

# the education department

EDUCATION STUDIES CONCENTRATION NEWSLETTER #4

DECEMBER 2009

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

February, 2010



Dear Concentrators, Prospective Concentrators, and Alums,

Last spring the Education Studies Concentration went through a very favorable review by the Dean of the College. In its self study, the faculty expects that Concentrators are able to understand and evaluate education research; read critically for argument and interpretation; make and support arguments with evidence; frame pertinent questions; demonstrate orally and in writing a coherent understanding of chief challenges and issues in contemporary education today. Regardless of their *Area of Emphasis*, Concentrators are expected to be conversant with issues in *Human Development* and *Education History and Policy*. In essence, our graduates are well-prepared to engage in professional careers and graduate programs.

The faculty's self study also raises a concern expressed by many students and alumni, that the concentration's name, "Education Studies," does not fully describe their undergraduate course work and research training. For example, many students interested in Human Development aspire to work in communities and organizations that are not school-based, and others plan to pursue graduate study in human development, school psychology, social work, or other professional training. Likewise, many students interested in pursuing further work or graduate study in education policy find that "Education Studies" does not convey their extensive academic preparation to prospective employers or graduate programs, so they feel pressured to concentrate instead in Public Policy or double concentrate. To address these concerns, the faculty proposes replacing the existing Education Studies Concentration with two distinct and more accurately named Concentrations, *Human Development* and *Education History and Policy*.

While the Dean of the College did not go as far as to endorse the proposal for two distinct Concentrations, she did approve to include in the students' transcripts the two areas of emphasis. Consequently, the transcript of our concentrators will now read either "Education Studies: History and Policy" or "Education Studies: Human Development." Our faculty believes that these specifications more accurately represent our Concentrators' academic and research experience at Brown.

The process that led to the specification of the areas of emphasis is clearly an example of how much attention our faculty has given to the inputs of our alumni and students on the

future of our Concentration. I welcome you all to continue to share your best ideas with our faculty. I can assure you that your suggestions will shape how our faculty teach, advise, mentor, and support our Concentrators. In other words, your ideas matter a lot to us.

With Best Wishes,

Kenneth K. Wong  
Chair and Annenberg Professor  
Education Department

## EDUCATION STUDIES CONCENTRATORS WHERE ARE THEY NOW? IN THEIR OWN WORDS....

So here it is. After many emails and a few delays... the 2009 Education Department, Education Studies Concentration Newsletter! I have always imagined that getting this newsletter out to everyone for Christmas is both a wonderful way to end the year we are all talking about; and a very optimistic and inspiring way to start the new one we are all looking ahead to. This year that did not happen and I was made aware that the foundation of a process like this is to follow-up... and when you have done following-up... follow-up some more. Even if we do have the best graduates on the planet they (you) still take a bit of prodding and if I had stopped after even the third email this newsletter would not look as it does right now. (Note: I sent out a final plea just last night and just added that contribution ten minutes ago!) The thing about following-up is that it takes time and it really made me realize what a luxury time is. It is a luxury that all of us have less and less of. This is all to say that it makes your contributions all the more generous. You are not only sharing your experiences – which are as inspiring, honest and impassioned as they have been every year. You are sharing your time; and when people read about what it is you are all experiencing, they will appreciate all the more that you gave some of that ever more precious time. So... we are all busy people with busy lives and yet we do manage to come together each year as a community and ‘catch up.’ Between us we create this ever-expanding document that, I am pleased to report, so many of you say in your emails to me you cannot wait to read and find out what ‘everyone is doing.’ This year it is 46 pages long – containing our collective trials and triumphs of 2009.

In 2006 this newsletter was 10 pages long and was literally all about the class of 2006. Of the fifteen contributors that year eleven are still featured here four years later. This year the newsletter includes the stories of forty-five students from the classes of 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011! It may be a little bit late but, as always (at least in my opinion); it is also more than a little bit great! Enjoy! Enjoy what you, your friends and your colleagues have accomplished over the course of one of the more challenging years in our recent history.

February 25, 2010  
Karl Dominey  
Academic Department Coordinator



## CLASS OF 2006

### **Robert (Rob) Blair – History Policy Track Concentrator 2006**

I'm in my second year of a PhD program in Political Science at Yale. I'm in the program's Order, Conflict, and Violence track, and spent my summer in Liberia, working on a handful of projects related to the reintegration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants from the civil war. It was a wonderful, though often very sad, experience. I had never seen such an under-developed country before: no electricity outside the capital, few paved roads, little health or educational infrastructure left after 14 years of violence. Every single person I spoke to during three months in the country had lost a relative in the war, and many had witnessed unbelievable crimes. The work was rewarding and incredibly interesting, however, and I'm hoping to return for a longer stay next year. Other than that, working through one more semester of classes, mostly in econ (thanks to John Tyler for planting that seed), and looking forward to more travels soon.

### **Sarah Bowman – Human Development Track Concentrator 2006**

Hopefully 2010 finds everyone happy amidst varied pursuits near and far! I am still living (mostly) in Providence with one foot in New Haven as I finish a Masters in Public Health at Yale. Come May I look forward to returning to Providence full time. An unexpected perk of grad school has been racing with the cycling team which will help to keep me grounded amidst long nights in the statistics lab during my last semester. Over the next few months I will begin my job search for something in the Providence area at the crossroads of incarceration, drug use and harm reduction. I have some leads but ideas are welcome....

### **Adie Buchinsky – Human Development Track Concentrator 2006**

This year hasn't been too different from last – I'm at the same job, teaching fourth grade general studies at a Jewish day school in Westchester, NY. I'm the learning strategist and enjoying helping all 42 of my students learn the tools and strategies that they will need to be successful in life. I JUST finished my second Master's at New York University in Childhood Special Education and am working on getting all of my special education certification in order now. I'm not sure what it will be like to be out of school for the first time in over 20 years, but I'm certainly looking forward to finding out. I'm trying to figure out what life's next big adventure will be. As always, visitors welcome in Westchester!

### **Peter Cirincione – History Policy Track Concentrator 2006**

I've just come to the end of the first half of my experience in the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP). To describe it briefly is all but impossible for me, but the first word would probably be "intense." The classes are amazing, the other teacher



candidates are brilliant and diverse, and I've really gotten a lot out of being in a classroom all year. In the winter, I'll be taking over and teaching Government to my awesome seniors at Hillsdale High. I feel pretty well prepared actually, and I'm more excited than nervous.

It has been an extraordinary learning experience so far and I would recommend it highly, but it is also extremely demanding and not cheap. Math and Science teachers are able to get a very large portion of their loans cancelled, but the program costs 70k all told and as a History teacher I'm only going to be able to get about 22k worth of my loans cancelled IF I teach in a public school for 4 years. That is in fact my plan once I'm out, but I thought that some of you prospective Masters students would appreciate getting some of the raw facts.

