them to seek a transition. They also speak movingly about the kinds of services, including assessment of personal and other prior learning, that adult-friendly colleges gave them.

What can educators do to help with this? That’s a tough one because high schools are so much more highly regulated and politicized on an ongoing basis. My own belief is that less reliance on testing and more focus on project-based learning that sees assessment as a pedagogy which helps learners reflect on the learning and application would be a step in the right direction. I also think that using technology to “flip” the classroom, thus freeing up in-school time for group work and using homework time to review content via technology, would be a positive step forward. **LH**

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2011

Barbara Elfman, Ed.M., graduated with a certificate from the Institute of Nonprofit Practice Core Leadership Program affiliated with the Jonathan Tisch School of Civic Life at Tufts University. She is an administrator with the Black Hole Initiative at Harvard University.

Anna West, Ed.M., won Louisiana State University's 2018 Distinguished Dissertation Award in Arts, Humanities, and Social and Behavioral Sciences for her doctoral dissertation, "In the School, Not of the School: Co-Performing Critical Literacies with English Amped."

2012

Moira Pirsch, Ed.M., earned a Ph.D. in 2018 from Columbia University's Teachers College. Pirsch also received an Excellence in Teaching Assistance Award from Columbia and an Outstanding Dissertation Award from AERA.

2013

Nancy Gutiérrez, Ed.L.D., was named CEO and president of the NYC Leadership Academy. She began her career as a teacher and principal in her hometown, East San Jose, California.

Marissa Gutierrez-Vicario, Ed.M., won a 2018 Catherine Behrend Fellowship from the 92nd Street Y in New York City. The fellowship is a program for rising female leaders in visual arts management.

Raquel Jimenez, Ed.M., recently won a Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship to support a three-year study of young artists and creative learning communities, specifically in Lynn, Massachusetts.

Rhoda Mhiripiri-Reed, Ed.L.D., is the superintendent of Hopkins [Minnesota] Public Schools. Prior, she was associate superintendent of Monterey Peninsula Unified Pub-



The alumni council (left to right): *bottom*: SONA JHO, Ed.M.'97; TIMOTHY BEGAYE, Ed.M.'93, Ed.M.'97, Ed.D.'04; HANNA RODRIGUEZ-FARRAR, Ed.M.'05, Ed.D.'13, chair; CLAUDIA BACH, Ed.M.'91, Ed.M.'92, Ed.D.'94; ROBIN MOUNT, Ed.M.'79, Ed.D.'94. *top*: EURMON HERVEY JR., Ed.M.'96; AUSTIN VOLZ, Ed.M.'13, vice chair; ALEXANDRA LIGHTFOOT, Ed.M.'89, Ed.D.'98; DANIEL VELASCO, Ed.M.'12; HAL SMITH, Ed.M.'95, Ed.D.'00; ELEONORA VILLEGAS-REIMERS, Ed.M.'84, Ed.D.'88; ELAINE TOWNSEND-UTIN, Ed.M.'16; DILARA ALIM SAYEED, Ed.L.D.'15; USHA PASI, Ed.M.'85

lic Schools and director of leadership development for the District of Columbia Public Schools.

2014

Darienne Driver, Ed.M.'06, Ed.D., superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools, will become chair of the board of directors for the Council of the Great City Schools.

J.D. LaRock, Ed.M.'04, Ed.D., is president and CEO of the Commonwealth Corporation, a quasi-public authority focused on workforce training efforts in Massachusetts. Prior, he worked at Northeastern University.

James Talerico, Ed.M., was elected to the Texas state legislature this past November.

2015

Eduardo Contreras, Ed.M.'08, Ed.D., was promoted this past summer to assistant provost at the University

of Portland. There he will lead a new unit, the Office of International Education, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Dilara Sayeed, Ed.L.D., left her job to work full time on vPeer.com, a professional learning platform that matches professionals to mentors online. Sayeed developed the idea at the Harvard i-lab while a student at the Ed School. (See news story online, gse.harvard.edu.)

2016

Flossy Azu, Ed.M., moved to Ghana and is working as director of alumni relations at SOS-Hermann Greiner International College.

Rachel Hanebutt, Ed.M., started Confi, an online website that offers expert-approved advice on sensitive health issues.

Ryan Helling, Ed.M., recently joined Google as a university programs

specialist. Prior, he worked in development at the Ed School.

