

Teachers

The Magazine of the Harvard Graduate School of Education
SPRING/SUMMER 2022

(THAT'S WHY
THEY NEED
OUR SUPPORT
NOW MORE
THAN EVER)



Are

Tired



Ed.

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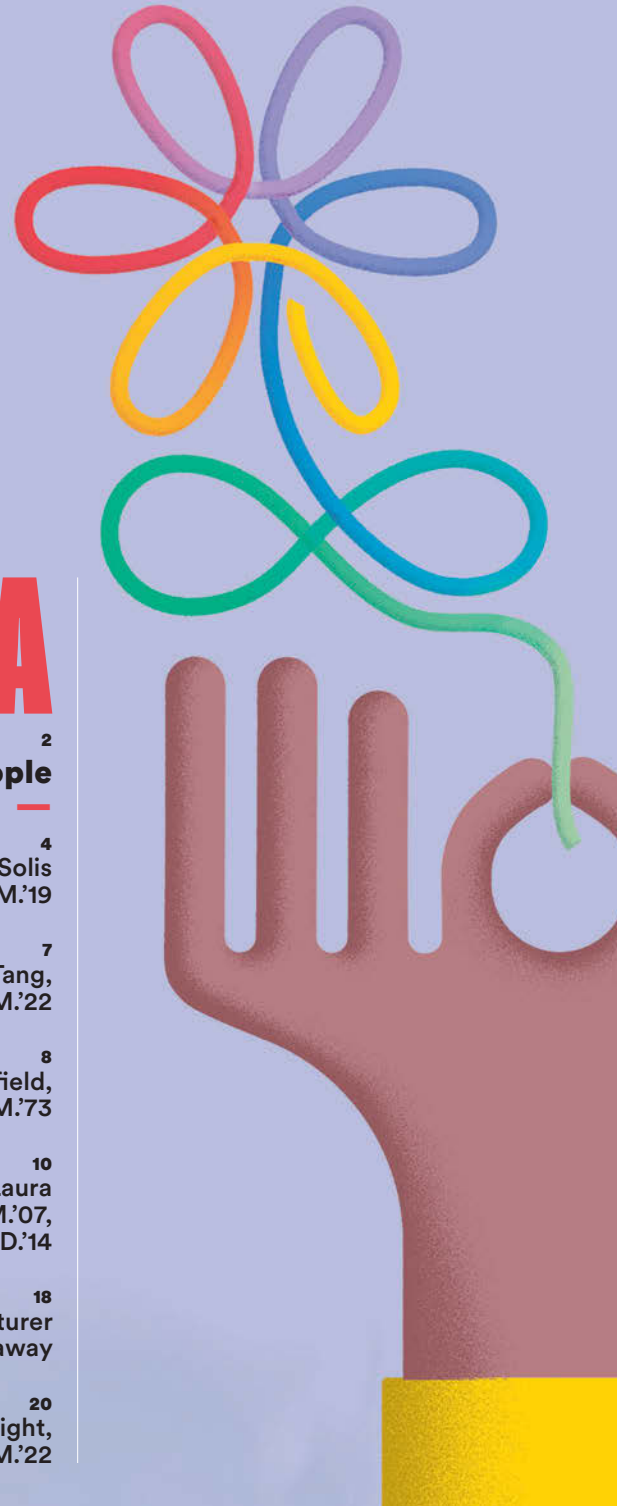
ON APPIAN WAY

Support Your Local Teachers

COVID took a big toll on teachers. This isn't an exaggeration. Talk to any of your teacher friends and they'll tell you how burned out they are. What's interesting, and what led me to want to include a feature story on teachers in this issue of *Ed.*, was how, for a brief moment, this wasn't the case. Early on in the pandemic, the status of teachers was actually elevated, as school buildings closed and parents, forced to become teachers at home, realized how difficult getting kids to sit and focus and do their homework really was. Teachers felt celebrated. But then, as COVID raged on and pandemic anger set in, something changed. Teachers, despite bending over backwards to teach in every way possible — fully remote, hybrid, and back in person — started getting blamed for not fixing what was broken in the world. They were questioned for wanting to stay home when COVID rates skyrocketed or they themselves were struggling. They were held to a different standard. It's no surprise, then, that morale among teachers and other educators has fallen and teachers are leaving the profession or say they would if they could. You'll still find lots of joy in schools, for sure, but as this issue's cover story highlights, more than ever, we need to recognize what teachers have been up against and support them and the profession like we've never done before. LH

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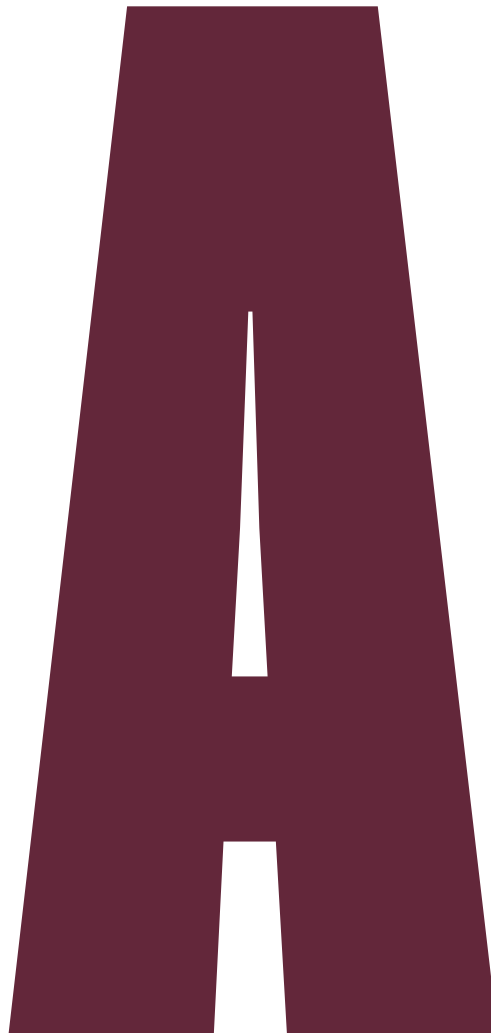
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“While I have been blessed to have a cool acting career, I feel like Hollywood hasn’t always known exactly what to do with me.”

TANYA WRIGHT, ED.M.’22, OPPOSITE, IN A SCENE FROM THE HIT NETFLIX SHOW *ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK* (SEE P. 20)



Working for WU

MARIANGELY SOLIS CERVERA, ED.M:'19, grew up in a family that did not trust government. “I am originally from Puerto Rico, an island with a colonial history that continues to impact people’s current lives. This is a history that is all too familiar to the Black, Indigenous, and communities of color,” she says.

How, then, did she end up working at Boston City Hall as the chief of equity and inclusion for Boston Mayor Michelle Wu?

Solis Cervera says the answer loops back to the Ed School.

“A really inspiring leader I met at HGSE knew I was curious about entering the world of government and policy. She asked if I had ever heard of Michelle Wu? I said, ‘Who hasn’t?’”

After that conversation with Wu campaign volunteer **MARIEL NOVAS, ED.L.D:'20**, Solis Cervera joined the campaign as the constituency director, a role that would change the way she experiences politics. During those hectic months, she says she was struck by Wu’s desire to empower communities, like her family, that didn’t trust government and didn’t know why they should vote for her, or anyone.

“My role was about engaging communities that speak different languages, work nontraditional work hours, and those who weren’t plugged in. We held phone banks in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Haitian Creole. We visited bodegas, community restaurants, and hair salons and barbershops, all in an effort to meet people where they are. To build trust. I understand those feelings,” she says. “I come from those feelings. We were able to build something beautiful and now we’re here, re-

Recent alum heads up DEI in a historic Boston administration

Story by Lory Hough



ally excited and ready to expand on that vision of a city for everybody.”

Asked what it feels like to be working in an administration that is making history — Wu is the first elected female mayor in Boston, as well as the first mother and the first person of color to hold the job — Solis Cervera says she understood during the campaign that Wu was breaking huge barriers in Boston, representing, as *The New York Times* noted, “a seismic shift to a political landscape in which ‘white’ and ‘male’ were prerequisites to be elected mayor since the position was established here in 1822.”

But it wasn’t until election night, she says, “that it really hit me. Not just the campaigner me, but me as the whole person. In her speech, she said anything is possible — in four different languages. It takes a special kind of leadership to understand the impact that has in our communities.”

Since then, Solis Cervera says she has been thinking deeper about the history being made at City Hall, for everyone who lives and works in Boston, and for herself.

“That night was the unlocking of, I see you,” she says. “It’s not going to be easy. In fact, the first five months have been very challenging given the hatred directed at our mayor and what she represents, but we’re doing this and it feels really damn special.”

Initially, she started as a senior policy adviser in the new administration before Wu asked her to be chief of equity and inclusion, a cabinet-level position with eight offices under it, focused on everything from supporting immigrants and the advancement of the Black community to training city workers in racial equity and making sure services are available to residents in a range of languages.

Solis Cervera says she remembers when Wu first asked her to take the role. As a first-generation queer Latinx woman, she says she is all too familiar with “imposter syndrome,” but was not going to let it get in the way.

“I called my most honest adviser: my mother. My mom said, ‘According to others, you were never qualified to go to college, to go to Harvard, to build a life you are proud of, but you’ve always figured it out. Your love of community will guide you.’”

She had those same questioning feelings when she was first accepted to the Ed School — and again, she turned to her family for their honest advice.

“I was on the train, on my way to work in New York. I got the letter from the only university I had known since I was six,” she says. Again, Solis Cervera’s mom reminded her of her “why” and pushed her to accept the offer.

At the Ed School, she found her people.

“Surprisingly, it was at Harvard that I found a community of first-gen professionals like me who understood the assignment. At times I thought, it feels challenging to be in a place that historically has been so exclusive. But that community that I found will always remind me that we belong here,” she says.

She’s even leaning into her roots as a former teacher. That background in teaching has proven useful for heading up a cabinet that has multiple departments under it and is tasked with making sure that work across all city departments is equitable and that every resident has access to the resources and opportunities that they are entitled to.

“As a teacher, you have daily lessons and month-long and year goals, but you also know that every day, students are coming with their own dreams and needs: Who am I? Am I hungry?” she says. “That experience prepared me to think about long-term system change while prioritizing people’s day-to-day needs.”

“I initially went into education because I believe that one way to change the world is to empower the hearts and minds of young people,” she says. “I accepted the role of chief of equity and inclusion because under the Wu administration we have an opportunity to empower historically excluded communities and change the trajectory of our histories.” □



COURTESY MAX TANG



QUICK CHAT

Tricky Transfer Process

Max Tang is helping other community college students navigate the move to a four-year school

When **MAX TANG, ED.M.'22**, came to the United States from China with his family, he didn't speak English. He was 17, first gen, and had no idea how to apply to college. He spent two years at a community college before facing another challenge: trying to figure out, on his own, the complicated process of transferring to a four-year school. Tang recently spoke to *Ed.* about why he's now helping other community college students navigate the tricky transfer process.

When did you realize transferring wasn't easy?

When I started at Santa Monica College, I met so many students with very similar backgrounds. I went through the whole transfer process myself. I even read a huge book about how to transfer to a four-year University of California school, but it's so complicated, especially with limited support from your school. Needless to say, I was often lost and confused. I studied hard, did a lot of extra-curricular activities, and got a high GPA, but it was only through sheer determination and many challenges later that I was able to successfully transfer to UCLA.

What about your classmates?

Most of my peers did not transfer. All of my friends were struggling with access to counselors, too. We had to help each other. You can't always wait to get a question answered. Unfortunately, community colleges are very underfunded. The result is these problems either delayed their transfer time or stopped them from transferring altogether. A [National Student Clearinghouse Center] study from 2018 said 80% of incoming community college students say they plan on going on to a four-year school, but only 13% actually do.

Aren't community colleges set up for transfers?

Yes, but community colleges are underfunded and resources are limited. Counselors are really important in the transfer process — you have to map which colleges you want to apply to and see what courses are required, and that takes a lot of time. Too often, students have to wait to get appointments with counselors, and then you might

get only 15 minutes. It's hard to get much done in that time. Parents of community college students sometimes don't know how to help, so students have to do it on their own.

Is this why you started ProDream Education?

I had this idea to help other community college students after a friend asked me to help him map which courses he should take and for guidance on the transfer application. He knew I had successfully transferred. Then another friend asked and I was like, Wow. There's a need for this.

How exactly are you helping?

I started offering free one-on-one consulting. In the past two years, we served hundreds of students and have helped more than 100 successfully transfer, but there is still much work to do. Traditional education consulting is labor-intensive, making it hard to be scalable, and usually only wealthy students can afford it.

Now you're trying to grow the company?

I was working almost nonstop [between] my own schoolwork and the company, doing it all myself. I realized we need to help more students, so last semester I got into the Harvard iLab. I started taking business classes at Harvard Business School and was exposed to new theories. I came up with an idea to automate consulting services. With one-on-one consulting, you only have time to help a couple of students a day. With an AI adviser, it's now a free, one-stop hub. Students put in their basic information and we predict which schools they can transfer into. You can generate a report with application advice and transfer information for each school, and it can be used 24/7.

Are you hopeful for community colleges?

I see a lot of opportunity for community college students now under the Biden Administration. The first lady has advocated for community college education. It's a really important sector and community college students have huge potential to add to our economy.

LH

Rookie Lessons

Longtime radio host shares what he's learned from his incarcerated students

By Bill Littlefield,
Ed.M.'73



FORTY-FIVE YEARS after receiving my Ed.M. from the Ed School, I became a volunteer teaching assistant.

Okay, that's a little misleading. When I signed on as a teaching assistant with the Emerson Prison Initiative in the fall of 2018, I had 48 years of teaching experience. I'd taught high school English for a couple of years before coming to HGSE. I'd worked with elementary school children through the Education Collaborative. I'd worked with veterans coming back to school at night at a couple of junior colleges. I was on the faculty at Curry College from the late '70s until just a few years before I began working with incarcerated men as a teaching assistant.

But when I walked through the series of locked doors and mechanical gates to get to the education building at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Concord for the first time, I felt like a rookie.

The Emerson Prison Initiative provides a small number of incarcerated men with the opportunity to pursue a bachelor's degree. My role was to help run study halls that would support the classes in which the men were enrolled. In my first semester at Concord, those men were taking a public speaking class. They practiced their speeches and their classmates and I offered suggestions. One of the first men to present his speech had spent eight years in a maximum-security prison before being transferred to Concord, which is

a medium-security facility. His topic had to do with nutrition and the food in the prison. He argued that the dinners would be more pleasant if there was chocolate for dessert. When he'd concluded his thoroughly convincing speech, he gave each of his classmates a piece of chocolate. Then he gave me two pieces.

The incarcerated guy's version of an apple for the teacher.

Teachers learn from their students. I learned right away that

my students all had a sense of humor. While they were practicing their speeches and commenting on each others' efforts, I learned that they were exceptionally supportive of one another. There was a lot of kidding in their comments. There was no cruelty.

I learned that the men with whom I was working could take seriously not only classes on economics, history, and literature, but also classes on acting and the impact of popular cul-



ture as represented on TV and in films. During one study hall, we watched an episode of *Friday Night Lights*, after which we discussed a Marxist interpretation of what we'd seen. They had no trouble understanding the "false consciousness" apparent in a small town where high school football was king.