Time for two Brown-related anecdotes:

- 1) I had the honor and pleasure of taking two course with the superhero known as John Bryan Starr when he was teaching at Brown. I wrote a supplemental case study for my end of semester project and John actually chose to tack it on to the end of one of the case studies he uses as part of the class. Fast forward 5 years to this fall – A current classmate of mine wrote me an email saying, "I knew I recognized your crazy name from somewhere, I read something you wrote in a class I took at Yale." Turns out that John not only taught but wrote a recommendation for him and two of the other candidates in the program this year. So, all of you John Starr fans out there, rest assured that he is still roaming the lands of New England, spreading his constructivist pedagogy around like some kind of education wizard. Like Gandalf but always wearing a Black Turtleneck and Khakis.
- 2) If she doesn't write her own submission to this newsletter than I want to make sure I let y'all know that Irene Castillon, Brown Ed. Studies '09, is in my History and Social Science cohort which means we hang out bunches and do our secret Brown Education hand shake. Wait, we don't have one of those and that is a *dang shame* and something really needs to be done about this.

I've got way more to share and would love to do so at length to anyone that was particularly interested. If you are, please don't hesitate to call, text or email me.

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I searched for a while for a picture that might give some meaningful impression of my teaching-related life out here in California. This one definitely hits on some of the keywords of my life: It's me in the local Redwood forest, deeply examining some nature that happens to be labeled with *two millennia* of history.





**February 2010 Update:** I've started teaching my own 12th grade Government class now, and the best metaphor I can think of for it is riding a roller coaster with my students each day that I built myself: i.e. pressure, exhilaration, and creativity, interspersed with moments of abject terror. The combination of nearly complete curricular and pedagogical freedom (12th graders are done with the testing regime), the swarm of amazing new ideas fed me by my program (if you haven't dealt with "groupworthy tasks," "cognitive engagement," or "dialogic conversation" I highly recommend checking them out) and getting to teach one of my greatest areas of passion is all that I could ever have hoped for in this teacher program and simultaneously, far more than I can actually handle.

### **Charles (Charlie) Cummings – History Policy Track Concentrator 2006**

After spending the summer writing the corporate social responsibility strategy for an all natural & organic soup company, I'm back in school, pursuing my MBA at Harvard. There are a lot of strong personalities here, as you can imagine it is a bit different from the Ed department, but I am learning a lot. I'm likely to head into cleantech this summer. I've done a lot of advocacy work in renewable energy but a big reason for going back to school was a desire to actually build a windfarm. In the meantime I'm certainly enjoying being back in school. Education-wise, I've gotten involved in a lot of non-profit work being done in Boston – there are some amazing innovations taking place right now. In many ways I'm envious of Peter C. and others that have taken on teaching roles; for the

time being my little 2-year old niece (and a nephew on the way!) give me an outlet to influence a young curious mind. I hope all is well with everyone at Ed!

### **Jessica DelForge – History Policy Track Concentrator 2006**

Hello fellow Education graduates! This past year has been a wonderful one full of professional and personal change.

Professionally: I was asked to become the Chair for the English Department at my school, Boston Preparatory Charter Public School, (otherwise known as Boston Prep) and now lead a staff of 12. Besides teaching 6th grade Reading, Ethics and high school Digital Photography and Theater each week I check in with each English teacher for an hour, observe them and offer feedback, create departmental professional development and chart the future course for English instruction at our school. I'm still adjusting to the new role – but loving it – and am so excited to be part of the administration. Last year our school was named one of the top five charters in the nation to create and sustain major student gains in assessment by an organization named EPIC. Our high school students placed first in the state in all categories on the MCAS, outperforming wealthy suburbs and test schools, which, for our students is tremendous considering they arrive in the sixth grade, through a lottery, reading on a K-6 grade level, are very low-skilled and struggle with poverty and a high percentage of learning disabilities. Last summer I attended Project Zero's Summer Institute at Harvard and was so intellectually inspired I hope to go back again this upcoming summer and perhaps craft a doctoral dissertation around some of their foci in the next few years when I go back to school. This year I was asked to guest-lecture at a local college, to be an outside evaluator of a 6-12 ELA program in another district and an organization called Uncommon Schools videotaped me teaching for a database of clips to show nationally. All of these experiences have been enriching and I've been thankful for all the opportunities this year.

Personally I'm great: I'm living in Boston with my two best friends from middle school but am considering buying a house with my brother by the end of the year. I decided it was time to kick my butt into gear and hired a personal trainer and I've never felt better. I've also been reading copious amounts of young adult literature, which I claim is for teaching, but really it's just been such a treat to reread all my favorite books from when I was a middle-schooler. I've been cooking a lot, trying to stay informed with all the Massachusetts political changes and I even survived an intense bout of H1N1...never have I been so sick.

I hope you are all healthy and happy. I love reading about everyone's life adventures in the newsletter and if you or anyone you know is interested in Boston charters drop me a line, for sure. Happy Holidays to you all!

### **Erica Dieselman – History Policy Track Concentrator 2006**

This is my fourth year teaching Chinese and history at Hingham High School in Hingham, MA. I have been able to grow the Chinese program into a four-year set of



courses, and I continue to be impressed every day with the work my students produce. I am amazed at how much they have learned and how good their Chinese has become! This April, I will be bringing a group of those students on a 9-day, 3-city whirlwind tour of China - I am both very excited and very nervous about how this will work. In addition to teaching, I am still coaching our school's ski team, and this year we were able to qualify 11 students to participate in the state championships. It is so gratifying to see all their hard work pay off!

I have also been busy continuing my own education, and I am scheduled to complete a master's degree in Chinese language pedagogy this August from Middlebury College.

### **Whitney Garland – Human Development Track Concentrator 2006**

I am still working at a wonderful charter school in the Clinton Hill area of Brooklyn, called Community Partnership Charter School. This year I teach math and science to the whole 4th grade and I love it! Right now, we're preparing for our annual science fair which means I am helping 52 4th graders prepare 52 different experiments and display boards. To say it's a busy time would be an understatement. :) All is well outside of school – I am living in Brooklyn with two kittens and my boyfriend! Happy 2010 everyone!

### **Annie Hatch – History Policy Track Concentrator 2006**

I'm having an awesome year at Mills getting a single subject English credential and a Masters in Teaching. I love my program and its intense social justice focus. I am very happy that I finally decided to make my flirtation with teaching official. In addition to my graduate school classes I'm student teaching and working in two different middle schools – one in Alameda and one in Oakland. The experiences are very different but I'm learning a ton and I love my students. I'm writing them goodbye haikus as I type, and thinking about how much I'll miss them... Next semester I start student teaching World History and English to 10th graders in a small high school in Oakland.

Hope all is well!  
Annie.

### **Julian Leichty – History Policy Track Concentrator 2006**

I continue to work at EdSource, a California education policy non-profit in Mountain View. It has been an interesting and challenging year. California schools are suffering as the state deals with budget crisis after budget crisis. The federal stimulus led us to write a report on California and the Race to the Top. We later learned the report was referenced by the governor and is being used by legislators during their special session on reforms – it's always exciting to hear things like that and learn about how our work is used by policymakers. If there are any other California education policy enthusiasts out there, we have a fascinating lineup of speakers planned for our forum in March: [http://www.edsource.org/event\\_forum10.html](http://www.edsource.org/event_forum10.html).



Outside of work, I have kept myself busy with singing and Chinese language study. In addition, in September, I co-organized a community event on occupational health hazards faced by nail salon workers (in California, predominately Vietnamese immigrants and other women of color). They have prolonged daily exposure to harmful chemicals known to or suspected of causing cancer, respiratory problems, skin problems and reproductive harm. Speakers included representatives from the California Healthy Nail Salons Collaborative (<http://cahealthynailsalons.org/>) – they're doing great work in this area, so if it interests anyone, take a look at their web page.