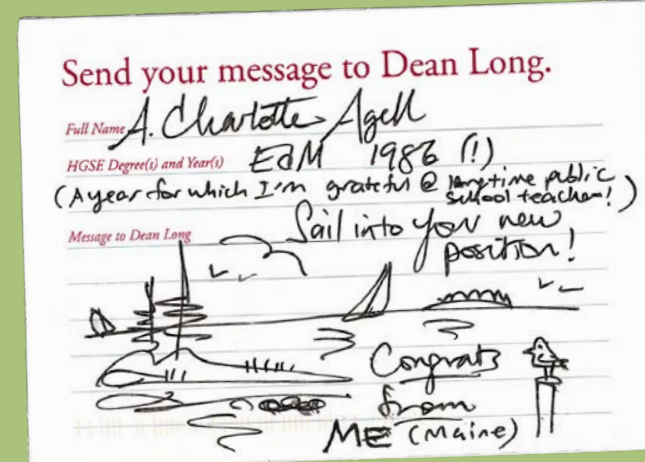
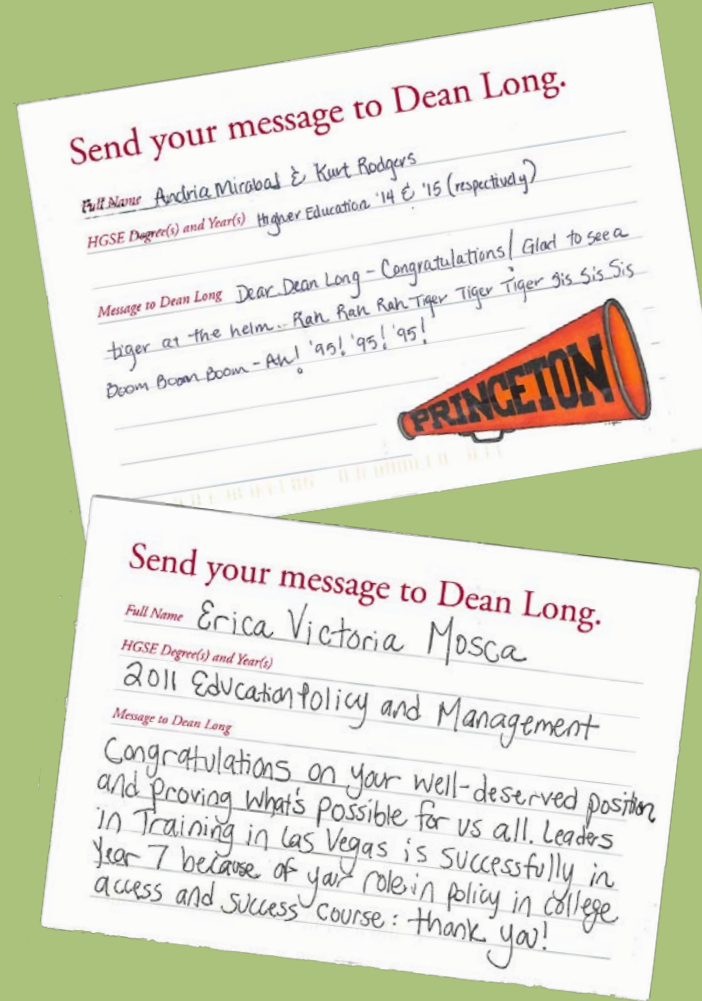
2017

Andrew Nalani, Ed.M., spoke in September at the Gates Foundation Goalkeepers event. The event coincided with the 2018 U.N. General Assembly. Nalani's personal narrative focused on the role of transformative education in activating youth's potential, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

2018

Christopher Calderón, Ed.M., recently began teaching at Jesuit High School in Portland, Oregon.

Sarah Engle, Ed.M., and **Bene Webster, Ed.M.**, were finalists for Teach For America's Social Innovation Award. They also won a fellowship from 4.0 Schools (Tiny Fellowship) to support the pilot of their organization, UsPlus.



LONG LETTERS

Last fall, just as Bridget Terry Long was stepping into her new role as dean of the Ed School, alumni were asked to send messages of congratulations to her. We read through some of the many responses and pulled out a few of our favorite lines.

"Dear Dean Long." It is so great to write that salutation! —Joshua Dieterich, Ed.M.'07

I would never pass up a chance to tell Dean Long how amazing she is! The future of the Ed School is in good hands. —Angela Boatman, Ed.M.'08, Ed.D.'12

Very excited for the future of education. Keep pushing HGSE and the world to grow. — Robert Keeley, Ed.M.'18

Thank you for being such a strong champion of college access and success for all students. Congratulations on your new role as dean! — Emily Weir Foley, Ed.M.'13

As another woman of color, I can say, "This has been a long time coming!" — Patricia Wright, Ed.D.'76

One of my favorite memories from HGSE was when I got to sit in your office for what I thought was typical office hours but ended up being an insightful chat about behavioral economics over coffee. You are such a warm and welcoming presence. — Sari Wilson, Ed.M.'16

May your tenure be fruitful and your enthusiasm remain high. We are cheering you on across America and the globe. — Barbara Termaat, Ed.M.'88

Congratulations from one of the school's oldest and proudest alums. Now 96. — Norman Boyan, Ed.D.'51

I am so excited for you. You will bring so much knowledge and compassion to the role of dean. Here's to a wonderful future at HGSE! — Julie Marie Wood, Ed.M.'92, Ed.D.'99

I can think of no better person to lead HGSE. Everyone in our cohort still talks about you and how much we loved your class. — Abigail Hays, Ed.M.'05

You are one of the main reasons I decided to attend HGSE and one of the main reasons I enjoyed my time there so much. — Gilbert Bonafe Jr., Ed.M.'14

I can't wait to see where you take HGSE! Cheers! Hooray! Awesome! — Emily Almas, Ed.M.'09

I love this quote from Linda Hogan of the Chickasaw Nation: "Walking. I am listening to a deeper way. Suddenly, all my ancestors are behind me. Be still, they say. Watch and listen. You are the result of the love of thousands." Don't worry. The dean role can be lonely, but thousands are rooting for you. — Teresa Rodriguez, Ed.M.'96

Congratulations to the woman who inspired me to learn as much as I could, be the change I wanted to see, and pursue the dreams I always wished. Remember, "Earning your Ed.M. in nine months is just like having a baby!" — Scott Flanary, Ed.M.'10

I stand in full solidarity with you in your triumph, as well as the work we have before us. — Taharee Jackson, Ed.M.'01

I am so proud to see a woman of such stature and experience leading our school! — Emily Coalson-Stamets, Ed.M.'13

You were my favorite professor in 2001 as I began my degree program! — Andrea Stewart, Ed.M.'03



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