How do you do participate energetically in that sort of discussion while your preoccupations include anticipation of a meeting with your attorney or sweating out the verdict after a parole hearing? How do you share your views on a TV show while you're worrying about whether your family will lose their apartment or how soon the most recent pandemic related restrictions will end so your children will be allowed to visit you?

I also learned about some of the things my students were doing to fill the days.

They were training dogs to be companions for people suffering from PTSD, which made sense, since some of them were themselves suffering from PTSD. They were speaking to groups of young students, urging them to avoid the mistakes my students had made when they were younger. They were meeting with other incarcerated men to discuss not only the circumstances that had led to the fatally bad decisions they'd made, but also strategies for prison reform. They were embracing personal responsibility and learning about the various manifestations of restorative justice, then practicing what they'd learned in

"Some of the students with whom I work have committed crimes as serious as crimes can be. Many were first arrested before they reached adulthood and have spent most of their lives incarcerated; 15 or 20 or 25 years later, none of them are the same people they were at 18 or 19 or 20."

meetings with people who'd been victims of various crimes.

Teachers working with incarcerated men and women are likely to face various challenges and negotiations with regard to language and lots of other matters. For me, the most basic conflict is one I rarely talk about with my students. On the best days at Concord, what I'm doing helps somebody become a stronger, more confident writer. But does providing these men with classes and the opportunity to earn a degree serve to make the fact of incarceration more tolerable? And if it does, is that desirable?

People teaching in a prison learn that their students are just people. This may seem self-evident, but perhaps not. Incarceration separates the incarcerated from everybody else. That's the point of the system. It's not difficult for those who've never been inside a prison or known

somebody who is incarcerated to ignore the people behind the walls, or to assume they must belong where they are, since a prosecutor, a judge, and a jury have decided that's the case, though many of this nation's incarcerated citizens have never had a trial. They are incarcerated as a result of desperate plea bargains, or they are locked up while awaiting disposition of their cases because they can't afford bail. Some of the students with whom I work have committed crimes as serious as crimes can be. Many were first arrested before they reached adulthood and have spent most of their lives incarcerated; 15 or 20 or 25 years later, none of them are the same people they were at 18 or 19 or 20. The system doesn't acknowledge that.

People driving home from their afternoons volunteering in the prison cannot avoid the painful realization that for their students, "home" is a cramped cell. They may not be able to avoid wondering if they are making a brutal and unresponsive system seem more acceptable by helping a small number of the people imprisoned earn a credential while learning something about history or political science. They are perhaps bound to wonder if they are providing those who would defend the enormous prison complex with cover: "Hey, it's not so bad. Some of those guys are getting a free college education."

That's not an attitude I've found among the incarcerated men with whom I've worked. When I wondered in class one

day if I'd be helping my students more if I was marching around with a sign reading "Tear It Down," one of them said, "Nah, we know you're one of us."

Of course, I'm not. I'm only a witness, and a witness whose experience has been limited to a small number of men in a single prison. But I heard that student, and it helped.

Three years into my experience as perhaps the nation's oldest teaching assistant in a state prison, I make no pretense to expertise. I've worked with the same group of a dozen students since 2018. In order to qualify for admission to the Emerson Prison Initiative, these men had to demonstrate they were more deserving of inclusion than more than 100 other incarcerated men who applied for that opportunity. Are the students with whom I've worked representative of the population at MCI-Concord, let alone the more than 2 million men incarcerated across the country? I can't say. I can say that I've come to feel that locking young men up for decades is unusually cruel and counterproductive. I say that as a witness.

On an as-yet-to-be-determined summer day in 2022, the men with whom I've been working will be awarded their bachelor's degrees. I assume there will be a ceremony. I look forward to that day. I hope I will be allowed to attend. □

Bill Littlefield is the former host of NPR's *It's Only a Game*

FEATURE

My Climate Moment

How paralyzing sadness over the state of the environment turned to a new education focus

Story by **Laura Schifter, Ed.M.'07, Ed.D.'14** Illustrations by **Brian Stauffer**



Three days have fundamentally altered my identity:

February 28, 2013, the day my oldest daughter was born, and I was forever a different person as a mother.

July 21, 2013, the day we lost my 27-year-old brother-in-law to an opioid overdose, and I was changed by the all-encompassing nature of grief.

And October 8, 2018, when the United Nations IPCC report on 1.5 degrees warming was released and headlines from all the major media outlets declared we only had a decade to address climate change.

I recall sitting in my basement that October, looking at my three children feeling paralyzed. I always believed in climate change, but I thought it was not an immediate problem. I worked in education policy where there are many pressing problems. But on that day, the full weight of motherhood and grief converged. My previous work felt meaningless. Would it matter if we had a great education system if the full destruction of climate change took hold? How could I look my children in the eye knowing the world they would inherit? This was my “climate moment.”

I looked into switching jobs, researching environmental organizations, but I was not sure where to go and what to do. In the spring of 2019, Washington state Governor Jay Inslee, in his presidential campaign, said he would call on every sector to address climate change. And I realized I did not have to enter a new field, but rather I could bring my expertise in education to the climate fight.

From my experience in education policy, I knew the education sector had not yet talked about its role in addressing climate change at a systems level, across school districts and at the state and federal level. And on the environment side, in conversations about advancing climate policy, education is often left out as a solution. This isn't surprising. Prior to my climate moment, I also felt this tension; there are already many pressing problems within each sector, it's hard to step outside your focus to look at issues that cross sectors.

After recognizing this gap, I immersed myself in learning about the issues. I spoke with everyone and anyone I knew and became introduced to new people along the way. I attended a Climate Reality Project training where I met many other people grappling with their own “climate moments” and searching for how they could make a difference. I met incredible people working at this intersection and learned about great work being done in pockets across the country that had the opportunity to scale.

I eventually connected with the Aspen Institute — the nearly 75-year-old organization committed to addressing our greatest societal challenges through dialogue, leadership, and action — to launch K12 Climate Action, an initiative to unlock the power of the education sector to be a force for climate action, climate solutions, and environmental justice. John King Jr., former U.S. secretary of education, and Christie Todd Whitman, a former administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency and New Jersey governor, recognized the critical opportunity to leverage the education sector in the climate fight and agreed to co-chair the initiative. We worked with Whitman and King to recruit 20 additional education, environment, civil rights, and youth climate leaders to join a commission to develop an action plan.

Ultimately, this bipartisan commission agreed about the critically urgent need to engage the education sector in the climate fight.

As outlined in the IPCC report, if we have any hope of preventing the most damaging impacts of climate change, the whole world must rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Including schools. Here in the United States, schools are a large public sector that must be a part of that decarbonization — meaning they need to reduce emissions from their energy, transportation, food use, and more. For example, to meet the needs of students across the country, schools are among





Writing Student-Friendly Climate Curriculum for Teachers

Students at the Ed School often have jobs while they're in the program. [LINDSEY POCKL, ED.M.'22](#), became one of those students when she found work doing two things she loves: focusing on the environment and helping other teachers. A long-time elementary school teacher, Pockl now writes curriculum for Subject to Climate, a free, online site started by two Ed School alums ([MARGARET WANG, ED.M.'20](#), and [DAVID RHODES, ED.M.'20](#)) for K–12 teachers looking for credible, unbiased material on climate change. She spoke to *Ed.* this past spring.

How did you first get involved with this organization?

I first heard about Subject to Climate from a job posting another HGSE student posted in a Slack chat during our summer courses. After reading the description and meeting with a member of the leadership team, I was hooked by the passion, mission, and vision the organization holds for one another and for the work that they do.

You're part of their teacher task force. How important is it for teachers to be doing this work for other teachers?

As a teacher, I think it is vital that content is written for teachers, by teachers. So often we are given lessons or resources that are hard to implement given the structure of the lesson or that require more work to prepare on top of our already chaotic schedules. When content is written for teachers, by teachers, the little factors that make a big difference in a lesson are paid attention to, making it easier on teachers to bring great content into their classrooms.

Have you taken anything from this work back into your HGSE classes, or vice versa?

Oh, so much! It has been interesting to reflect on how my work for Subject to Climate has influenced my academic work and choice of classes, but then also how what I've learned in classes has influenced my work for Subject to Climate. I have been able to bring lessons I've learned from the brilliant teacher task force teammates into my conversations at Harvard and have been able to incorporate the lessons I've learned in courses back into our design work. Most specifically, in my courses with [Principal Research Scientist] Tina Grotzer and [FAS Professor] Dan Schrag, I have been able to form relationships with others from various backgrounds who are passionate about climate change both within and outside of HGSE, expanding my scope of the multiple dimensions of climate change education.

In general, how long does it take to create a full lesson plan for the site?

This is a surprisingly tough question to answer. Working with the elementary task force, we create units which are a compilation of 4–6 lessons about a given topic. Teachers who are currently working in the classroom are writing these units while still teaching daily ... a huge feat. When the lessons are “ready,” they send the content to me and I create the slideshows and other resources, which takes the burden off of future classroom teachers. After those have been finalized, the units move to the climate scientists to ensure the content is scientifically accurate and to the publication team for revisions. After a few rounds of editing, the lessons are published on the site for teachers to use instantly in their classrooms globally. **LH**

Check out the site: subjecttoclimate.org

the largest consumers of energy in the public sector; they operate the largest mass-transit fleet in the country with about 480,000 mostly diesel school buses; and they serve more than 7 billion meals annually — all contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

Schools across the country

are also already experiencing climate impacts which will only continue to increase in the future. After Hurricane Maria, in addition to experiencing trauma and loss, students in Puerto Rico missed an average 78 school days. Just in the beginning of the 2021–2022 school year, 1 million students faced learning disruptions from wildfires, smoke, flooding, and hot days. As we have seen with COVID, these disruptions disproportionately fall on communities of color and low-income rural and urban communities. Yet, if the sector plans for potential climate impacts, it can emerge from this pandemic more resilient to the challenges ahead.

Our schools also present a very powerful opportunity. As places of learning, they can build our societal capacity to tackle climate change. Whether solar installers, business leaders, engineers, fashion designers, or farmers, the jobs in a clean economy will require an understanding of climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability. As of fall 2020, 29 states and the District of Columbia required teaching human-caused climate change in science classes, and five states recognized climate change in social studies standards. Twenty-nine states have career and technical education programs that prepare students for green careers. Yet, ensuring *all* students have the opportunity to engage in learning about climate change, solutions, and sustainability can prepare them for success in the clean economy and enable them to lead a more sustainable society.



Some Questions to Ask if Your District is Ready to Take Action on Climate Change

From increased vulnerability to extreme weather to increased exposure to air pollution, climate change disproportionately impacts Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian American, and Pacific Islander, as well as other communities of color and low-income rural and urban areas. For instance, schools with higher concentrations of low-income students are more likely to experience “heat island” effects where the temperature at that their school is higher than their community — and the problem is getting worse. Meanwhile funding inequities often leave these schools without adequate infrastructure to keep buildings cool, and the increased exposure to hot days has been found to negatively impact learning, in particular for Black and Latinx students.

Equity-focused investments like transitioning schoolyards from heat-trapping asphalt to green sustainable spaces can help reduce heat island effects and community flooding and increase access to safe outdoor spaces to learn and play. At this moment of societal transition to address climate change, we have an opportunity to acknowledge the disparities that exist and advance equity-focused action to ensure the communities most impacted by climate change and education inequities are centered and prioritized.

The K12 Climate Action Commission spent a year listening to students, educators, parents, and school leaders from across the country. They heard from students in Salt Lake City who pushed their school board to pass a resolution committing the district to transition to 100% clean energy. They heard from educators in Oklahoma, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Hawaii, and the Spokane Tribe about different ways educators are supporting action, and they heard from superintendents from Miami-Dade, Philadelphia, and the Bayfield School District in Colorado about ways school leaders are taking action.

After a year of listening and learning, the commission released the K12 Climate Action Plan. The plan envisions a future where our

Does my district or community have a policy to ensure new school infrastructure, renovations, retrofits, and systems replacements support healthy sustainable learning environments?

Does my district utilize renewable energy? Are there opportunities to support schools in utilizing renewable energy like solar and geothermal?

Does my district or community have a plan in place to transition its school bus fleet to electric?

Does my district access locally grown, sustainable food through local procurement or farm-to-school programs?

Do climate risks differ by communities or schools within my district?

Does my district have a plan in place for virtual learning in the event of disruptions due to climate impacts?

Does my district have a plan to transition schoolyards to green sustainable schoolyards?

Are there schools or communities impacted by heat island effects or storm-related flooding that can benefit most from access to green sustainable schoolyards?

Source: www.k12climateaction.org

“Would it matter if we had a great education system if the full destruction of climate change took hold? How could I look my children in the eye knowing the world they would inherit? This was my climate moment.”

LAURA SCHIFTER



Laura Schifter, Ed.M.'07, Ed.D.'14, is a lecturer on education at the Ed School and a senior fellow with the Aspen Institute leading the K12 Climate Action initiative

nearly 100,000 schools are beacons of climate action: where our school buildings produce as much energy as they consume; where America's 480,000 school buses are electric; our schools' 2 million acres of land are green schoolyards; the 7 billion meals served in schools are sustainable; and importantly, the 50 million students in school are engaged in learning about climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability and are prepared for success in the clean economy.

At K12 Climate Action, we are now working with our 22 leaders and organizational partners to make our vision for schools a reality by advocating for the recommendations at the local, state, and federal level. For example, our commissioners are working to elevate the issue across the sector, speaking with the media and in conversations at events, including the Ed School's Askwith Education Forum and SXSW EDU. And we are hearing from people in early childhood and higher education who are interested in advancing a similar conversation in their fields.

Upon the report release, we were able to tour Alice West Fleet Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia, where we saw firsthand this vision in practice. Fleet is the largest net-zero energy school in the country. Planning elements, such as the angle of the building and the south facing tilt of the roof, help the school generate enough energy from renewable sources, including 1,532 solar panels to cover the school's energy needs. In fact, a power tower in the center of the school shows students in real-time the amount of energy the school produces compared to the amount it consumes, and students are able to observe differences in the power tower when the whole school goes lights out or it is a cloudy day. The school is modeled after the Earth, where students begin their education in the ocean and end at the poles. The whole-of-school approach to sustainability is reflected in the principal's leadership, the teaching and learning in the classroom, and the built environ-

ment. Importantly, when asked if a building like this costs more, an Arlington director noted it doesn't cost more if you are smart about how you do it, plus, the learning opportunities it creates are invaluable.

I know I am not the first person to have a climate moment, and I've encountered many others working tirelessly on these issues on my climate path — people on the commission, those who presented to the commission, and those whom I had the opportunity to meet as I was immersing myself in the issues. Naina Agrawal-Hardin, who drew on her relationships to organize the U.S. Youth Climate Strike; Ari Bernstein, who applies his knowledge as a pediatrician to elevate how climate change will impact children's health; Gil Rosas, who uses his position in operations to get Stockton (California) Unified School District electric buses; First Lady of New Jersey Tammy Murphy, who pushed the state to establish climate change standards across the curriculum; and Wyck Knox, who applied his architectural skills to design Alice West Fleet Elementary; to name a few. These people all recognize the urgency of climate change and the opportunity to use their knowledge, passions, and positions to advance solutions.