### Jessica McCrory – History Policy Track Concentrator 2006

This has been quite a year. I'm currently a fourth-year graduate student at Penn, working on a Ph.D. in Sociology, and busy as ever, which is probably why it took me so long to get this in (thanks, Karl, for being so persistent!). I spent the early part of the year finishing up course work, doing research for my dissertation, TA-ing, presenting at conferences, and preparing for a comprehensive exam in the Sociology of Education.

Somewhere in there I also found time to plan a wedding – my husband (Dan Calarco '03) and I got married in August. We figured that since we met at Brown and got engaged at Brown (at Campus Dance for Dan's 5-year reunion); we might as well get married there, too. It was a crazy idea (we live outside of DC, so there were plenty of day-trips back and forth to Providence during the planning process), but we couldn't imagine doing it any other way. We had the ceremony in Manning Chapel and the reception in Andrews, with plenty of Brunonians in attendance. It was a gorgeous day, and we couldn't have asked for a more meaningful place to celebrate.



Dan and I then spent two weeks exploring the Mediterranean, with stops in Venice, Florence, Rome, and Malta, as well as a random day in Amsterdam. It wasn't exactly a relaxing honeymoon (I can't count the number of museums and historic sites we saw), but we're not exactly the kind of couple that likes to just sit on the beach when there are things to do and places to see.

Returning stateside, I spent far too much time jumping through the various hoops required to officially change my name to "Jessica McCrory Calarco." The big issue seemed to be that I was simultaneously living in both Pennsylvania (during the week for school) and Maryland (with my husband on the weekend). Apparently the bureaucrats aren't a big fan of people with complicated living arrangements.

By the end of September it was back to the grindstone. I spent most of the semester doing full-time research for my dissertation, a qualitative study of how elementary school students attempt to negotiate and manipulate the classroom environment to personalize their educational experiences and opportunities. I am conducting my research in a socioeconomically diverse, suburban, public elementary school, with the goal of looking at the extent to which kids' social class backgrounds influence whether and how they try to obtain these kinds of individual accommodations.

As I head into this next semester, I will be continuing work on my dissertation and prepping for another comprehensive exam. I am also teaching my first class, "Social Problems and Public Policy," a course examining why and how American society comes to see some issues (but not others) as social problems, as well as the factors that influence how we as a society try to make sense of and solve these problems. I'm excited, but more than a little nervous. It'll be the first time anyone calls me "professor," but I think I'll just stick with "Jessica" for now...

## CLASS OF 2007

### **David Braslow – History Policy Track Concentrator 2007**

When I graduated in '07 I joined Math for America to teach math in NYC public schools. After getting my Master's at Columbia, I am now in my second year of teaching. While teaching has its ups and downs, I'm ultimately glad to be doing it before entering the policy arena. I'm teaching at the NYCiSchool, a new, innovative school with a focus on using technology to let kids learn what they're interested in at their own pace and to help tackle genuine problems in society. It's great to be experimenting and learning in a way that can actually improve students' educations!

### **Maia Connors – Human Development Track 2007**

I still love living in beautiful San Francisco and have been taking full advantage of all that it has to offer. I am also still working at WestEd's Center for Child and Family Studies where my work focuses on raising preschool quality and expanding access to high-quality preschool for all young children. Over the past year I have been working more on state-wide initiatives, such as the development of an Early Learning Quality Rating and Improvement System in California as a way to measure and raise the quality of California's early childhood classrooms. One project that I am particularly excited about is the Early Childhood Educator Competencies, a publication that will detail what teachers need to know and be able to do in order to work with young children. I hope you all are doing well. It's great to hear from you!



**Laura Gerace – History Policy Track 2007**

I recently moved back to New York after two wonderful years working at the MATCH Charter Public High School in Boston. Although I loved working at the MATCH School (and miss my kids every day) I am happy to be back in my beloved home city. I am currently working with a nonprofit called APEX. It works with Asian-American youth in NYC. I teach ESOL and SAT classes. I will also be starting a legal internship at the end of January. I will be working on cases involving children in Special Education classes in NYC public schools. I am doing the legal internship to prepare for law school, which I expect to start in the fall. I am not yet sure where I will be studying but I look forward to being back in school. As of right now the plan is to focus on education law and policy reform.

**Terrence Gong – History Policy Track Concentrator 2007**

Happy New Year all! Currently I am still working at Time Inc. as an Advertising Finance Manager for three magazines: This Old House, Health, and Sunset. In addition, I also help provide back-up support with Real Simple, All You, and Coastal Living. I recently applied and heard back from a few business schools, and while I am still making my final decision, I will most likely be attending Harvard Business School starting fall 2010. During business school, my current goal is to pursue a career change from publishing to Corporate Social Responsibility/Corporate Philanthropy. Outside of work I am still actively involved in Queer Asian community organizing in New York, as well as Asian American event programming within Time Inc.

**Margaret Heidrick – History Policy Track 2007**

Hello fellow Ed Dept folks! Well, I can't say that too much has changed since this time last year. A trip to Buenos Aires that was intended to be eight months long has lasted more than two and a half years, so clearly I'm having a good time! I continue to work at Cuatro Cabezas, a TV production company, in the "Laboratory of Ideas," doing mostly writing and brainstorming. They just opened an office in Washington, D.C., so maybe you will be seeing the fruits of my labor in the not so distant future. I've also been studying art and Portuguese (I'm still dreaming of a stint in Brazil); taking advantage of all the wonderful things this city has to offer, and trying to get out on my bike when possible. Plans for 2010 are still up in the air, but I'm thinking life stateside might not be too bad! In the meantime, I'm enjoying the summer and looking forward to experiencing my first World Cup in South America.

**Paige Lansing – Human Development Track 2007**

I am still living in San Francisco and really feel like I've found my niche here. For the last year I've been an Account Manager for a company founded by a Brown alumnus: Revolution Foods. The mission of our company is to provide healthy lunches to schools. Our current food system provides highly processed foods to kids and has led to an obesity and diabetes epidemic! Revolution Foods is trying to change the tide by making

fresh food for kids at low cost so that we can reach the schools that have little access to quality nutrition. I visit schools daily checking in on the program, teaching nutrition classes and parent workshops on healthy eating. I am putting my degree to work!! When I'm not working I can be found canning tomatoes, riding my bike or out exploring this fantastic city.

### **Jason Li – History Policy Track 2007**

Hi all. It's been two and a half years since I've graduated and I'm easing into my fourth "job" at the beginning of 2010, which I'm very excited about. Along the way, I've moved to San Francisco and then Barcelona, and worked at a think tank, a design firm and a consultancy. The only thread through this weird mix of jobs was a commitment to understanding people from the bottom up (read: qualitative research). I've also been working on little personal projects, one of which I was interviewed by BBC Radio 5 Live about – ironically it was a comic of all things (see: [www.iheartrecession.com](http://www.iheartrecession.com)).

Some of you may recognize it follows the same style as the BDH editorial comic I ran in 2006-7.

Which leads me back to the fourth job I mentioned at the beginning: I'm planning on taking half a year off to pursue personal projects (no, really, it is voluntary unemployment!) This includes writing a graphic novel, polishing my Spanish, building a couple of websites I've been talking about and moving back home with mum and dad. (Of course, I hope to catch up on all those books I've flagged on my Amazon wishlist as well.)