I still walk around anxious about the reality we all face with the climate crisis, and I still get asked by those in education, how can we possibly think about this now when we are grappling with the many education problems posed by COVID? But I remain hopeful as I collaboratively contribute to solutions and realize the potential of our collective action. As more people experience the grief of their own climate awakenings, they can look to bring their passions, interests, and expertise to make a difference. To meet this moment, we need everyone's unique contribution to the collective fight. As others embark on their own climate paths, I hope they live by the motto of Alice West Fleet: “Let nothing and no one stop you.” □

RECESS

Need another way to use your brain? Try "nerdy lifting" Story by Lory Hough

"I've never done sports voluntarily in my life," says Senior Lecturer Carrie Conaway. "I'm so unathletic."

So it may come as a surprise that for a few months back in 2017, Conaway hit a major athletic milestone that few ever accomplish: she (briefly) held a national record.

"What I realized I like doing is lifting heavy weights over my head," she says.

Conaway's passion for weightlifting and competing started when she decided to join a gym about 10 years ago and work with a trainer on basic strength exercises. Every once in a while, the trainer would throw Olympic lifts into the lunge and bicep curl routines. The lifts, called the snatch and the clean and jerk, are the kind you see when you watch the Olympics, where the lifter ends up with the bar over their head. (With the snatch, it's in one quick movement. With the clean and jerk, the bar first comes to the chest and then over the lifter's head.)

"He told me he thought I could do these because to be a weightlifter, you need to be strong, flexible, and fast. He said, 'You're two of these things: strong and flexible,'" she jokes. "He really felt I could do it. It's such a great lesson for us educators. Because of his confidence in my ability to do it, I was like, OK, all right. Normally, if I failed at something, especially physical, I'd be like, I'll just do something else, but instead, even though there are a lot of things that can go wrong

from the floor to over your head, I said I'd try learning it."

Conaway says Olympic weightlifting is considered the "nerdy kind" of weightlifting because it can be more technical than powerlifting. (Powerlifting involves squats, bench presses, and deadlifts.) "First of all, who knew there was a 'nerdy' kind of weightlifting? And secondly, of course I would gravitate towards the nerdy kind of lifting, even though I had no idea it was considered nerdy at the time."

Nerdy training turned into serious competing, which now includes working out three to four times a week with her trainer and a team, sometimes at home in her basement, where the low ceiling is a clearance challenge.

"As I mentioned, you have to get the weights over your head so I can't use the full-size plates or I'll hit the rafters," she says. "I have to use 7,000 tiny plates on the bar."

And what about the national record Conaway briefly held?

"In 2017, all of the weight classes were redone at the international level. In the United States, they decided that rather than try to equate 'this person had this record so what would it be in the new weight class,' they just started over," she says. She qualified for the first national competition. There were no records to beat and she was the only person in her age and weight class. "I did have to qualify and make one of each lift, so it wasn't a to-

tal gimme, but it was pretty close. But still, I held the record for about six or so months."

One of the things Conaway says she loves about the weightlifting world, or at least the one she's orbited in, is that there's room for everyone. "The vibe is so welcoming," she says, especially from other female lifters she's met over the years at competitions, like her hero, Sarah Robles, a bronze medal winner at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

"Yes, you're competing, but you're really just competing against yourself. You're trying to do your personal best," she says. "Your success doesn't take away from anyone else. We joke that it's a bunch of adults involved in parallel play. I once competed against an 85-year-old woman. It was fantastic. That was the first time I didn't come in last. I beat the 85-year-old. She said I was graceful. She was the first person who ever said that."

When Conaway's not lifting, she's cooking or playing bass. During COVID, she also learned about canning and has kept at it.

Having interests outside of the education world is important, she says. "I don't do as well at my job if I don't have other things in my life. I need that downtime. It's a different way of using my brain and my body. And we all have an obligation to current and future educators to model what we aspire for them, which is a well-rounded life." □

Follow her on Twitter: @c1conaway

HCSE by Day, Weightlifter (and Bassist) by Night



Early morning lift for
Carrie Conaway in her trainer's
garage gym

STUDY SKILLS

Tanya Wright left
Hollywood for a year
of Ivy

Story by
Lory Hough

Crimson Is the New

YOU'VE SEEN HER ON TV, most notably playing Deputy Kenya Jones on *True Blood* and Crystal Burset on Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black*. Back in the day, she briefly was Theo Huxtable's girlfriend.

These days, you've also seen her around Harvard, especially at the iLab and on Appian Way, because actress **TANYA WRIGHT, ED.M.'22**, has spent the last year as a student in the new Learning, Design, Innovation, and Technology (LDIT) master's degree program.

"I came to the Ed School after I saw the inequities that were laid bare due to the pandemic. I felt like I could be helpful," she says, especially with her idea to create educational, story-driven content for young people. "But I knew I had to educate myself formally first."

The content Wright started creating relates to Hairiette of Harlem, an animated educational children's franchise about a 7-year-old girl named Hairiette who realizes her hair is magic and goes on learning adventures with her friend, Charlie the Talking Comb. The idea for Hairiette came in part from a hair care company Wright had started a couple of years ago by the same name, and a related book, *I Found God in My Hair*.

"I realized I was more passionate about educating children than I was about manufacturing and distributing hair products," she says. When a friend applying to the Harvard Divinity School sent her information about LDIT, becoming a graduate student started creeping into her brain.

"I didn't think I had the bandwidth to go back to school, but the program was so intriguing, and it kept gnawing at me. It was exactly what I wanted to do!" she says. "I called [LDIT assistant director] Rilda Kissel in hopes she would talk me out of applying, but instead the opposite happened. I started filling out my application right after I got off the phone. When I got accepted, I shut my life down in Los Angeles, took an Amtrak from LA to New York City — the CDC recommended we avoid the airports due to COVID-19 — found an apartment in Cambridge, and set up shop! I went all in."

That included spending time last fall at the

Harvard iLab and working on various aspects of the Hairiette brand in each of her classes.

"In Deeper Learning, I created a mobile financial literacy program; in Connected Teaching, I started building a digital platform to help kids read using the Hairiette book series, which will help them learn vocabulary and reading comprehension," she says. "I'm building a delivery system with peers in this class which will mitigate the need for a traditional publisher. And my Motivation class has been instrumental in helping me build a prototype for a Big Hair Hairiette! game."

Is she happy she made that decision to board the Amtrak to Harvard?

"Going back to school at this time in my life was not something I anticipated but has probably been one of the most important and impactful choices of my life," she says. "I am an eager and engaged student, far more so than I was as an undergrad."

"While I have been blessed to have a cool acting career, I feel like Hollywood hasn't always known exactly what to do with me. They've been leaving a lot on the table! I have found my tribe here at Harvard, mostly with my peers. They are kind, exuberant, curious, and whip smart. They are truly inspiring and inspired. I hope to be impactful at the intersection of education and entertainment. Hairiette of Harlem is just one of many projects." □

Orange



Ideas

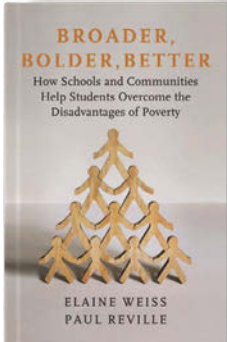


“It’s draining to have to put on the ‘everything is normal’ face every day.”

JEFF DURNEY, ED.M.’21 (SEE P. 26)



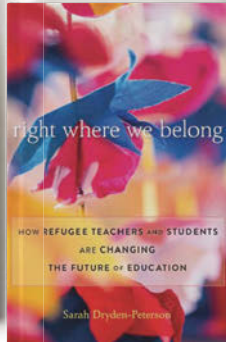
NEW BOOKS THAT EXCITE US RIGHT NOW



Broader, Bolder, Better: How Schools and Communities Help Students Overcome the Disadvantages of Poverty

By Professor Paul Reville, founder of the Education Redesign Lab, and Elaine Weiss
(HARVARD EDUCATION PRESS)

In this new book, Paul Reville and Elaine Weiss make the case for radically changing the design of schools and communities to provide a “pipeline of supports, from cradles to career” for all children, not just the “lucky minority.” The bulk of the book is a series of profiles of 12 diverse communities in 12 states trying to make these changes, and includes strategies that have worked and challenges still faced.



Right Where We Belong: How Refugee Teachers and Students Are Changing the Future of Education

By Associate Professor Sarah Dryden-Peterson, Ed.D.'09
(HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

When it comes to improving schooling for the 13 million refugee children around the world, Sarah Dryden-Peterson says that policy-makers, activists, and educators can learn a lot by talking directly with refugee children and their teachers who have found ways to experiment with learning during crisis, especially when international relief groups and government agencies have their hands tied or hit a roadblock.

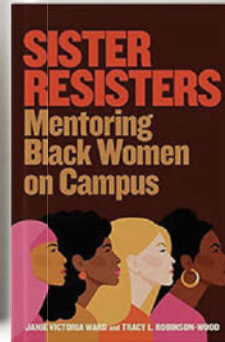
Listen to an EdCast with Dryden-Peterson recorded in April 2022 about her work: gse.harvard.edu/edcast



The Voices of the Trees

By Professor Fernando Reimers, Ed.M.'84, Ed.D.'88, and Elisa Guerra, Ed.M.'21
(PEARSON)

At the end of February, with snow still on the ground in Cambridge but with the hint of spring around the corner, Professor Fernando Reimers and Elisa Guerra, a writer from Mexico and a finalist for the Global Teacher Prize, published *The Voices of the Trees*. Framed around six stories set in different countries and locations — a park, a school — this illustrated book teaches children around the world about topics such as social solidarity, responsibility, and the importance of being global citizens.



Sister Resisters: Mentoring Black Women on Campus

By Janie Victoria Ward, Ed.M.'81, Ed.D.'86, and Tracy Robinson-Wood, Ed.M.'83, Ed.D.'88
(HARVARD EDUCATION PRESS)

In *Sister Resisters*, Janie Victoria Ward and Tracy Robinson-Wood present a topic they have been studying for decades: the ways Black college students are underserved, in part because their college mentors — including faculty, coaches, and advisers — don't always have the skills needed to truly mentor them. These skills go beyond just taking a mentee out to lunch or checking in on classes. They range from having a better sense of African American history to understanding what it means to contend with gendered racism.

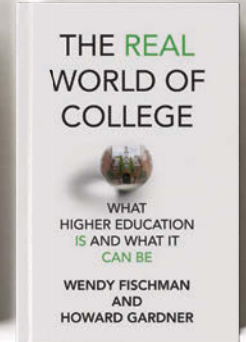


Mercy

By Bill Littlefield, Ed.M.'73
(BLACK ROSE WRITING)

In this, Bill Littlefield's third novel (he has written several other books, including *Only a Game*, the namesake of the NPR show he hosted for 25 years, and *Champions: Stories of Ten Remarkable Athletes*), the focus is on overlapping stories of neighbors in a suburban community who are all seeking mercy in one form or another. As author Gish Jen writes about *Mercy*, “This book has much to tell us about life, and what it's really like. Written by a man who knows about a lot more than baseball, it is a wonder and a pleasure.”

Read Littlefield's essay on page 8



The Real World of College: What Higher Education Is and What It Can Be

By Professor Howard Gardner and Wendy Fischman, project director, Project Zero
(MIT PRESS)

Based on years of research plus more than 2,000 interviews with individuals (mostly students, but also faculty, administrators, parents, and young alumni) at colleges across the United States, Howard Gardner and Wendy Fischman present a snapshot of the college experience, what works and what doesn't at various schools (and across the higher education world in general), and why more colleges and universities need to get back to focusing sharply on their unique mission: to develop minds to the fullest.

Timothy McCarthy, Lecturer on Education

This spring, just after *Reckoning with History: Unfinished Stories of American Freedom*, co-edited by Lecturer Timothy McCarthy came out, McCarthy shared his favorite childhood stories, why he curled up with a book about a dog, and the practical reason there are no books on his nightstand.

What are you currently reading?

You mean, aside from all the things I have assigned my students that I am re-reading? Jenna Blum's *Woodrow on the Bench: Life Lessons from a Wise Old Dog*.

What drew you to a book about a dog?

My husband, **CJ CROWDER, ED.M.'02**, a Teach For America alum, and I lost our beloved dog, Jeter, just before Christmas. It was sudden and unbearable. We adopted Jeter a month before we got married in May 2011. He's always been our kid, but he became our rock during the pandemic. Jeter and Woodrow were black labs who brought all of us immeasurable joy. Jenna is a friend, and she sent us signed copies of her beautiful book to help get us through this terrible time, which we will always cherish.

What kind of reader were you as a kid and what book has continued to stick with you?

I was (and am) a very slow reader and voracious lover of stories: *Dr.*

Seuss, Winnie the Pooh, Sesame Street, and Star Wars were my childhood favorites. The book that most sticks with me is Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*. In fourth grade, I was selected to participate in a writing workshop with Ms. Babbitt, who was visiting our elementary school. She taught me a lesson I will never forget: readers and writers are related. I still have my signed copy of her book.



What's the last interesting or useful thing you read in a book?

The final line from Nikole Hannah-Jones' essay, "Democracy," in *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*: "We were told once, by virtue of our bondage, that we could never be American. But it was by virtue

of our bondage that we became the most American of all." I had read this before, but it resonated differently this time. Perhaps it's more controversial now — and self-evident.

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

I would insist on four: my husband CJ, his mother Jean, and my parents Michelle and Coach Mac. They're all brilliant educators, curious people, and kindred spirits. Come to think of it, this would be a wonderful thing for CJ and me to do with our folks right now — for so many reasons.

What book that you assigned to your students this spring should all educators read? All high schoolers?

Every educator should read bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Free-*

dom. I have assigned it in my HGSE classes this year — first as a way of acknowledging her influence on my/our thinking and teaching, then as a way of marking her passing and celebrating her life and work. Every high school student in the world should read James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* and Martin Luther King's *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. And when you do, let's talk!

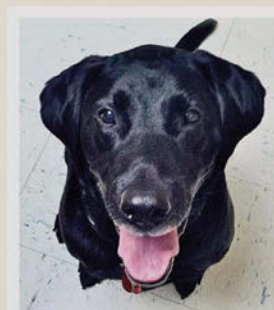
Favorite place to read.

It used to be various libraries or my office. During the pandemic, it's become a bed or couch. Eventually, I would love to read more with others, all of us together.

What books, in addition to *Woodrow on the Bench*, are currently on your nightstand?

Nothing. We have just moved and are still waiting for our furniture! But here are the books I've recently started: Farah Jasmine Griffin, *Read Until You Understand*; Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*; Tiya Miles, *All That She Carried*; Thich Nhat Hanh, *How We Fight*; Mary Oliver, *Upstream*; Elizabeth Hinton, *America on Fire*; and Derecka Purnell, *Becoming Abolitionists*.

Woodrow on the Bench



*Life Lessons
from a Wise Old Dog*

Jenna Blum

New York Times bestselling
author of *The Lost Family*

FEATURE

A Space for Joy

Educators talk about the impact COVID has had on school happiness

Story by **Lory Hough**

Illustrations by **Julia Schwarz**





Julia

DE LA TORRE, ED.M.'06, is tired. The teachers, staff, and administrators at the preK-12 school she oversees in New Jersey are tired. Her students are tired and often uncertain. Now in our third calendar year of the pandemic, there's still much to deal with and process, even as schools are moving toward the summer break.

"I am tired of COVID protocols and the endless emails and video messages that I send to our families about the changing rules related to the pandemic," de la Torre says. "I'm wearied by carrying the emotional weight of people's worst fears about their health." But more than anything, she says she's worried that during these chaotic years, her relationship with students, staff, and families has been rooted in crisis.

That's where the ladybugs and joke book come in.