After that, who knows. But if any of you pass by Barcelona or Hong Kong within the next half year, do shoot me an email ([jason@hongkonggong.com](mailto:jason@hongkonggong.com)). I'd love to catch up: First drink's on me.

### **Carole Ann Penney – History Policy Track 2007**

I'm in my second year as the AmeriCorps Program Coordinator at the Providence Children's Museum. If any graduating seniors are looking for a job where they'll learn tons about informal education, send them my way ([penney@childrenmuseum.org](mailto:penney@childrenmuseum.org))! This year I'm also an Artist Mentor at New Urban Arts, an open, after-school art studio for high school students in Providence. I'm learning so much about art, mentoring, their educational philosophy, and community through that experience. Tied to that, I also started by own craft business this year called "connect the dots crafts." I do a lot of sewing in my free time, and a lot of thinking about how to build community through art and what it means to call myself an artist.

Check out my blog at <http://connectthedotscrafts.blogspot.com/>.

# CLASS OF 2008

## **Sade Bonilla – History Policy Track Concentrator 2008**

Hello Fellow Ed Concentrators -

It has been a whirlwind since last December when I wrote for the newsletter. After finishing the summer and fall semesters of the Urban Education Policy (UEP) Program at Brown I traveled to Honduras for 3 months. Even though I was on a "traveling vacation" I couldn't keep myself away from the realm of Education and ended up volunteering as a teacher's aide at a bilingual school with a bunch of energetic 4th graders who tried as much as possible not to speak English. After my stint in Honduras I traveled to Valparaiso, Chile for my Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship. I worked at a Catholic Public University with students studying to become English teachers and translators/interpreters. In my spare time I volunteered at a local all-girls public school and with a local community organization that provided environmental, arts, sports, music and agricultural workshops for low-income students during school hours. During school breaks I had the opportunity to get to know the north and south of Chile as well as surrounding Argentina and Brazil. The Fulbright was a wonderful opportunity and I am extremely grateful for the support of the professors and staff at the Ed Department who helped make this all happen. I will be back at Brown to finish up the UEP program and plan my next adventures. I look forward to hearing about all the exciting things folks are doing. Happy holidays! ([sade.bonilla@gmail.com](mailto:sade.bonilla@gmail.com))

## **Timothy (Tim) Drinan – History Policy Track Concentrator 2008**

I'm living with six friends in Brooklyn, still working for the NYC Department of Education. Under a recently re-elected mayor, the Department is continuing its work to improve school choice and make admissions processes more transparent and equitable. In line with this work, my current projects include improving the High School Directory my office distributes to all 90,000 eighth graders annually and overhauling the web interface that allows parents to find and compare schools. Outside of work, it's been a great year as well. I made it to DC in January for Obama's inauguration, made it to Providence in the spring for graduation, and made it a whopping 4 blocks away from my house to Prospect Park to see a lot of great (and free!) concerts this summer. I've really enjoyed this first full year since graduation, and that's mainly thanks to all the wonderful friends from Brown that are also living in NYC these days. Happy holidays everyone! I can't wait to see you all at Campus Dance 2010!

## **Cara Farber – History Policy Track 2008**

Last year I worked at a law firm in DC and after reading the Concentration Newsletter, I realized just how much I missed being a part of the education world. I was moved to email one of my Ed TAs from Brown for guidance about teaching and charter schools.



After my conversation with Jess Delforge I felt completely re-inspired and immediately began looking for positions in schools. (I hope you don't mind the shout out, Jess!)

I'm now a Kindergarten teacher at Excellence Girls Charter School, part of Uncommon Schools, in Brooklyn, NY. It's our first year open which is both exhilarating and exhausting! I love my students and how they make me smile throughout the day. It has been an amazing experience to watch them grow into excited readers and hungry learners. I'm also working towards a Masters in Elementary Education through a program called Teacher U at Hunter College. It's a new program that is partnered with KIPP, Achievement First and Uncommon Schools. I'm searching far and wide for a better work-life balance, but as a first year teacher in a new school and a grad student, I may have to hold out until next year to find it!

I hope you can also use Karl's great work with the newsletter to reach out to other alums for guidance and inspiring conversations. Please email me if you have any questions about Excellence Girls or Teacher U! [cara.farber@gmail.com](mailto:cara.farber@gmail.com)

### **Jessica Gorkin – Human Development Track 2008**

I graduated in 2008 and spent last year teaching Junior Kindergarten in a private school in South Florida. I decided that I missed the North East too much and this year, I am back in New England (in Boston). I joined AmeriCorps and I am serving Massachusetts Mentoring Partnership as an "Ambassador of Mentoring" (cool title, huh?) Day to day, I serve in a literacy and mentoring organization called 'Everybody Wins! Metro Boston' screening and training corporate volunteers to work with children in the Boston Public Schools. I'm spending my free time thinking about what to do next year – can't wait to hear what everyone else is doing!

### **McCall Lewis – History Policy Track Concentrator 2008**

Hi everyone! In February, I was hired as an instructional assistant at a high school in the Worcester, Massachusetts area. I began my elementary certification program over the summer. I needed to complete a science and math pre-practicum fall semester, so I did not return to the high school as an aide. I was assigned to a 4th grade class in an urban school district and I loved every minute with the students. I can't wait to have a class of my own! The days I was not at the elementary, I worked at a coffee shop and bakery. I will be completing my pre-practicum in reading during spring semester. I'm hoping to find a job for my off days (perhaps substituting). I have to take a few more courses before I can start my student teaching. Hope everyone is happy and well. Enjoy the holidays!

### **Johnny Lin – History Policy Track Concentrator 2008**

Hello all! I have been living in San Francisco since fall 2008, now going into my second year as a nonprofit strategy consultant. Over the past year I have been working with several education-focused clients such as the Gates Foundation's domestic education



strategy to support severely behind students, and the Chicago-based nonprofit CASEL to promote social-emotional learning in public schools. Some challenging and exciting stuff: tackling education from a system-level. I have been learning a whole ton, but I think will soon be eager to get back into the frontline of global education development work again.

Recently I have been thinking a lot about how to brand and communicate the cause of education reform/equity so that it actually compels a broad movement of people to action – how do we use design and stories to get people to care about "other people's children"... etc. Would love to hear thoughts and strike up a conversation around this if anyone is in.

The Bay Area is simply fantastic and I continue to fall in love with it every morning as I walk to the BART. Would love to hear from other folks and do come visit when you get a chance. In my spare time I am painting a mural in my apartment and launching an informal gathering of local social entrepreneurs over potlucks.

### **May Mark – Human Development Track 2008**

I cannot believe I graduated from Brown over a year and a half ago! My professional life the last six months has been completely unpredictable, so much fun, and entirely education related! In June 09, I left my last position to join Coney Island Prep (CIP), a start-up charter school in Brooklyn, NY as the Office Manager. Coney Island Prep is in the school district I grew up in, so it has been a very special experience for me. When I first joined, we were still working in our temporary space at the NYC Charter School Center, getting kids off the waiting list to meet enrollment goals, and buying furniture, smart boards, and other equipment! Starting a school is one of the most fast-paced, high-stress, and fun (!) jobs ever.