They're de la Torre's attempt to upend the tired, the chaotic, the crisis with another powerful word — a word that's normally easy to find in schools but has been in short supply these days: joy.

EROSION OF JOY

On top of her desk at Moorestown Friends School, de la Torre keeps a big book of kids' jokes. A colleague gifted her the book recently and she uses it to bring kid humor into almost every meeting she attends.

"I spend a lot of time in meetings and on Zoom, and it can be easy to feel disconnected from our shared purpose," this former high school French teacher and principal says. "The jokes keep things light and reconnect us with the innocence of children, the purity of their humor, and the reason why we love being in student-centered communities. The pandemic can sometimes mean we take ourselves too seriously, so I try to keep laughter as a central theme at school."

For her students, especially the younger ones, that includes ladybugs.

"I have a tradition at my school where I hide little ladybug stickers all throughout the lower school," she says. "Ladybugs bring good luck in German culture, and I like to share that part of my multicultural background. You'd be amazed to see the joy on a student's face when they find one of these tiny hidden treasures." As she walks down the hall, students love to update her on how many stickers they found. "They also learn to leave the stickers behind so that other students can discover the joy. I love that the ladybugs not only connect me to them on a daily basis, but they also encourage students to think about their peers and what will bring them joy in their day."

Joy. It seems like such a simple word, but it was hard to find back in the spring of 2020, when COVID first sent learning online and took away face-to-face and "fun" activities like clubs, sports teams, classroom parties, recess, musicals, and chorus concerts. Even now, with students back in person and masks optional in many places, the push to make up what was "lost" is stressful.

As Decoteau Irby, an associate professor of educational policy studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago wrote last fall in a Harvard Education Publishing blog post, "If there has ever been a time where I've witnessed the widespread erosion of joyfulness among children and school-aged youth, it has been throughout the past two years. In March 2020, joy gave way to confusion, fear, and un-



“If there has ever been a time where I’ve witnessed the widespread erosion of joyfulness among children and school-aged youth, it has been throughout the past two years.”

◀ Decoteau Irby, associate professor,
University of Illinois at Chicago

certainty as the world came to terms with the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Katie Salch, an ELA and math curriculum coordinator at Glendale Elementary School District in Arizona finishing the Certificate in School Management and Leadership Program at the Ed School, says part of the stress she has seen in her district has to do with the ups and downs of this long pandemic.

“Students are on edge with the unknown. Are we going to close again? Am I going to get quarantined today? Is this phone call to send me to the office to go home?” For teachers, “Navigating a classroom with students in and out for 5–10 days, and keeping up with who is out when it’s like a who’s-on-first comedy sketch, is stressing teachers out. When the teacher then gets sick, all bets are lost with keeping up with where students are at academically for those 5–10 days.”

Personally, she feels stressed trying to come up with ways to support everyone.

“There isn’t a day that goes by in our schools that is normal,” she says. “It eats at your nerves and eats up your quota of coping mechanisms.”

De la Torre says the cumulative impact of operating a school in an unpredictable setting was especially tough when learning was both virtual and in-person. Educators had to learn new technology at lightning speed and figure out how to keep kids interested. It was definitely not an in by 8, out by 3 kind-of-day.

“The lines between work and home blurred and teachers were working harder than they ever have,” she says. On top of that, everyone was concerned about the health and wellbeing of every community member. “It’s an enormous emotional load to carry, and teachers have done it beautifully. [But], with every change in COVID guidelines, state mandates, and local case rates, I worry that we will crumble under the weight of it all.”

Last November, the *Education Week* Research Center found that nearly 75% of teachers say their morale is lower than it was before

the pandemic. (See feature, page 44.) Talk to any teacher you know, and they’ll say either they’ve considered leaving the profession or know other educators who already have.

JEFF DURNEY, ED.M.’21, is back teaching at the K–6 Boston Public School he worked at for 10 years as a STEAM specialist before coming to the Ed School. He says the vibe has been very somber this year, especially for teachers.

“It’s draining to have to put on the ‘everything is normal’ face every day,” he says. “At some point, we’ve all covered another class and/or lost a lunch block to support staffing shortages. In addition, we’ve had teachers give students rides home due to no coverage for bus drivers being out. As a teacher, you can often find yourself feeling like you’re on an island, but the pandemic has made it worse. Teachers have had to support the kids in their class while also supporting their own families as well.” Although he says he works in a supportive and understanding school, he is considering leaving the classroom, although even that takes its own kind of energy. “The workload and expectations for teachers have become too much. In conversations with various educators, a lot of us are too tired to look for positions outside the teaching profession. Furthermore, many of us are far too exhausted to sell ourselves during an interview.”

As Salch says, “I’ve had many teachers and coaches resign this year for several reasons. A majority are for health and safety and other employment in the private sector of education. Working remotely for almost a year really sat well with some educators and they are transferring to jobs where they can continue to do that.”

Bill Brooks, a Certificate in School Management and Leadership 2021 graduate, has seen the same trend as middle school dean of students at TESIS Portugal in Lisbon, where he also teaches English.

“I know several colleagues who have left or are thinking about leaving the profession,” he says. “In most cases, the cost of staying in

“It does not take anything extraordinary to the workplace of teachers.”

▲ JULIA DE LA TORRE, ED.M.'06, principal, Moorestown Friends School

the profession reached or is reaching a breaking point. It has simply become too much, and some reckon that a career switch is a better path, ultimately.”

IS LEARNING EVEN MEANT TO BE JOYFUL?

Anyone who has picked up an instrument or tried to learn a new language knows that learning can be hard and frustrating. As Irby pointed out, “Learning is not always a joyous undertaking. Pushing through a difficult subject, topic, or painstaking assignment can be tough.”

But, he adds, “joy at school and in learning is a foundation from which students gain the confidence that academic struggle is temporary and worthwhile.”

There’s also a very real connection to the brain. “The brain does not exist by itself,” writes Professor Jack Shonkoff, director of the Center on the Developing Child. “Connecting the brain to the rest of the body is critically important. When we’re stressed, every cell in the body is working overtime.”

Students who appear joyless or unmotivated (previously on Zoom, now in person) may not be making voluntary choices, says Judy Willis, a neurologist who went on to teach middle school for 10 years. Their brains, as Shonkoff points out, may just be responding to what’s going on around them, like the ups and downs of the pandemic and our push to “catch up” academically in schools.

“The truth is that when we scrub joy and comfort from the classroom, we distance our students from effective information processing and long-term memory storage,” Willis recently wrote in the *Neuroscience of Joyful Education*. “Instead of taking pleasure from learning, students become bored, anxious, and anything but engaged. They ultimately learn to feel bad about school and lose the joy

they once felt.” Neuroimaging studies and measurement of brain chemical transmitters reveal that “when students are engaged and motivated and feel minimal stress, information flows freely through the affective filter in the amygdala and they achieve higher levels of cognition, make connections, and experience ‘aha’ moments. Such learning comes not from quiet classrooms and directed lectures, but from classrooms with an atmosphere of exuberant discovery.”

Irby saw this with his own children. When school went remote, they were not happy. “On the best days, they were ambivalent. On the bad days, they were miserable,” he says. When they returned to in-person learning this past fall, things mostly got better. His son, a first-grader, didn’t like people being too close and didn’t want to be overly corrected for his efforts, but “they were very happy to return to school. They loved almost everything about returning, from packing their book bags, seeing their friends and socializing, to developing relationships with their teachers.”

PUSH TO GET KIDS UP TO SPEED

Happy is great, but what about the important idea that we need to regain academic ground lost during the pandemic? As Professor Tom Kane and his colleagues at the Harvard Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) reveal in their new Road to Recovery Project, using real-time data and working with school districts across the country, learning loss from the pandemic is significant.

“I don’t think there’s a broad appreciation for the magnitude of the declines we’ve seen,” Kane told *Ed.* (see Q+A, page 52) — the equivalent of kids missing three or four months of school last year. As he said in a recent *The 74* article, “School districts have nev-

to bring joy back



er had so many students so far behind.” And especially for some students. The Brookings Institute reported in March that test-score gaps between students in low-poverty and high-poverty elementary schools grew by approximately 20% in math and 15% in reading, primarily during the 2020–21 school year.

CEPR has called for tutoring, extra periods of instruction, Saturday academies, and afterschool programs. Schools, they say, should focus for the next couple of years on getting students back to pre-COVID academic levels.

But what does catch up mean for the joy that tired students and teachers also desperately need?

In a *Harvard EdCast* interview in February, Susan Engel, a senior lecturer at Williams College and author of the new book, *The Intellectual Lives of Children*, said, “I heard a first-grade teacher say to me, back in August, when she was planning her remote teaching, she said, ‘The parents are so worried that their children aren’t going to keep up this year.’ And I said, ‘Keep up with what?’ And she looked surprised, and she said, ‘Well, with the standards.’ But I mean, the standards are completely arbitrary. Who made up those standards? Just a lot of people sitting in rooms. I don’t know. And I’m not sure they were good standards in the first place, but it’s silly to let those constrain you too much as a teacher right now.”

Which is why it was interesting, says Wade Whitehead, a fifth-grade teacher in Virginia now in his 28th year of teaching, that in the

spring of 2020, when it became clear that we weren’t going back to in-person any time soon, “the first two things we threw out the window were grades and standardized testing.”

Why was that, he wondered? “I think it’s because those two rob students and teachers of joy. I think it was to keep students and teachers happy” as we shifted focus to everyone’s crushing social-emotional (SEL) needs. And there were other changes that at any other time would have seemed radical: Schools shortened the school day and cut back to just a few class blocks a day. “COVID was an opportunity for schools to go deep. People had the freedom to just learn. If you want to be around someone who is happy, be around someone who’s just learning something to learn, especially face-to-face. You’re just happier that way.”

Unfortunately, says Whitehead, a a Certificate in School Management and Leadership graduate, a year later, we “picked up those two apples” — grades and standardized tests — “and put them back in the cart. I’m not against grades or tests. I’m for amazing grading systems and amazing assessment and accountability systems.”

Durney agrees that the “normal” way of schooling wasn’t working for everyone and says that we can still rethink schooling.

“We need to use the pandemic as an opportunity to consider how we meet the needs of all our students through engaging tasks,” he says. “Students have access to apps, games, etc., and there are things that can and should be leveraged when designing learning oppor-

“One of the many benefits of working with elementary-aged children is that they can find joy and humor in just about any activity.”

JEFF DURNEY, ED.M.'21, teacher, Boston Public Schools ▶

tunities. It isn't just academics that students missed over the past two years. They need opportunities to engage in activities that allow them to build and strengthen their SEL skills. Rigor can and should be fun!”

Kane agrees and says that academics and emotional care go hand-in-hand. If students feel more comfortable being back in school, they are going to have an easier time focusing, just as finding success in the classroom can lead to positive effects on mental health.

Irby also says it's not an either-or as we move forward.

“I would say to educators who want to prioritize getting kids up to speed academically over joy that the two are not mutually exclusive. They should think about them as mutually reinforcing,” he says. “Not only do joy and academic rigor go hand-in-hand, but tactful educators plan to ensure both happen in tandem.” He noted that Gholdy Muhammad's framework outlined in her book *Cultivating Genius* includes five pillars to consider when planning lessons, and joy is one of them. “An example is children's museums, which offer learning opportunities that center play and fun. Exhibit curators plan with joy and excitement at the center of their learning design, but they don't forgo academic content. In other words, the same way a teacher can plan to have students learn a disciplinary skill, they can plan for students to experience joy while doing it. One priority doesn't need to outweigh the other.”

He says this is especially important for students who experience “compounding killjoys” — students who “live with circumstances and experiences that make it very difficult to be joyful. Some big picture joy killers include poverty, racism, social isolation, and concrete realities that stem from racial, social, and economic injustice such as hunger and food insecurity, housing insecurity, exposure to violence, health ailments, and living in a household or community where adults experience chronic stress. The more of these killjoys

that students experience, the more concerned educators should be about using learning as a means to cultivate joy.”

For example, he says that if students don't have access to safe green space, recess should become a priority. If they experience conflict with relationships in their lives, educators can create learning scenarios that are collaborative, “which provide opportunities to find joy in working with people.”

Keeping this in mind, **SANDRA NAGY, ED.M.'02**, managing director of Future Design School, says any effort to get kids caught up and still feel joy needs to be intentional.

“In order for this important change to take hold in schools, there needs to be a space for joy,” she says. “That means balancing efforts to address learning loss with looking ahead to what we can do next and celebrating the way teachers proved their ability to innovate and adapt in the past two years.”

And Brooks says we can do something else to bring back joy that would once have been considered radical: We can slow down.

“We can engage with students where they are, whatever they're interested in at the moment, because that's the ‘stuff’ of the world they're trying so hard to build normalcy from,” he says. “We can play with them on the field and court and laugh with them throughout the day. There will still be time for all that needs to be learned.”

IS JOY STILL BELOW THE SURFACE?

It's all important — and it's not all doom and gloom. Even tired educators say that below the frustrations, they see joy again.

“Given the circumstances, I have seen a lot of joy at school,” says Durney. “One of the many benefits of working with elementary-aged children is that they can find joy and humor in just about any activity.” Right before winter break, for example, they held an outdoor schoolwide activity where stu-

dents were able to share their work and play games created by their peers and with parent involvement. “It felt like pre-pandemic times where we’d gather as a whole school community. The day ended with our principal jumping into the frigid waters at the M Street Beach in South Boston because as a school community we exceeded our fundraising goal. The smiles and laughter throughout the entire day were a great way to end the first stretch of the school year.”

Salch addressed burnout when students — and teachers — stopped using a diagnostic online program by creating a challenge where students would earn a popcorn party if they logged in for 10 of 15 days in December.

“We have a local chocolate factory that sells 10-gallon bags of popcorn for \$6. We can feed a whole school for less than \$15,” she says. “Students that earned the reward came out to the courtyard to eat a coffee filter full of popcorn and dance to Kidz Bop.”

She celebrates her teachers, too — even in small ways. “I do everything I can to keep my teachers joyful,” she says. “I write handwritten notes to them monthly thanking them or congratulating them on something they accomplished. I give random gifts of pens or stickies to show appreciation. I organize themed meetings that included engaging activities that show each other we are humans before we are our professions.”

Joshua Neufeld, a first-grade teacher at the American International School of Guangzhou in China and a participant in a Project Zero program in 2021, is part of a peer coaching network for international teachers called Positivity Playground. He found that regular staff socializing has helped morale.

“The pandemic has been challenging for everyone, and Positivity Playground reminded me that together, as colleagues, we can generate more positive emotions and manage negative emotions effectively.” With this in mind, Neufeld organized a weekly lunchtime tea party for his colleagues called Positvi-Tea.

It’s a time for teachers to hang out and talk, he says, often about things other than school. “This is a time that energizes the participants and challenges them to continue the day with a positive outlook. I leave the meetings feeling recharged, viewing upcoming situations with a sense of realistic optimism.”

Beyond celebrations and gatherings, others say a focus on personalized learning and setting small, actionable steps (not just big lofty goals) can help bring joy back. Brooks says teachers and other educators can also pay more attention to self-care.

“I am striking a better work-life balance, taking time to be with my family and recharge,” he says. “Doing so allows me to be more fully present and increases the likelihood of finding and making joyful moments at work.” The same needs to be done for all educators. “It does not take anything extraordinary to bring joy back to the workplace of teachers. I would argue it comes down to acknowledging the difficulty of the work in these times, commiserating openly and honestly about these challenges, facing them together, and celebrating every small success of the professionals in the building. Impromptu conversations, dropping by to check in, and showing gratitude are a few other easy and regular ways to bring a sense of joy back to the workplace on a daily basis.”

With her ladybug stickers in hand and her joke book open and ready for the next meeting, Julia de la Torre is still tired, but she knows the joy at her school is there.

“Quite frankly, joy is the reason I come to work every day and why I love my job,” she says. “Pop your head into any classroom and you’ll see kids thriving, connecting, and enjoying school. They may have masks on, but you can see joy in their eyes and in their laughter. I’m always trying to remind my teachers that there is joy everywhere in schools, if you stop to look for it. It may be harder to find during these challenging times, but it’s the joy that keeps us coming back for more.” □



REAL WORLD

History Rewritten

Assistant professor helps Boston archeologists uncover new way to digitize archives

A data guy walks into a kitchen.

It's his kitchen, and Nadia Kline, his partner, is sitting there, tediously labeling photographs online. She's an archeologist for the City of Boston and she and her team are creating a digital database of the city's historical archives that researchers and students can use.

The process is frustratingly slow: She's been at it for more than five hours. And it's like this just about every day.

"I thought, I can help with that," says Sebastian Munoz-Najar Galvez, the Ed School's new assistant professor of data science and education. He created a script — an optical character recognition, or OCR script — that converts an image into text. This is exactly what Kline and the archeology department needed. At the time, they were printing out a label for each artifact that includes an archival code and descriptive information such as where the piece was found (beneath Paul Revere's house, inside a privy on Endicott Street) and what it's made of. They photographed each artifact with the label. The challenge was that the camera was creating a default file name for each file, such as DSC-0001 or DSC-0002. Manually, they had to open the picture, look at the label, then change the camera's labeling to the artifact's catalog number. Doing this for tens of thousands of photos in the city's massive collections was taking forever.

The script Munoz-Najar Galvez wrote finds the archival label in the photo, isolates the catalog number, and then saves the image with the catalog number as the file name.

"The procedure was so effective that they started changing the typography on the labels so that the automatic procedure works better," he says. He also helped the

team learn basic coding. "Now they have ownership," he says. "They're running with it."

Automating the process has freed up the staff to do more interesting things, such as using laser scanning and photogrammetry to create multiple 3D models of some of the artifacts, such as a Boston Common cowbell and a whizzer (like a colonial-era fidget spinner) found at Town Dock near Faneuil Hall, that the public can download for free and print with their own 3D printer.

Munoz-Najar Galvez's text processing work goes beyond helping the City of Boston. He's teaching students at the Ed School how to access and make sense of the massive amount of data they will encounter as they move into jobs in school districts and at education departments.

"I'm here at Harvard to teach data science to education researchers," he says, which includes developing classes in network analysis and text analysis. With students, using text analysis, he looks at documents like school improvement

plans and charter school applications — common but complex education documents full of detailed information. "I'm helping students find evidence of schools innovating or different districts coordinating with one another. Within this massive archive of documentation are actually data to find out what's going on in schools."

But again, the problem is that doing this manually — like for the archeologists in Boston — is too much. "No single human could spend their time fully reading all of these documents," he says. "For example, we're currently looking at school improvement plans in Florida, specifically documents where schools outline their plans for a whole year: budgets, strategic goals, description of their challenges. I'm like wow, you document all of this in such careful details, but who's going to read every plan?" Using text analysis, he says, you can look at the data and find patterns.

"What we're looking at in Florida is the difference between school improvement plans of very successful

schools and schools that need improvement," he says. "For example, we look at the budget. What are the things successful schools are putting their money toward? You could do this by interviewing people, and there are experts who know what to look for — I'm not trying to replace them — but that would take a long time, so we're helping to make it more efficient. What I'm putting on the table is, we can do this at scale."

Asked if people are surprised by what can be done with these scripts, he says, "It's been really fun to have 'a-ha' moments with students and my colleagues." He says he had his own moment of surprise when he realized the technology could also help the archeologists.

"The real 'a-ha' for me was when I identified that problem," he says. "I realized there's this process — the archeologists in Boston spend five hours a day doing this tedious task — that I can actually help out with."

Munoz-Najar Galvez is quick to point out that what he's doing, whether it's for a school district digging into a budget document or an archeologist digging into photos of clay pots, isn't unique.

"All of the tools I use are available in the world — this OCR technology is public and open to everyone," he says. "In history, there's a well-established tradition of using OCR to search through old archives. There's an imaging unit at Harvard Library, for example, that does this with old books."

But with everything he does, there's still the human element.

"It's not difficult to automate a tedious task or run analysis at scale," Munoz-Najar Galvez says. "What is challenging is learning how to identify worthy puzzles as part of an authentic partnership with experts from other domains." **LH**



STORIES SHARED

Gabrielle Oliveira focuses on the journeys of immigrant children



Dulce and Daniela
after showers at their
home in an NYC church

THERE ARE TEXT STORIES, photo essays, video interviews, and handwritten notes. All of the pieces focus on the lives and struggles of migrant children, like Epifanio, who worked in the strawberry fields during the day with his family before walking through the Altar Desert at night to cross into the United States with the help of a paid coyote. And Dulce, Daniela, and David, siblings who have been living in a sanctuary church in Manhattan for more than a year with their mother, who fled Guatemala. The stories are written by the children and a group of female anthropologists, teachers, filmmakers, writers — women like Associate Professor Gabrielle Oliveira, who has been leading the Immigration Initiative at Harvard for the past year. Oliveira recently spoke to *Ed.* about the stories, which are part of a project called *Colectiva Infancias*.

How did you get involved with this project?

The project was founded back in 2015 and the first iteration of it was developing free social sciences courses to students across Latin America. Valentina Glockner, an anthropologist from Mexico, and Soledad Alvarez Velasco, a geographer from Ecuador, were the two women who spearheaded the initiative and because of them I was able to be part of this collective. I first met Valentina back in 2010 when I was a graduate student in anthropology and education in New York City. Since my first fieldwork was done in Mexico, she and her family were a great source of support and care for me as I was collecting data on my project about transnational motherhood. We've been good friends since and with time our networks expanded and today we are a

group of eight women researchers across the Americas that came together to focus on the knowledge produced by immigrant children.

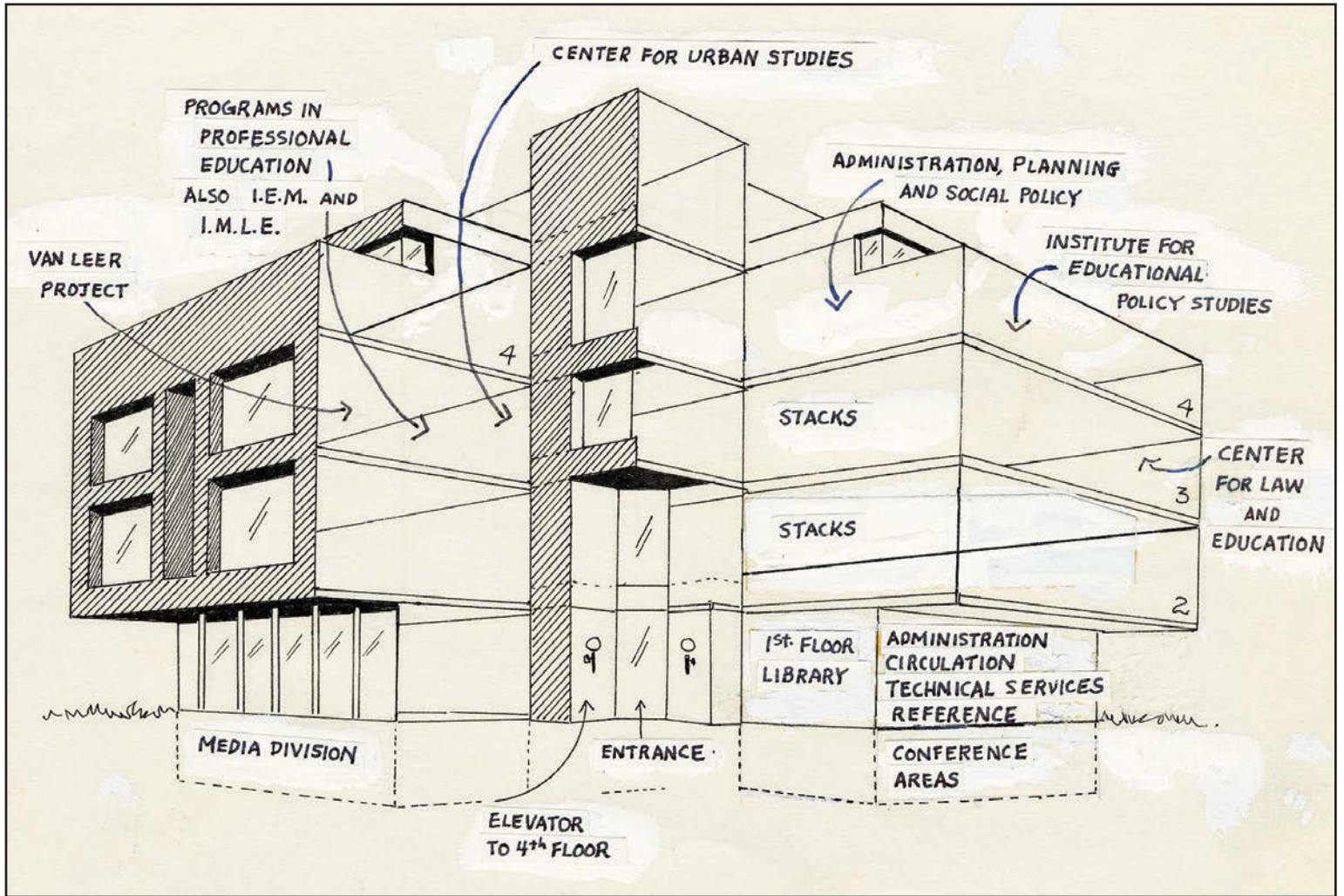
What are you trying to do with the project's website?

The website was funded by the National Geographic Foundation. The focus was to do public-facing scholarship. As academics, we rarely have the option to take on writing projects that think about the broader audience and not just your usual conference-goers. We wanted to tell detailed portrait stories of immigrant children and show how these knowledges are co-constructed. Methodologically we center children in the research as the experts of their lives. We wanted the wider audience — teachers, parents, social workers, students — to get a glimpse of the long-term research we have each engaged in for so long. We took out academic jargon and situated our work within a storytelling framework. Our hope is that people can gain a complex, in-depth understanding of the journeys experienced by migrant children.

There's a lot on the site written by the kids themselves. Why is it important to have the kids tell their stories, too?

Rarely are we able to hear from immigrant children in the news and academic books. All of their experiences are rapidly transformed into one data point or discredited and challenged by adults. All of our research was done alongside children — they have led the interactions and decided what they wanted to discuss and talk about. We want to show children for what they are — agentic, powerful experts of what is happening around them. Our stories are not edited to satisfy academic audiences, but to serve as windows into children's worlds. Thus, the importance of incorporating different modes of expression like drawing, narratives, text messages, pictures, and artifacts. **LH**

CELEBRATION



TO CELEBRATE THE PAST FIVE DECADES OF GUTMAN LIBRARY, WE'RE LOOKING BACK AT SOME MEMORABLE MOMENTS.

HAPPY 50TH GUTMAN!

1968

• **MONROE GUTMAN**, a New York City banker and philanthropist, donated a gift of \$1,130,000 toward the construction of a new building on Appian Way, which would become the Gutman Library — the first library building built by the Ed School since its founding in 1920. The need for a library was felt strongly by



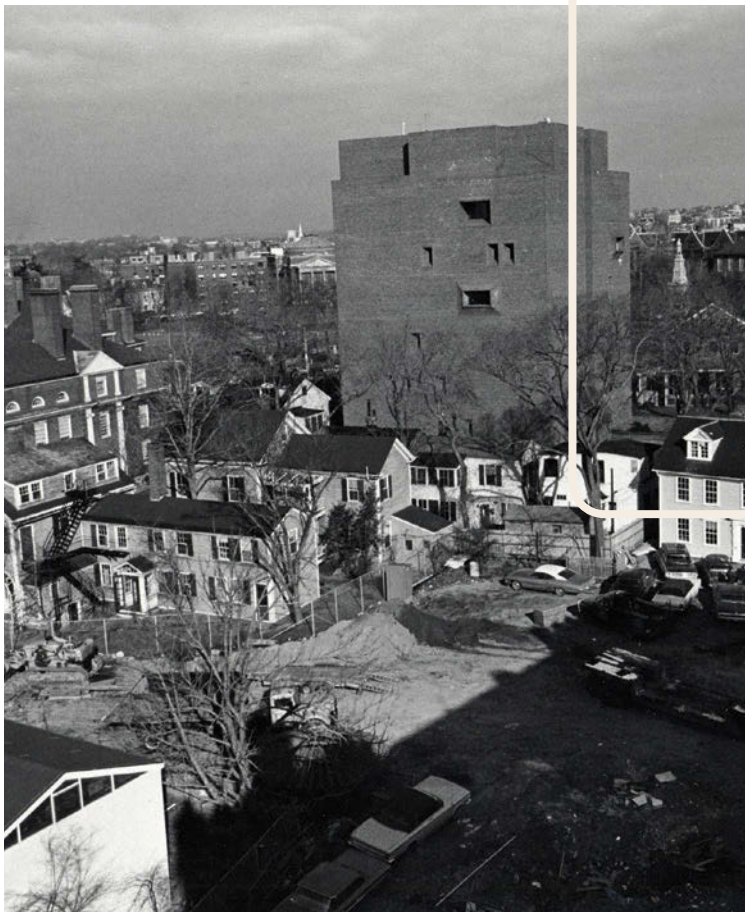
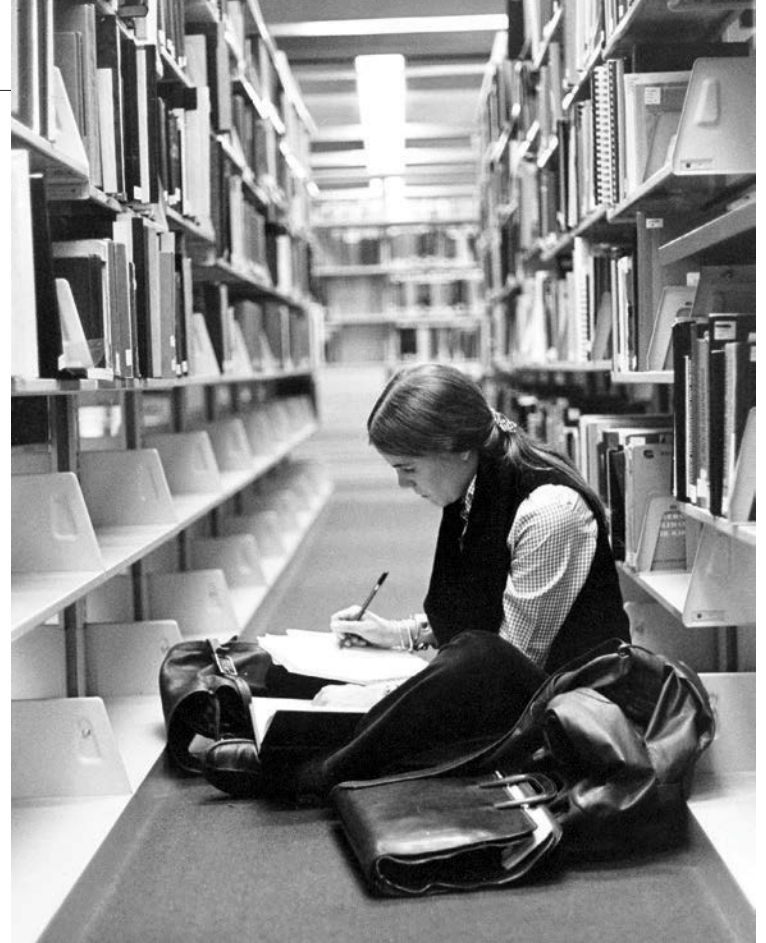
frustrated students who had to travel to four different libraries on the Harvard campus to take out education-related books. That same year, while architects were still working on plans for the new building, Bill Coperthwaite, Ed.D.'72, a first-year doctoral student, built a **\$600 YURT** in two days on the site with the help of other Ed School students. The yurt, with its shiny red roof, became a gathering place for students to drink tea and talk about their classes.