Coney Island Prep's staff of twelve currently serves ninety 5th graders and we are planning to add a grade each year until the 12th grade. We are a college-preparatory school where college is highly emphasized. Scholars are in school every day from 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and we have one monthly Saturday Activity. The school is academically rigorous, but joyful as well. All of our scholars enrolled through our open lottery. Coney Island Prep is also the first school housed in a New York City Housing Authority space. We share the building with a community center that is part of a housing project. A large percentage of our scholars actually live in the building upstairs!

About two months into my job, my direct manager left the school. Literally over night, my responsibilities tripled and I started reporting to the Executive Director. I suddenly had to be responsible for Student Transportation, School Foods, Facilities Management, and be CPR/AED certified, among other things. My responsibilities continued to grow and as of December 09, I was promoted to the position Operations Manager. I also started to direct Student Recruitment and Enrollment, co-coordinate all of our Saturday activities (i.e.: Career Day, ice-skating for 90+ people, Museum trips) and Family Events (potluck

for 200+ people, Family-Teacher Conferences, Workshops), manage our Security Guard, and literally almost do whatever falls onto my plate.

I work extremely hard; sometimes almost 70 hours a week, but I enjoy every minute of it. I always knew I wanted to do something education related but not teach. I feel like I have found that role... I miss Barus Hall very much, esp. Karl's warm attitude (which I am trying to adopt to be more scholar and family-friendly). I also use the skills (project management, attention to detail, organization) I learned as Prof. Li's research assistant everyday! It is also interesting to see the politics of charter schools and education play out, literally from noting the exact date a scholar enters the school to get the correct funding from New York State to better understanding how other schools feel about our move into the community.

If you are ever in Brooklyn and want to visit CIP, let me know! If you are looking for teaching and other opportunities, let me know as well! I hope everyone is doing well!

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[maymark43@gmail.com](mailto:maymark43@gmail.com)

### **Joanna Packer - Human Development Track 2008**

Hey Karl and co.,

I spent the 2008-2009 year living in Brooklyn as a corps member in Avodah: The Jewish Service Corps, an Americorps program which combines work combating urban poverty, communal living, and the study of the intersection of Judaism and social justice. My work placement was with Comprehensive Development, Inc. a non-profit based in a New York City public high school, serving its students in many different ways. I worked as a college counselor, provided academic support to English language learners, and led several extracurricular student groups. I worked with amazing students, ages 17-21 who were persevering against all odds to finish their high school degrees at this incredibly unique day and night high school. Most of the day students were recent immigrants and English language learners, from over 45 countries! The night students were native New Yorkers who were over-age and under credited, students coming back for another chance at a high school diploma. After completing my year in Avodah, I headed to Tel Aviv. I arrived in Israel this September to begin a year-long Social Justice Fellowship through the New Israel Fund and Shatil. The fellowship helped to place me at an Israeli NGO to pursue work within Israel's movement for social change. I am currently working as the Education Team Coordinator at the African Refugee Development Center in Tel Aviv. I manage an Education Center where refugee and asylum seeker adults take language classes, computer literacy classes, and more. I'm also coordinating a Hebrew Literacy project, which supports elementary-aged children of refugees and asylum seekers in Tel Aviv public schools, promoting literacy and academic integration. I look forward to hearing about all of the wonderful things everyone is up to. If you are coming to Israel, send an email my way! ([joannapacke@gmail.com](mailto:joannapacke@gmail.com))



## Matthew Sawh – History Policy Track 2008

These newsletters are a great way to stay connected. Thanks to Karl and the Dept for doing them! Last year, I helped Dave Marcus with his book *Acceptance* about the college admissions process and, I'm working with Jeff Reichert on a film about Gerrymandering please take a look [here](#) and, be in touch on [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#). Otherwise, as the saying goes, life is what happens when you're busy making other plans. I'd love to hear from anyone – just shoot me a line on Facebook.

All Best, Matt

## Jasmin Torres – Human Development Track 2008

Dear Education Concentrators -

Greetings from Hartford, CT! My name is Jasmin Torres and I'm in my second year with Teach For America. This is my second year teaching at my placement school and things are so much different than first year. My first year was a whirlwind of many things and by the end I was very thankful to have survived. I learned a lot about education from the trials and tribulations both in and outside of my classroom and community. There was one thing I was sure of though; I was definitely coming back for a second year.

This year I came back rejuvenated and re-inspired to close the achievement gap that I had set out for at the end of my senior year at Brown in 2008. I have been more confident than ever before in my abilities to teach my 23 wonderfully bright and ambitious kindergartners. I am by no means a perfect teacher, but I love my job and the room for growth that it gives me. Teach for America has been a tremendous support with their outstanding professional development. I always know that there is someone to turn to whenever I need guidance in any area.

This past summer I spent time as a Teaching Resident at Achievement First Hartford Elementary Academy's Summer Academy. If you haven't heard, Achievement First is a collection of high performing charter schools in Connecticut and New York. They have been absolutely revolutionary in the methods implemented to close the achievement gap. I assisted them by pulling math intervention groups with their lowest performing students, as well as other tasks. Needless to say I learned a lot of helpful, fun, and effective strategies that help to boost not only student achievement, but also student engagement.

I'm extremely happy to say that they have offered me a position for the 2010-2011 school year! As a third year teacher I feel that I will bring a lot to the table with my public school experience. However, I also know that I will learn an incredible amount that will be priceless in my journey to find my niche in the profession of education. During my third year I'll be applying to graduate programs in education. So keep your fingers crossed for me. Who knows? I just may end up back at good ole Brown. ☺



Take care! Jasmin Torres

## CLASS OF 2009

### Irene Castillon – Human Development Track Concentrator 2009

After graduating in May, I had a two week break before I packed my bags for school once again. This time however, my bags went to Stanford, CA! Since June, I have been part of STEP (Stanford Teacher Education Program), pursuing my Masters and secondary Credential in History/Social Science. Each day I'm convinced more and more that teaching is probably one of the most complex and hardest professions, but definitely the most rewarding =).

I am currently student teaching at East Palo Alto Academy High School, a charter high school started by Stanford. The school serves about 300 students, the majority of whom are Latino (I went to a large comprehensive high school, so it's totally different but I love it!) While my professors are truly amazing and passionate about education and equity, my students have proven to be my greatest teachers. They never cease to amaze me! They have so much passion, hope and above all **GANAS!!!** *Ganas*: the willingness and dedication, to succeed and to learn. As seniors, my students are in the process of finishing their college applications; the majority of them will be the first in their families to attend college.

When I first received my acceptance to Brown five years ago, I learned that the other teachers and administrators at my school were labeling me as the “exception to the rule.” The “rule” embedded in their beliefs was that Latinos from low socioeconomic backgrounds living in urban areas are not worth challenging because they end up pregnant or involved in gangs and thus, are not open to learning. My students are proof that I was not just the “exception,” and they are the reason and the constant reminder of why I entered the teaching profession...and I don’t ever want to lose sight of that!