1970

- In order to make way for the construction of Gutman, two historic buildings had to be moved: **READ (1772)** and **NICHOLS (1827)**. Both buildings are now tucked to the side of Gutman and house administrative offices.

1972

- On February 7, 1972, the five-story Monroe C. Gutman Library opened to the price tag of \$6 million. (**F.A.O. SCHWARZ JR.**, the great grandson of the toy store founder, worked with a



seven-member committee to find some of the funding.) Then-dean Ted Sizer made a toast before checking out the first book, a Latin grammar believed to be donated to Harvard in 1870 by the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

When designing the library, architects **BENJAMIN THOMAS & ASSOCIATES** said the brutalist, sandblasted concrete design included the use of large windows, especially on the lower level and first floor, to “avoid the deadness and inactivity that institutions often impose on once vital streets and commercial areas.”

The initial library **COLOR SCHEME** was a far cry from today’s

muted tones and living plant walls. Even the pop of color from the purple chairs currently on the first floor of Gutman is no match for the massive burst of color back when the library opened, including green, orange, and yellow elevator doors and purple and orange wall-to-wall carpeting.

That first year, you could develop prints in the Gutman darkroom, look up books in the card catalog, dial pay phones in the lobby, and use your own typewriter in the typing rooms.

1973

- The school’s **MEDIA DIVISION** was housed in Gutman and began producing videos for children’s TV, including a series on science broadcast on WCVB-TV Boston. The building also started winning design awards, including the **HARLESTON PARKER MEDAL** from the Boston Society of Architects for best designed building in Boston.





1998

- The library's new **GUTMAN GALLERY** opened its first exhibit in October with work by artist Joanna Steinkeller.

2012

- After enduring extensive jackhammering and dust for a few years, Gutman underwent a **MAJOR FACELIFT** that turned the first floor into a café, hangout, and study area with cozy fireplaces. The circulation desk moved to the second floor, as did staff and most of the books and periodicals.

1992

- A silent vigil, held outside Gutman and organized by the Harvard Coalition Against the L.A. Verdict, honored the nearly 60 people who died after the **RODNEY KING VERDICT**. After each name was read, a bell was rung.

Previous spread: An early drawing, the yurt, (1968) campus before the build (1963), reading in the stacks (1978), the goovy elevator (1972); This spread: A chat outside Gutman (1983), early computing (1982), blue for autism, the die-in, biking and studying today

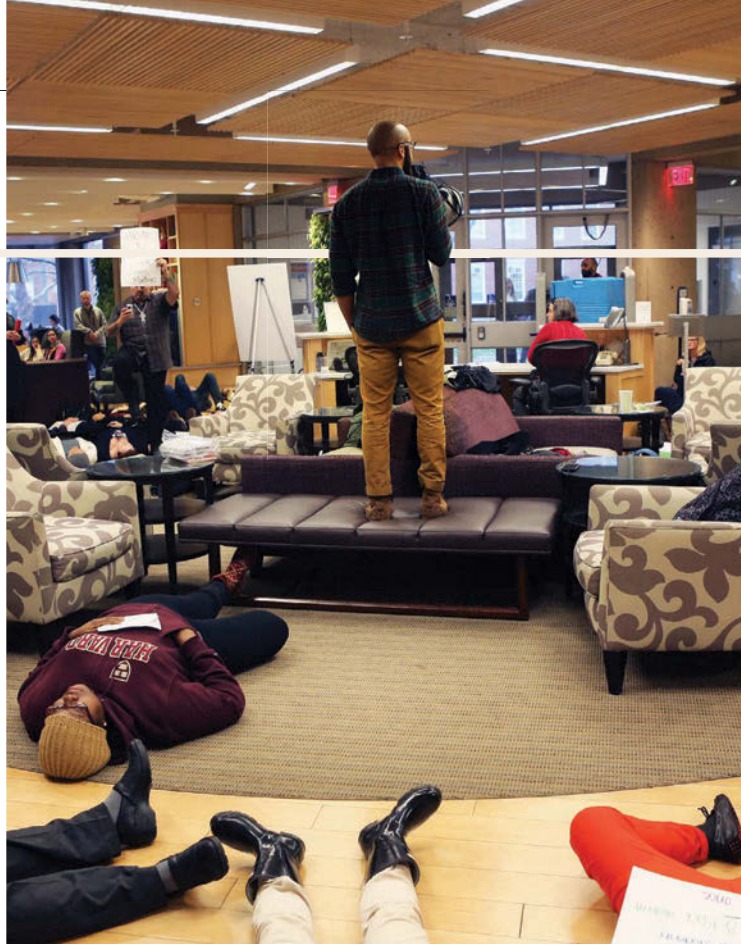


1985

- **JOHN COLLINS** joined the staff as Gutman's third director and ended up staying for nearly 30 years — the longest anyone has held the position to date. Other directors have included: Paul Perry (acting 1973-1974, 1974-1978), Inabeth Miller (1978-1985), Susan Fliss (2014-2016), and Alex Hodges (2017-present).

2014

● Gutman's exterior was lit up **BLUE** in April for the first time for autism awareness as part of a global initiative. That same year, dozens from the community staged a **DIE-IN** on the first floor after non-indictments of the police officers who killed **ERIC GARNER** and **MICHAEL BROWN**.



2016

● For a year starting in the fall, a little piece of Gutman was on display at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., when a rare book from the library's special collections called *The Freedman's Spelling-Book* (1866) was sent to the new **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE** as part of their exhibit on slavery.

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE, TOP: G. VAN KIRK; JILL ANDERSON (3); LISA ARBITOLI; TOM KATES



2022

● Gutman celebrated **50 YEARS** by sharing memories on social media and creating a time capsule that will be opened in 2072.

Follow Gutman on Twitter and Instagram [@gutman_library](#) and [#Gutman50](#) for more.



Practice



“Every student should know there is at least one faculty or staff member or adviser who knows them and cares about their well-being, at least a little bit.”

PROFESSOR DICK LIGHT (SEE P. 54)



The Art of Talking With Children

Ten ways to jumpstart conversations with kids that will help them bounce back from challenges

By Rebecca Rolland,
Ed.D.'14



AS A SPEECH PATHOLOGIST, lecturer, and mom of two, I often hear conversations suggesting kids are struggling with resilience. Sometimes the struggle comes out in obvious ways; for example, “I’m never going to be good at this” or “I give up.” These comments can also be more subtle; for instance, kids who say they don’t want to challenge themselves or clam up if they face tough questions.

Resilience, defined as the ability to overcome serious hardships or bounce back from challenges, is a topic on so many parents’ and teachers’ minds, and for good reason. As the pandemic has brought challenges into the lives of so many, we’re prompted to do more to help kids persist and thrive. As research from the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard shows, resilience accumulates from a combination of protective factors. While biological factors play a role, the most important factor is a stable, supportive relationship with a committed parent, caregiver, or other adult. When so much of school and home lives have been disrupted, helping kids maintain and enhance these relationships is even more critical.

The good news is that our daily conversations can help. When we support kids to reflect on their challenges and emerge stronger, we shore up our relationships and build their long-term resilience. Promoting executive function skills such as goal setting, prioritizing, and problem-solving is key. The following, discussed in

my new book, *The Art of Talking with Children*, are top 10 questions to jumpstart conversations for resilience:

1. What can you teach me?

Ask a child of any age, toddler onward, to show you how to do something — ideally, something you can’t do yourself. Think about getting out of your comfort zone, entering your child’s world, as they show their strengths. My 10-year-old daughter Sophie

taught me how to play Roblox, while my 5-year-old son Paul showed me his made-up game. This process shores up their language skills while supporting their senses of themselves.

2. What can each of us do when we feel [mad, sad, angry, scared?]

Have everyone in the household weigh in and offer feedback. Teach that learning to manage these feelings is a way of em-



“When we support kids to reflect on their challenges and emerge stronger, we shore up our relationships and build their long-term resilience.”

powering ourselves. Offer your own child-appropriate stories of times you managed these feelings more and less effectively and encourage theirs.

3. What was a time when you felt scared or anxious but went forward anyway?

Support kids to recognize we can have “big feelings” but still face our fears. Distinguish between truly dangerous situations and ones that aren’t so dangerous but that challenge or worry them.

4. What is one activity that makes you feel “good stress,” and how can you practice it more?

There’s no need to avoid everything stressful. Distinguish between negative stress and eustress, or stress that causes us to ramp up our efforts and perform our best. (Think of a race.)

5. In what places, situations, or with whom do you feel most safe, and why?

Invite kids to reflect on places or relationships they can come to when they are feeling challenged, burned out, or scared. When kids have a place of refuge, they have an easier time testing their limits since they know there’s comfort for them on the other side.

6. At what times do you feel most out of control?

Helping kids to plan through challenging times in advance will cause obstacles to feel less overwhelming.

7. What is your best quality, and how can you show more of it to others?

When Sophie tells me she’s good at listening, or Paul says he’s good at making people laugh, I help them reflect on these positive qualities, allowing them to feel a grounded pride and share more of their unique gifts.

8. When you want to give up, what’s one thing you can tell yourself?

Having a personalized mantra or phrase can support kids in the moment with their self-talk, which supports their persistence long-term.

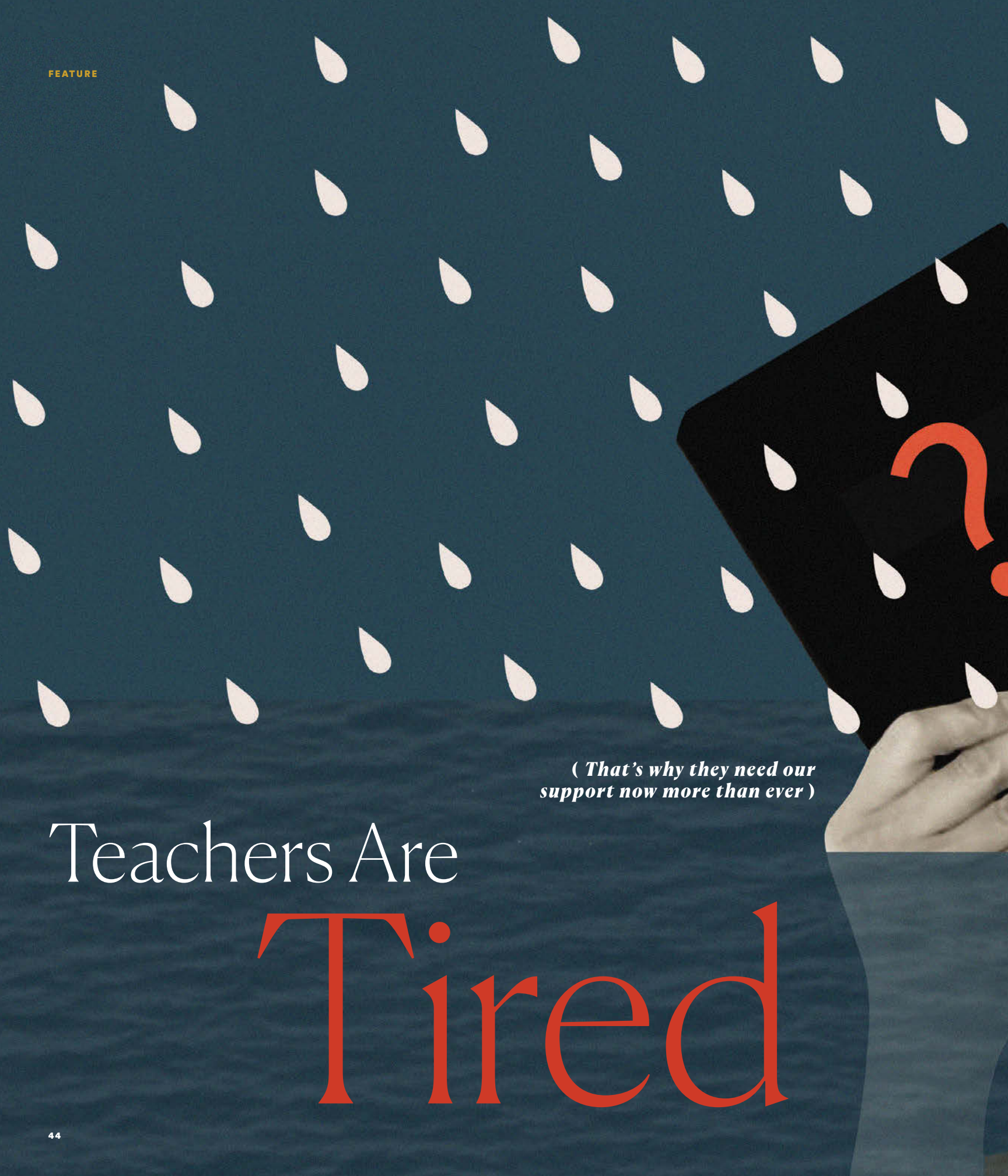
9. With a big project, how can you go about breaking it down in steps?

This can work with academic projects, but even with tasks that can feel big, like cleaning a room. Talking out the steps in advance, and even making a checklist, can help kids make it through a task and feel proud afterward.

10. What do you need from me?

So often, kids have a sense of what they want and need in a relationship, but we don’t always ask. Taking the time to listen and respond, and encouraging them to do the same, are key to strengthening your bond and letting kids feel heard and seen. □

Rebecca Rolland, Ed.D.’14, is an adjunct lecturer at the Ed School and on faculty at Harvard Medical School. *The Art of Talking with Children*, her combination memoir and guidebook, came out this spring



(That's why they need our support now more than ever)

Teachers Are

Tired

Story by
Elizabeth Christopher

Illustrations by
Helena Pallarés



W

When Boston public school educator Neema Avashia was a freshman at Carnegie Mellon University, she volunteered in a Pittsburgh classroom helping a 5-year-old boy learn to write his name.

“He got it during our time together — he learned how to write his name — and I remember thinking, this is something he is going to be able to do for the rest of his life. And that was it for me,” she says. That was the moment she realized what it meant to be a teacher: “You have this ability to shape minds and shape lives in a way that is really humbling and powerful.”

That experience Avashia described — the sense that you are making a meaningful impact on a student — is the reason many people become teachers. Not for the summers off. Not for the pay. But for what Dan Lortie, author of the seminal book *Schoolteacher*, calls “the psychic rewards” of teaching. But the COVID pandemic, which separated teachers from students, placed everyone behind screens, and left educators feeling less effective than ever before, has made it more difficult for teachers to experience those rewards, leading many to question whether or not to remain in the job.

“I’ve never felt as unsuccessful as a teacher as I did during that initial March to June 2020. It was really an identity crisis as an edu-

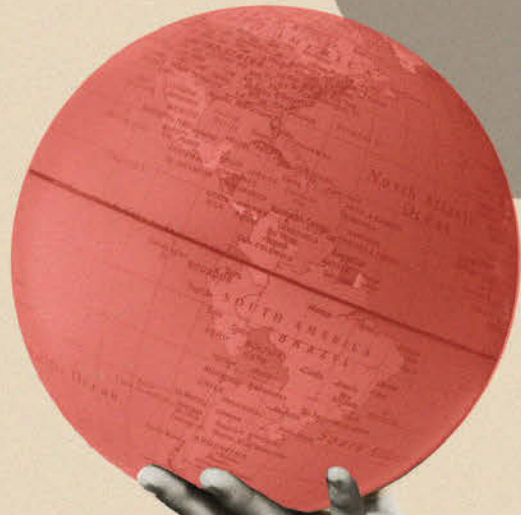
cator,” says Avashia, who taught civics in Boston schools for 17 years and now teaches ethnic studies part time. Her new book, *Another Appalachia: Coming Up Queer and Indian in a Mountain Place*, was published in March.

Avashia is not alone. A 2021 RAND survey found that nearly a quarter of teachers thought about leaving their jobs at the end of that school year. In an industry where 75% of district leaders and principals report moderate to severe staffing shortages, according to a 2021 *Education Week* Research Center survey, that number is concerning.

Polarized views of parents during the pandemic didn’t help matters. The public accolades teachers received in the early days of the pandemic from parents struggling to teach their children at home was quickly replaced with online vitriol when teachers expressed safety concerns about returning to school. “The narrative that teachers are lazy and don’t want to work is exhausting,” says Avashia. While the challenges of the pandemic are partly to blame for recent teacher stress and disillusionment, it started well before COVID. Enrollment in teaching programs had been trending downward for some time before dropping sharply during COVID — nearly 20% of undergraduate-level and more than 10% of graduate-level teaching programs saw a significant drop in 2021, according to a survey by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. In 2018, a majority of parents surveyed by PDK International said they would not want their children to become teachers.

Many are pointing fingers at the profession itself as the reason teachers are feeling stressed and disillusioned. “Teaching has become de-professionalized in recent years,” says Professor Heather Hill, faculty cochair of the new Teaching and Teacher Leadership Program at the Ed School. “It’s not the profession it used to be, where people came in and had a lot of leeway to use their professional judgment to do what they felt was best for kids,” she says.

“Teaching has become de-professionalized in recent years. It’s not the profession it used to be, where people came in and had a lot of leeway to use their professional judgment to do what they felt was best for kids.”



REMOTE LEARNING EXPOSED INEQUITIES

“Teaching has never been a punch in, punch out job,” says **STEPHANIE CONKLIN, ED.M.:06**, who teaches math to high school students in an urban-suburban district outside Albany, New York. Her concerns for her students often linger into the evenings and weekends. During the spring of 2020, she and her students did school remotely. One of her greatest frustrations during that time was her inability to see up close how her students were doing — academically or personally. “Every day it was so hard to find out what was really going on with the kids,” she says.

When she noticed one of her students wasn’t handing in work, she called her at home. Her student’s mother got on the phone and started to cry. She had lost her job and said they had no food in the house. “How could I expect my student to be doing algebra if she didn’t have basic things at home? I felt like a bad teacher,” says Conklin.

“We know from research that teachers stay in teaching because they experience success with kids and that’s what drives them,” says Hill. “So when they don’t see that or are having trouble reaching them, it risks burn out. The rewards aren’t there anymore.”

What COVID did “was make visible all the inequities in our public education system,” says Avashia, who teaches in Dorchester, one of the largest neighborhoods in Boston. While it may have been easier for wealthier communities to move to remote learning, without the infrastructure and supports of school, such as Internet access, breakfast and lunch, and mental health services, many students were left destitute. In Boston, teachers, staff, and other city government employees “were literally putting Chromebooks in the backs

of cars and going house to house to drop off computers to students. The pandemic made clear that we are not in the same boat; we are in the same storm. Some people are on yachts and some people are on, like, a door,” she says.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL PLACED ADDITIONAL STRESSORS ON TEACHERS

Returning to the classroom has presented new challenges for teachers. In fact, 84% of teachers surveyed by the *Education Week* Research Center in March 2021 said that teaching is more stressful than it was before the pandemic started.

DANI PEREZ, ED.M.:22, is a first-year teacher at

Brown Middle School in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Most of the school’s 500 students identify as Latinx and many come from immigrant families, according to Perez. Unfortunately, there are only about four counselors for the entire student body.

As a result, “teachers are doing a lot of emotional labor for students because the kids want people to talk to,” says Perez, who teaches English and Spanish language arts, and welcomes

those conversations. Perez was a senior in college when the pandemic happened and remembers being too exhausted to show up to classes. Now, as a teacher, “I try to offer the same generosity that I would have liked to [have] received,” Perez says.

“The U.S. has a ridiculous shortage of counselors assigned to schools,” says Professor Jal Mehta, faculty cochair of the Learning Design, Innovation, and Technology Program. According to The National Center for Education Statistics, the average student to mental health staff ratio is 260 to 1.

Catching up their students for so-called learning loss is another stressor teachers ex-



JAL MEHTA

What COVID did “was make visible all the inequities in our public education system.”

perienced when they returned to the classroom this year.

“My students are well behind where they should be,” says Conklin, who teaches 125 students each day and has been using the free periods between her classes to meet with students. “It’s exhausting.” This leaves her little time for class preparation and lesson planning. “What’s frustrating is that we still have hanging over our heads state assessments at the end of the year.”

Others agree that state testing, which many states have continued to require this academic year, should be suspended temporarily. “This is not the time to be worrying about ranking schools, for instance, on the state test,” says Hill.

“What’s hard for educators is that recognition that what kids are saying they need is so different from what the metrics demand. Students need more autonomy, for us to go slower,” says Avashia.

There were already a lot of forces working against teaching at a structural level, pre-COVID, according to Mehta. In the United States, he says secondary schoolteachers typically see up to 150 students per day, 30 at a time, across five periods. That kind of schedule doesn’t allow teachers to form relationships with their students let alone grade papers or plan their classes.

That schedule is hard on teachers’ mental health, too.

“When I was working full time, I didn’t have time to exercise or take a walk,” says Avashia, whose workday used to start at 7:45 in the morning and end around 6 at night. But during the early days of the pandemic, when everyone was home, she had a chance to do those things, which is what led her to move to teaching part time. “It’s nice to take care of yourself a little bit,” she adds. “Most of my

friends are teachers and they are asking themselves, can I keep doing this?”

ARE SOME SCHOOLS GETTING IT RIGHT?

As a first-year teacher at Boston Collegiate Charter School in Dorchester, Lucia Couto’s experience has been different. **COUTO, ED.M.:22**, teaches 50 seventh-graders in two separate classes. Where some of her peers at larger schools see their students only once a day, she has multiple touch points with her students.

“I see them at homeroom, lunch, and recess. Then for class one to two times per day. I have a lot more proximity to kids” than do teachers at nearby [traditional] public schools, she says. “It feels great. I can get to know them and find out what they like and don’t like and what triggers them.”

When it comes to catching up her students because of learning loss, Couto doesn’t feel pressure from school administration. “We’ve been given leeway,” she says. “Yes, there are standards to meet,” but she says she was able to take the time students needed to revisit the previous year’s material. Learning loss wasn’t the biggest issue. Rather it took her students time to reacclimate to learning in general. “I need to remind them, you should have a notebook and pencil. There is a lot of ‘re-normaling,’” she says. She credits her mentor and coach at school, who observes her once a week and provides detailed feedback on her teaching, for making her feel supported and successful. And the practice she says is not just reserved for first-year teachers at her school. “Here, they do it for everyone. Everyone has someone who watches them and gives feedback.”

Many teachers at traditional public schools, such as Avashia and Conklin, also report feeling personally supported by their principals and



HEATHER HILL

administrators during COVID. “She trusts our judgment in terms of going at a pace that makes sense to us,” says Avashia about her principal, but she feels this acknowledgement needs to also be made at the district and state level.

WHAT EDUCATORS SAY NEEDS TO CHANGE

Two years into the pandemic, workers in other industries are demanding more flexible work schedules, more autonomy, and greater access to technology innovations that support those objectives. Likewise, the pandemic is an opportunity to reimagine the teaching profession, says Lecturer Victor Pereira, faculty co-chair of the Teaching and Teacher Leadership Program. He says we need to ask ourselves, Are we going back to the way school was, or are there lessons we can learn from teaching through the pandemic?

“The stressors on our current systems are an opportunity for us to be innovative in teacher preparation programs, school community design, curriculum, and how we use technology,” he says. However, it’s a tough shift that Pereira is not sure everyone is ready to address.

But it’s a change the profession will have to make. “If you want things to be good for students, you need working conditions to be sustainable for teachers,” says Mehta, who added that collaborative leadership that values teacher perspectives and consults them in decision-making will also help bring about change.

Here are some concrete ways people in the field say the public education system needs to change to make the teaching profession an attractive and sustainable profession well after the pandemic is behind us:

► **MORE PLANNING TIME:** U.S. teachers spend 1,100 hours per year in front of students com-

pared to 550 hours in Japan, says Mehta. This gives teachers in Japan more time to plan, collaborate, and meet and build relationships with students. “If I could change one structural thing, it would be time,” he says. “As a society, we don’t value giving people time and space to reflect and think and work and collaborate.” Expecting teachers to plan on their own time is not sustainable.

► **FOCUS ON LEARNING ENJOYMENT, NOT LEARNING LOSS:** “Less focus on learning loss and more focus on learning enjoyment” is important for both students and teachers, according to Pereira. Teachers will derive greater satisfaction if their students are more engaged in deeper, more meaningful learning. To do this, we have to rethink the structure of the school day, for example, reducing the number of classes that meet each day.



VICTOR PEREIRA

► **TRUST TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT:** “Teaching has become heavily bureaucratized,” says Hill, who says that teaching isn’t just about executing instructional techniques; it’s about being creative and using your professional judgment

to make decisions. Hill would like to see the profession allow teachers to experience the intrinsic rewards that Dan Lortie wrote about in *Schoolteacher*. “Bright people are looking for jobs they can grow in and express themselves in,” she says. To do that, teachers need more flexibility, freedom, and trust to meet the needs of their students. “That might mean not staying on that day’s pacing guidelines and not being overly consumed with end-of-year state assessments.”

► **APPRENTICE NEW TEACHERS:** When Mehta was on The National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future in 2016, the group

Starting this fall, the Ed School is welcoming its first group of students to a new master’s program designed for those who are both learning to teach and who are already developing their leadership as teachers. Called Teacher and Teaching Leadership (TTL), the program builds on the work of the Harvard Teacher Fellows Program and the school’s long-running Teacher Education Program. A \$40 million gift announced earlier this year – the largest gift in the school’s history – will support endowed fellowships for students, ensuring financial support that will enable teachers to enter the profession without significant debt. Is there anyone you know who is interested in making a transformative impact in the lives of young people? Recommend that they explore TTL: https://hgse.me/TTL_EdSpring22

“The stressors on our current systems are an opportunity for us to be innovative in teacher preparation programs, school community design, curriculum, and how we use technology.”

noted that teachers repeatedly cited student teaching alongside an accomplished veteran as the most useful part of their preparation. And, yet, only 20% of first-year teachers had practice teaching before taking their first job. Mehta believes just as strongly today that every new teacher should have a year of apprenticeship with a master teacher like a medical residency. This in-classroom support and training that gives new teachers the time to learn will enable them to be more successful over the short and the long term. “You can fill the shortage through emergency certifications, but if you don’t give new teachers the tools to succeed, you are going to lose them in a year or two,” he says. And there should be more support for veteran teachers, too, for example, by having specialists in the classroom to support students at different reading levels.

► **RECOGNIZE WHAT TEACHERS ARE UP AGAINST:** “Being mindful of what teachers are being asked to do on top of teaching,” would go a long way in making her feel supported, says Couto. She would like to see occasional staff meeting time used to allow teachers to finalize grades and progress reports. “That would show me that you recognize that you know what I am under and you are finding ways to help me achieve it,” she adds.

► **GREATER DIVERSITY.** “We have a teaching force that is 83% white women,” says Mehta. “We need to diversify the profession.” For example, only 7% of public school educators are Black, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, leading to feelings of isolation as well as racist microaggressions that impact Black educators’ decisions to leave the profession.

► **MORE COMPETITIVE PAY.** “This might sound basic,” says Conklin, speaking about her salary, which she says is competitive compared to other schools in her area. With her salary, Conklin can afford to hire a morn-

ing babysitter for her two young sons. “I can get my work done and know my boys are taken care of,” she says, adding that not every teacher can afford that kind of childcare.

► **USE TECHNOLOGY TO GIVE TEACHERS MORE FLEXIBILITY:** “We had a chance to pilot a lot of technology during the pandemic,” says Pereira, who feels that technology, such as videoconferencing, could be used to free up hours during the workday. For example, teachers could host virtual office hours outside of regular school hours to further build relationships with students.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE?

There is a lot written about why changing the way we think about, structure, and run schools is difficult. But for meaningful change to happen, many experts agree that there needs to be a willingness at the highest levels of the education sector to do so.

There’s no doubt the pandemic added pressure to an already over-stressed system, revealing problems in the teaching profession. But despite the challenges, there is reason to be hopeful about the future of teaching in the United States, says Mehta. That’s because the changes the system needs to make in order to attract and retain the best teachers — more respectful leadership, more planning time, moving at slower paces through the curriculum — are not pie in the sky theories. “Plenty of schools are doing these things. As people see it, it will spread, and the way we normally do things will diminish,” he says.

Another reason to hope? The fundamental rewards of teaching hasn’t changed. Teachers are still motivated by the difference they can make in a student’s life. Perhaps that is what offers the greatest hope for the profession. “Even though the past two years have been exhausting,” says Conklin, “what refreshes me is being with my students.” □

Elizabeth Christopher is a freelance writer living north of Boston

Road to COVID Recovery

New project launched to evaluate academic interventions for kids who fell behind

**By Andrew Bauld,
Ed.M.'16**



Professor Tom Kane

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, school districts are implementing new strategies to support student learning loss stemming from COVID-19 disruptions. But understanding the efficacy of those interventions will be crucial to keeping kids from falling even further behind.

That's the goal of the new Road to COVID Recovery project led by the Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) at Harvard University. Using real-time data, the group will provide districts with evidence of which interventions are working, and which aren't, to guide planning of catch-up efforts.

"Over the last few years, how often have we heard that science should drive decisions?" says Professor Tom Kane. "We need science to drive decisions in the K-12 world."

Along with CALDER at the American Institutes of Research, and NWEA, an international research-based academic assessments nonprofit, Kane and his team have partnered with a dozen large, urban districts to evaluate the effectiveness of pandemic recovery efforts, including tutoring, summer enrichment, and extracurricular programs like after-school and Saturday school. Kane says that if districts wait for test results from the end of the 2022 school year to guide their thinking, it will be too late to implement adjustments in time for the next school year, or to capitalize on federal COVID relief funds.