### **Peter Cipparone – History & Policy Track Concentrator 2009**

I’m checking in from Spain, where I’m a Fulbright teaching assistant. I teach in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes in Ciempozuelos, a small town 45 minutes outside of Madrid. I act and use wild hand gestures on a daily basis, both to help the students understand my English and to bring excitement to the foreign language classroom. I’m often frustrated by how the school is run, as students learn English exclusively by filling out grammar exercises and the principals’ idea of classroom support seems to be berating students in the hallways. But I’ve realized how important English is as a tool for social mobility and access to white collar jobs around Madrid, which keeps me motivated. I do feel like I’m stumbling around the Forbidden Forest of teaching sometimes, with no curriculum to speak of and no theory-based ideas to go back on. My work in school makes me look forward to learning how to be an excellent educator who can both engage students and hold them to high expectations.

I’ve had quite an adventure living here in Ciempozuelos. I rent a studio above the house of a family who sells dogs – and it’s a good thing I like dogs because we have between 30 and 80 puppies at a time. In town, I’m playing on/assistant coaching a basketball team, volunteering at a residence for the mentally disabled and playing trombone in the town band. Keeps me busy – which is a good thing since otherwise the town is a little “*tranquilo*”, as they say here. I’m also working on a research project looking at the politics around bilingual education in the Basque province of Spain, a part of the country which has its own language, a distinct identity, and a strong separatist movement.

A warm winter hello to everyone around Barus! And if anyone (seriously, anyone) is going to be around Europe shoot me an email at peter.cipparone@gmail.com – I would be more than happy to show you around Madrid, Ciempozuelos, and my doggie house.

### **Alison Cohen – History & Policy Track Concentrator 2009**

After spending a month this summer traveling all the way around the US by train with my younger brother, I am now in Brussels (and traveling all around the country by train here in Belgium too – where anywhere is only a few hours away). I am here on a Fulbright scholarship to the European Union to study the implementation of REACH (the EU's trend-setting chemicals policy) and understand lessons learned for chemicals policy reform back in the US. I'm becoming fluent, both in French (which I last studied five years ago) and in chemicals policy, and I have certainly been learning a lot. (If anyone

has any questions about the Fulbright scholarship or will be near Brussels sometime before mid-June, please get in touch:

[alison.cohen@fulbrightmail.org](mailto:alison.cohen@fulbrightmail.org)

Fortunately, I am still continuing to be involved in education. In particular, I have collaborated with one of my Fulbright friends here to develop and teach a reenactment of the Iowa caucus, where students choose between states instead of actual politicians, for students learning English (including in teacher colleges, where I also did a brief overview of American education policy) around Belgium. I'm proud to report that Belgians seem to appreciate Rhode Island – Rhode Island is one of only two states (the other is California) to have been a final contender each time!

**February 2010 Update:** Alison also has a paper "Achieving Healthy School Siting and Planning Policies: Understanding Shared Concerns of Environmental Planners, Public Health Professionals, and Educators," that will be published this spring in *New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*. This paper began in an independent study Alison completed with our own Professor Laura Snyder.



### **Megan Danyliw – History & Policy Track Concentrator 2009**

I am teaching high school English at Emma Willard School, an all-girls boarding school in Troy, NY. I teach freshman and sophomores, coach field hockey and crew, and work in the dorms. Needless to say, they are keeping me very busy. I am really enjoying teaching so far and my students are great. I am also involved in a seminar program with other new teachers at the school which is keeping some of my classes from Brown fresh (We just finished a unit on Dewey). I am looking to relocate next year, hopefully to the DC area so if anyone has any information on job openings I would greatly appreciate it. Also, Emma Willard is starting their search for next year's interns, it is a great program if you are looking for experience teaching in private schools and while the salary is not top notch the support and community here has been great. Send me an email at [mdanyliw@gmail.com](mailto:mdanyliw@gmail.com) if you would like more information.

### **Jazmin Perez – Human Development Track Concentrator 2009**

A big HOWDY to y'all from Houston, Texas! It has been less than a year since I graduated, but already it feels like a lifetime of change has occurred. After my May graduation I moved back to Texas, my home state, where I started working for the Institutional Review Board of the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (What can I say? Our state is big and so are our names!). At the end of the summer I

started my masters program in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences at the UT School of Public Health (UTSPH). The program has been amazing in combining my dual degrees in Human Biology and Education Studies. My classes have tied in theory, culture, and science in a manner that focuses on solutions for many of today's major public health issues. The field of public health has been growing exponentially, each day revealing new research opportunities and career options. As a student, it has been a wonderful learning experience being both in the classroom and behind the scenes on some of today's leading research studies.

Throughout this time it has been clear that my experiences prior to and while at Brown have been key in creating opportunities that otherwise might not have been available. In fact, it was the dynamic combination of my Brown education and my life journey that lead me to get noticed by our country's most influential leader. Soon after the beginning of my first semester at UTSPH I received notice from the White House that President Obama would mention me in his national speech on education. It was an amazing honor to be exemplified in a presidential speech on a subject I have been deeply passionate about. Since then, things have only sped up. I got engaged shortly after, and have been planning our wedding while trying to balance my love for school and work. In short, my time after Brown has been an amazing (and at times hectic, but totally wonderful) journey, and everyday I'm thankful for being blessed with my undergraduate experience.

### **Michael Ramos-Lynch – History & Policy Track Concentrator 2009**

Life after graduation has proven tremendously exhausting, but rewarding. My last semester "at Brown" was actually spent in Dharamsala, India, home of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile. Choosing to spend my final semester abroad was tough, but I'm very happy with the choice I made.





My five-month trip to India was everything I wanted it to be: spiritually stimulating and rich with risk. I rode in barreling busses down India's anything-goes highways; meditated with Tibetan Buddhists in sacred monasteries; paddled a boat across the Ganges River in Varanasi, walked with Tibetans on "Uprising Day" to protest the Chinese occupation of Tibet; rode across the country's sprawling deserts by camel; received a blessing from the Dalai Lama and a number of Sadhu Priests; interviewed Samdhong Rinpoche, the Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government in Exile; and even contracted Malaria. Fortunately, I'm fine now. The whole program was a pure sensory overload, and

it led to what has now become my somewhat unhealthy obsession with India. I hope to travel back soon. I started a blog while I was abroad to document my journey: [www.Tibetanexile.com](http://www.Tibetanexile.com)

The time I spent in India has led to a lasting fascination and curiosity regarding the culture as well as the dominant religions there. Though limited, I spend a significant portion of my spare time studying Tibetan Buddhism and Islam. However, most of my time is spent lesson planning, grading papers, and thinking of new student investment strategies. I'm coaching the mock trial team and teaching English II to tenth graders in a Dallas, TX high school as part of my two-year commitment to Teach For America (TFA). It's very difficult, and I'm always eager for advice. I invite anyone to come observe me and offer some constructive criticism.



In the Spring I will begin taking classes at Southern Methodist University to obtain my M.Ed. Life after TFA is unclear, but I'm hoping to either attend law school or return to India and get a grant to help build schools in some of the country's most impoverished areas. Either way, I'm confident that everything I learned from the Brown Education Department (BEST DEPARTMENT AT BROWN!!!) will serve me well. I'm so thankful for all of the wonderful professors, students, and everyone else (especially the Department coordinator) for making the program so incredibly strong and tight knit.

### **Zach Townsend – Educations Studies, Brown University Class of 2009**

I work at a boutique consulting firm, where our practice is entirely non-profits, government agencies and foundations. I'm currently working on a project helping the MacArthur foundation with one of their major grant-making initiatives, to give an example of the work I do. It is great to do this type of management consulting work, but only have to help these 'civic' organizations. I can say that rarely a day goes by where John's economics class, Ken's policy implementation class or Marty's program evaluation class don't get used one way or the other in my work.