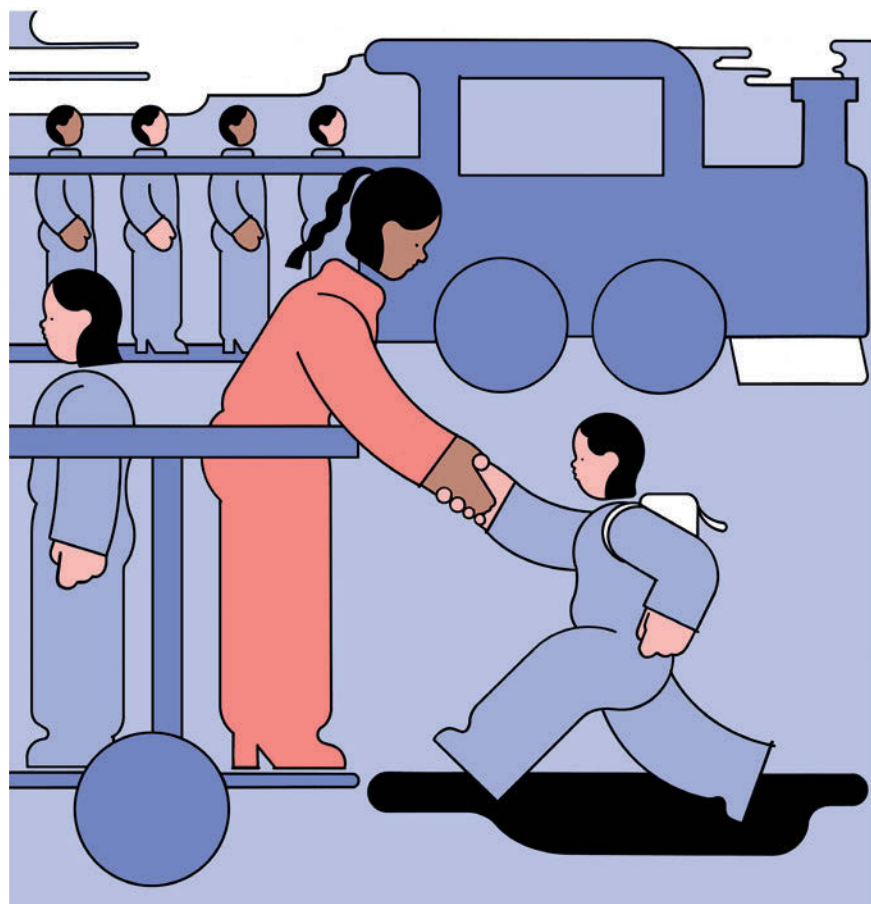
"This isn't something the education research field was set

up to provide, so to some extent we're having to invent a system for doing this," Kane says. "But if we don't create it, districts aren't going to have the information to help kids catch up over the next couple of years."

This past spring, *Ed.* sat down with Kane, the faculty director for CEPR, to learn more about the Road to COVID Recovery project and his urgency to get districts the evidence they need to make timely decisions.

How did the Road to COVID Recovery project come together?

Last spring, we began speaking with state departments of education about their plans to measure the efficacy of different COVID academic recovery efforts and we discovered that there was really no planning going on for collecting the kind of data that would be required to learn what kinds of interventions would make a



difference. After a number of those conversations, we eventually identified a partnership with NWEA as probably the best, most efficient way to generate evidence on COVID catchup and provide evidence to the field. NWEA data cover every state in the country, and we have the data now to evaluate interventions. NWEA also has fairly complete testing from the fall of 2020. A lot of states, even if they did administer tests in the spring of 2021, have incomplete data because they don't have a baseline score to measure if kids are making progress.

In a piece in *The 74*, you put student learning loss in pretty stark terms, stating that if gains aren't made now, students could lose \$2 trillion in lifetime earnings. Is the situation really that dire?

I don't think there's a broad appreciation for the magnitude of the declines we've seen. There's been a .25 standard deviation loss in math achievement, and around a .13 or .14 standard deviation loss in literacy achievement. Because not everyone is conversant in standard deviation, those numbers sort of roll off of people's backs, but to try and make it a bit more tangible, effectively it's as if kids missed three or four months of school last year. And if we just let those losses stand, we'll be imposing a major debt on future generations because it's going to have substantial impacts on kids' careers. There's this window in the next

"It's as if kids missed three or four months of school last year. And if we just let those losses stand, we'll be imposing a major debt on future generations because it's going to have substantial impacts on kids' careers."

couple of years where districts will be making decisions about use of federal money that, if they don't get the evidence to adjust strategies, these losses will become permanent and that loss will be, to some extent, not just a tragedy for children but a major failure by the research community to provide the evidence districts need to make these decisions. That's the problem we're trying to avert.

Many districts have already begun to implement interventions like tutoring. How will your research help school districts make effective choices?

There's nearly \$200 billion the federal government provided to schools for COVID measures

and academic recovery, and school districts are making decisions about what interventions to try in the absence of evidence on whether they are working. There's pre-pandemic evidence on the effects of things like tutoring or double dose math courses or afterschool programs and summer school, but districts are going to need evidence of the efficacy of the things they are implementing this year and next to guide their decisions. If they are waiting for the state test scores, they aren't going to know until the fall just how far their current efforts have undershot. For example, research has found that high-dosage tutoring, with four or fewer students, three times a week, for an hour a day, can have an impact. But to close a .25 standard deviation gap in math, we would need to offer that intervention to two-thirds of all students. My fear from what I've seen so far is that the interventions aren't nearly at the scale required to close this gap, and districts aren't going to see their state test scores until it's too late.

How do you balance these interventions, some of them intense as you've mentioned, with students already burned out and numbers showing student enrollment dropping for the second straight year?

Many of the districts we're working with are implementing interventions to support the mental health of students and the

social-emotional outcomes for students. We'll be looking to see if some of these interventions meant to support social-emotional well-being have any effect on math and reading scores. To some extent, the debate has been framed as a false dichotomy between should we help kids with academics catch up or forget about academics for now and focus primarily on mental health? Well, of course it's not either/or. Kids are suffering both emotionally and academically, and interventions in either sphere are likely to have spillover into the other, so if we have kids feeling more comfortable being back in school, chances are they are going to learn more in math and reading, and conversely, if kids are finding success in the classroom, that's going to have some positive effects on mental health. I think we can and should be working on helping students recover emotionally and academically, and we shouldn't be confused to think we can put off the academic comeback until after students are fully comfortable being back in school. We have to work on both simultaneously. □

Andrew Bauld, Ed.M.'16, is a freelance writer and podcast host

Watch a May Askwith Forum with Kane on planning for an equitable recovery: gse.harvard.edu/askwith

What I Learned Working with Colleges and Universities

1969 WAS A GOOD YEAR for Professor Dick Light. He got his Ph.D. from Harvard that year and started teaching at the Ed School and the Kennedy School. In some ways, though, 1986 was even more pivotal, at least in terms of Light's career: In 1986, then-President Derek Bok asked him who at Harvard was looking at how the university could improve teaching and the quality of student life. After that, Light's research, focused on all things college and university, really took off as three subsequent Harvard presidents also asked him to explore how to strengthen the undergraduate experience at Harvard and beyond. After visiting 250 campuses, and publishing his new book, *Becoming Great Universities: Small Steps for Sustained Excellence* with [ALLISON JEGLA, ED.M.:20](#), here are some of the things Light has learned about higher education.

University leaders should ask students to share ideas about how to improve and enhance their experience as students at their particular college. They should do this far more often than they do it now.

Students are generally smart, talented, and eager to have a great experience. They may be the greatest underutilized resource at many campuses.

Faculty should give students feedback, when possible, about what they are actually learning. It is hard to think of a more empowering bit of information for most students than compelling evidence that shows them that they are learning to do certain things better.

Lecturing should be reduced, ideally to an absolute minimum, and students should be pushed hard to talk in class. To speak up. To contribute to class discussions. We all fully understand that some stu-

dents can be hesitant, or a bit shy, or unsure when they speak up. Yet that is the whole point of going to college — to contribute to your community. Not to sit anonymously hiding behind a pole in a large auditorium in row 56, just quietly taking notes and contributing nothing to anyone's learning.

Class participation is where steel meets steel, cordial debates and arguments develop, and students clearly become the most engaged.

It takes effort from everyone, and when it works it is “active learning” at its best.

Every student should know there is at least one faculty or staff member or adviser who knows them and cares about their well-being, at least a little bit. A person, usually an adult, who knows that student is there on campus. A person who has an idea about what matters to that student. I have had more than a few advisees here at HGSE who went to various universities, usually large, impersonal universities, where my advisee told me she or he had no idea if anyone at their undergraduate campus knew or cared if they were dead or alive.

I had an HGSE advisee who went to college at a large public university on the west coast. When I asked her about her experience as an undergraduate, she responded by saying, “It was pretty impersonal. I think if I were dead in my room, there is some chance no one would have noticed for two months.” I am not making this up. Needless to say, I don't consider that a great university.

The biggest lesson I have learned is that sometimes university leaders have a great idea to improve their students' undergraduate experience, and they feel they must enlist the support of just about everyone on campus before be-

ginning to implement their great new idea. My strong evidence tells me that it is a waste of precious time to try to convince everyone to change something. It will take forever. You may never win some people over. So just start.

I have learned from visits to so many campuses that administrators are way too hesitant to demand certain basic behavior from their faculty and staff. I don't really understand why so many administrators are often hesitant to do what is obviously the “right thing” for students. On many campuses, some professors post office hours, and they don't show up! Students show up, and the professor is nowhere in sight. I was aghast when I first saw this. I have never seen it happen at HGSE, not a single time, yet at some larger universities this happens more than anyone realizes.

My evidence suggests that students in the last several years have become more demanding, and less “subservient” than they were 20 years ago.

Most students now want their faculty teachers to be reasonably accessible. I couldn't agree more. Most students want clear syllabi, well prepared classes, and serious academic challenges. The strongest students say out loud they want to learn new ways of thinking and new questions to ask. I salute today's students who want more. The flip side is students must be willing to do their share, to come to classes well prepared, and to speak up in classes so that students learn from one another as well as from the professor.

Life sometimes offers lucky, unexpected opportunities. And the most amazing thing I have discovered is that the harder I work, the more opportunities that seem to present themselves. □

Professor
Dick Light





Research librarian
Kathleen Donovan
assists a student
doing research

Open Books

When asked to share a favorite memory of Gutman Library in honor of the library's 50th anniversary, BARBARA BEATTY, ED.M.'73, ED.D.'81, wrote to us about something extra special: the Gutman staff.

"Bob Rogers, of course! I remember that he remembered me, always, and always had something to say that cheered me up and inspired me to keep on researching and writing. He remembered me instantly, by name, when I returned after five years to start in on an Ed.D. after getting my Ed.M. in 1973. He loved checking the date stamps and noticed with interest that I was checking out so many "old" books, some from the 19th century, books no one appeared to have read or checked out in almost 100 years. He told me that my own book was a 'good one,' and that lots of people checked it out. Just what I needed to hear to give me hope that spending hours burrowing into the past mattered. People cared about the history of education! Yay! We cared about Bob! More recently, I remember how excited Carla Lillvik was in Special Collections that I had found a kindergarten journal that no one had used since the 1870s! She immediately had it digitized and put online and even sent me links to sources she had found about the editor, about whom I was having trouble tracking down information. Not only did Carla help me with my research, she also shared my excitement that HGSE's Special Collections held a unique source and wanted to make it available to other researchers. This is the kind of caring and support that scholars and scholarship needs, support that all the staff at Gutman give us all. Thank you, we can't do what we do without you!"

- Have a great memory from your time on Appian Way that you want to share? Lory_hough@harvard.edu

BACK STORY

“As a former art teacher, I connected immediately with the subject of the article and felt represented by all the educators’ accounts. I wanted to symbolize the mental struggle the teachers go through at the same time that they keep doing their jobs giving the best of themselves.

“I really enjoyed doing the cover and being able to create a concept for both the front and back covers to create a double message. This is the first time I’ve been given this kind of access on a magazine, so along with Patrick Mitchell (the creative director), we conceived this visual metaphor for the main message of the article: On the cover, the educator goes in search of help to adapt to the current realities and on the back cover makes a call for some global and critical awareness, not just in the education system but for all of society.

“It was a pleasure to create these illustrations and I’m very happy with the result.”

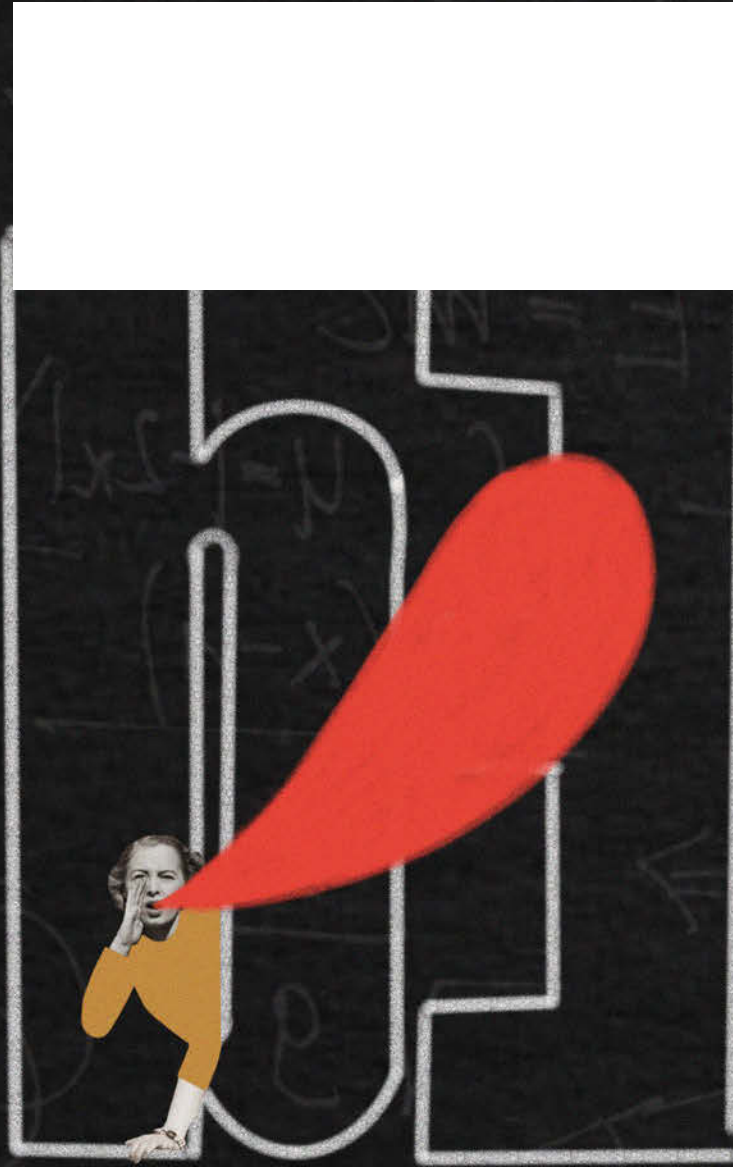
Paris-based illustrator Helena Pallarés on her thought process when asked to illustrate our cover story on supporting teachers. (See the story on page 44.)





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“It’s exhausting.”

STEPHANIE CONKLIN, ED.M.'06
HIGH SCHOOL MATH TEACHER
NEW YORK