### **Sara Walter – Human Development Track 2009**

Since graduating last May, I have relocated to York, Pennsylvania. In August I began working for the Penn State Educational Talent Search program as an Advising/Counseling Assistant. This program strives to inform students about, and provide them access to, post-secondary education options. The program has a partnership with the York City School District and we specifically aim to provide our services to students who are potential first-generation college students or who come from low-income households. I work in three of the city schools – two traditional middle schools (grades 6-8) and one charter school (currently grades 6-11, though it will expand to 12th grade this fall). For my middle school students I have revised and am currently implementing a grade-specific curriculum that focuses on study skills, decision making, and early awareness about college and career options. I also plan monthly group workshops for students at each school focusing on a specific aspect of these topics. Additionally, the program takes students on field trips that expose students to college campuses and cultural institutions. While my high school students also participate in individual counseling meetings, workshops, and field trips, they are more narrowly focused on learning about and deciding which educational option they will choose to participate in upon graduation.

My department at Penn State also coordinates the Project Talent Connections program, which pairs highly motivated middle school students with high school and college student mentors in a "students teaching students" model. During the school year these students participate in Saturday classes and excursions. In the summertime, they attend an intensive four-week program of advanced level classes designed and taught by high school and college students. Working with these programs has been incredibly rewarding and reaffirmed for me many of the lessons that I learned through my courses in the Education Department. I have had countless "A-Ha!" moments, where a lesson from a

former professor pops into my head. In addition to working with the ETS and PTC programs, I was recently accepted to graduate school and will begin classes this spring to pursue my M.A. in Community Psychology and Social Change at Penn State.

### **A Little Bit More Alison Cohen ('09) – A Memoir from Sweden....**

Hey hey (Swedish for "hi"; one of the few Swedish words I picked up) —

It's hard to believe that I've been here in Europe for three months now. I've solidly launched into the taking-in-lots-of-information phase of my Fulbright research, which has been picking up in pace: I attended five conferences/meetings in the second half of November, and I've also been meeting with a number of folks from the business sector who are based here in Brussels. And then I spent four days last week in Stockholm. If Belgium has an affinity with Rhode Island because it's small and overlooked but has its own unique character and charm (Rhode Island actually almost won the most recent Iowa caucus we did – California eked out a victory due to some last-minute strategic maneuvering), Sweden is California-esque in that it has positioned itself as a leader in the EU within the realm of environmental – and health – protective regulations.

And so I went to Stockholm to meet with folks at the Swedish Chemicals Agency and a professor and her research group at KTH (Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology) whose work I've closely followed (they're one of the few groups studying chemicals regulation and risk assessment). In December. (I know. But actually, I felt like I got more light there than I had in Brussels (although the sun is only in the sky from 8:30-3:30 you could see it that whole time, as opposed to the dark clouds that tend to hang over Brussels...and I may have also timed it right, because apparently the sun was only visible for 14 hours in the entire month of November). And it wasn't too cold, since Stockholm is composed of a number of small islands). It was great – the people I met with were really interesting and also really excited about collaboration, and so welcoming: I ended up being invited to tag along after my meetings with the folks at KTH for their annual departmental holiday party as well. And the added benefits of the Fulbright network continue to multiply, most recently leading to a couch I could sleep on while I was in Stockholm with one Fulbrighter, and going over to a Swede who is headed to the States next year on a Fulbright for dinner one of the nights that I was there.

And the saints/cultural tidbits to share:

– Belgium starts celebrating Christmas on St. Nicholas's Day (December 6) (although St. Nick comes to the Netherlands on December 5 – he stops there first, apparently, and Belgians are I guess okay with this), where St. Nick comes to put gifts in your shoes – accompanied by Black Pete. People explain that he's black because of the soot (Black Pete goes down the chimney, not Santa), but let's be honest. He's a slave. When people dress up as Santa (and Black Pete), Black Pete is wearing blackface. I still haven't gotten used to it.

– Sweden's big day is St. Lucia (today, actually). It's a festival of lights (which you need in Sweden in the winter to cope; it's pitch-black by 3:45). This often involves a concert (I

got to go to a St. Lucia concert on Friday morning at KTH) where a girl is dressed in white with a red sash and a candle-wreath in her hair. Turns out that the candle-wreath is because she was initially set on fire as a way to kill her because she refused to marry a pagan as a young girl, and the red sash represents the fact that they had to stab her to kill her instead. (She is also often depicted with eyes on a plate...somewhere in this brutal death her eyes were gouged out.) But, this violent end is more or less overlooked and is now an occasion for singing beautiful songs and lighting lots of candles.

## CLASS OF 2010

### **Britney Jones – Human Development Track 2010**

When I entered Brown University in the fall of 2006 I knew I wanted to be an Education Studies concentrator. Three and a half years later I am preparing to graduate and I could not be happier. As a Human Development concentrator I finished most of my content courses early on and was able to explore the History/Policy track as well. Having taken so many classes within the concentration and even joining the Education DUG, I have really grown to know and love the department. This year I was fortunate enough to secure an internship with the Director of Development at Highlander Charter School. We are working to create a transition program, to combat dropout rates among the 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduates. This endeavor has become my Senior Capstone experience, as well as an independent study with Professor Laura Snyder. I have also been involved with Dr. Kenneth Wong's Pathways study as a research assistant, interviewing middle and high schools students across Rhode Island. Overall, I have really enjoyed my undergraduate experience and these opportunities have just been the icing on top of the cake. I now understand some of the real life, hard work and dedication prevalent in the field of Education. After exploring the field and all it has to offer I am brought back to my original passion for teaching. I have applied to a few programs and hopefully I will be in a Master's program next year working towards becoming a certified Elementary School teacher. I am overwhelmingly excited for what the future has to offer, but I will never forget my incredible undergraduate experience in the Education Department at Brown University!

### **Ana Lopez – Human Development Track 2010**

It's hard to believe that it has been 2 years since I first started frequenting the Education department. Since then I have been working with Professor Jin Li on her research project and this year am Team Manager for the Research Project about Learning Beliefs across Cultures. This has certainly kept me pretty busy, but has also been quite a rewarding and interesting time. I spent both the summer after sophomore year and this past summer working with the team on the project and helping to start the workings of another research project. Last semester while studying abroad in Nantes, France I taught English



to adorable 3-10 year old French students and it was a wonderful experience, persuading me that perhaps elementary Education is my calling. After a few years of being immersed in the loving and wonderful ED department with research and helping to run the DUG, I finally think that teaching may be the path for me. It is quite a scary thought that (if I finish these looming papers) I only have one semester left and the future is currently quite uncertain. I may be sticking around Providence (in which case, you'll be seeing me around!) or I may be as far away as Korea depending on how things play out. For now, I'm just glad to have one more semester and thankful for everything that the department has done for me these past few years. I could not ask for a more caring, supportive and overall awesome department!

### **Martin Silva - Human Development Track 2010**

Hi folks!

It's very surreal to be adding a piece to this newsletter as a senior here at Brown. When I reflect on my time here at Brown, I reference the Ed. Department as one of the highlights in my career as an undergrad. I've grown a great deal as an individual and as a student, and I can whole-heartedly admit that there are a number of people affiliated with the department in some way who have been a part of that experience.

It has taken me some time to sort it all out, but I've figured out my plans post-Brown. I'm fairly certain that I'll be taking the next couple (possibly several) years off to gain some research experience as a clinical research assistant, before making any commitment to a Ph.D. program in Clinical Psychology. My general interests in mental health have been explored in coursework, discussions with friends and professors, and have led me to the realization this path will bring me to my ultimate goal: bettering myself so that I can contribute something meaningful while helping others.

Right now, however, I'm working on my senior thesis for the department which is investigating the implications of internalized homophobia on identity development among college students. I'm also preparing for the massive job hunt that will ensue in the spring as positions open up and employers start looking. Spring semester right now looks like it will be absolute madness with the rush of deadlines and the amount of work to be done, but I look forward to pushing through this final stretch and through the Gates with my surrogate class of 2010. ('08 baby!).

I'm definitely looking forward to working with the Education Department in my final semester as a student and as a DUG co-coordinator. I hope to meet some prospective concentrators and re-connect with everyone after our much needed Winter Break.

All of the best, Martin Silva.

**February 2010 Update:** After experiencing stomach pains last week in Professor Li's EDUC 1580 class Martin was taken to hospital to have his appendix removed! He is up



and about, smiling broadly as always, and looking extraordinarily healthy for someone recovering from a major procedure!

## CLASS OF 2011

### **Miriam Joelson – History & Policy Track Concentrator 2011**

From the moment I stepped into Barus Hall as a sophomore, I knew I had found my home on campus. Under the guidance of Professor Spoehr and Dean Gaylin, I threw myself into education courses, and have been captivated by lectures, discussions, and assigned readings ever since. At the Education Department, every class is challenging, but not one seems like a requirement. For example, in my seminar on qualitative research methods taught by Professor Ulichny, I got so involved in my final project about the experiences international students make at Brown that the final draft I submitted counted 54 pages. In fact, final projects are one of my favorite things about my studies; in Professor Modell's "Sociology of Education," I was able to cater to my interests outside of education by synthesizing readings from French intellectual history with a sociological and historical analysis of the American high school extra-curriculum; for my research paper on Rhode Island Mayoral Academies in Professor Wong's "Policy Implementation in Education," I had the chance to interview Mayor McKee of Cumberland, RI; finally, in Professor's Spoehr's "American Higher Education in Historical Context," I went treasure hunting in the Brown archives to trace the development of Pembroke's prospective student guide in the ten years before its merger with Brown in 1971. Studying has never been this much fun.

Research didn't end with the semester: this past summer, I had the opportunity of assisting Professor Tyler in his research on data-driven decision-making in Cincinnati Public Schools, and Professor Wong in his research on merit-based pay for teachers. The combination of groundbreaking research and outstanding teaching, advising, and small classes is absolutely incredible.

In the fall, I took Professor Tyler's class, "Economics of Education," during which he got me excited about microeconomics – a feat that seemed impossible to me when I signed up. The critical thinking fostered and work ethics required for the class have deeply impacted my approaches to education-related issues and to my own studies at Brown. Though I am focusing on education history and policy, Professor Demick's human development courses have fueled my interest in the way children develop ethics and morals. Currently, I am building on my fascination with ethics in Professor Felicia Nimue Ackerman's philosophy seminar, "Ethics, Education, and Fiction."

As I am finishing up these paragraphs, I am already excited to crack open the spines of my books and start my homework. Whatever will I do when I am forced to leave this paradise after I graduate in 2011?



## Michael MacCombie – History & Policy Track Concentrator 2011

When I came to Brown, I had an interest in education, but didn't really know how to engage in helping students outside of working as a tutor. After my first year at Brown, though, I had seen too many students walking the halls of schools I worked in to be content with the scope or scale of my work. So, beginning early last year, I began building up an organization called Students For Education Reform (SFER); through SFER I wanted to find students like me who had a passion, but not necessarily the information or avenues to engage in improving education on a broader and more sustained scale. The group works in two ways; information and engagement. We inform students on campus and promote community awareness about the issues facing schools in Rhode Island, doing everything from organizing teach-ins to discussion panels by local reformers, and a lot in between. To build on this growing knowledge of the issues, SFER also engages in work on advocacy for major state and local issues. We have done everything from helping to facilitate community forums for parents and other stake holders to testifying before the state's Board of Regents.

This semester, we have a lot going on: we have joined a state wide coalition to end fifteen years of fiscal inequity in the state's schools by advocating for a state funding formula; we are getting into a research project on the political support and resources of elected officials that have influence on educational issues; and we are organizing a panel discussion later in the spring, likely including State Commissioner Deborah Gist, on the prospects for reform initiatives to improve the most struggling schools.

The future looks great for SFER; as our impact is growing across issues and arenas, and students at Brown now have a solid outlet to build lasting change for Rhode Island's students. Anyone interested in learning more about SFER and what it does can contact me at [Michael.MacCombie@gmail.com](mailto:Michael.MacCombie@gmail.com)

## U.T.E.P. UPDATE (UNDERGRADUATE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM)

### John Westermann – Social Studies/History U.T.E.P. 2010

I am currently finishing my final academic semester after participating in Brown's Undergraduate Teacher Education Program (UTEP). My actual concentration while at Brown has been history, with a particular focus on modern American history. As a junior I began teaching a small wood shop class at the Wheeler School and a love of teaching was born. After that I knew I should apply to become a UTEP. After a busy summer at Brown Summer High School I had a brief two weeks off before beginning my student teaching semester at the Blackstone Academy Charter School, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. There I worked under former Brown undergraduate and MAT Brian Fong. He supervised as I student taught two sections of ninth grade world history. I grew so much as a person and an educator during my time there and felt many benefits from working



under a former MAT. Where I go from here is yet to be determined, but I will always take with me the lessons I have learned from Brian, Eileen, Dan, Laura, and Maureen.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ALL!

### EDUCATION D.U.G. 2009-2010

#### SEMESTER ONE

This year (and I guess we do this every year) we did things a little differently with our D.U.G. Since our 'revitalization' in 2006 our momentum has grown under the consistently strong leadership of, most often, 2-4 students meeting a bunch of times over the course of each semester. This year we have 9 students that share the leadership/coordination of the D.U.G. and they meet weekly to discuss the events they are planning and the concentration more generally. Sometimes they meet and just hang out! I meet with them whenever I can and every week they send me the minutes of their meetings – letting me know who is responsible for doing what and how I can help. I believe that just the sheer presence, the visible and active engagement of these students is one of the things that has helped build our concentration to almost double over the last year-and-a-half. We currently have 35 junior concentrators – closing in on the magic number of 40 for the graduating class of 2011 – and because of the commitment of these 9 hard-working students I believe that a graduating class of 40 is still a real possibility. Their consistent physical presence keeps students in touch – in touch with each other and in touch with us – and the casual conversations that happen regularly allow us to informally gauge how our students are doing in terms of their requirements and their student workload more generally. It means we can help them before they fall behind and potentially drift away to a second concentration that may be more convenient to complete when graduation time comes and time has run out. Every year we have people on our lists that just disappear without a word and I believe that the work of our current D.U.G. – building on that of all those before them – will help us to... help those students when they need us most. On behalf of the Department... thank you. We appreciate the work you do and what you have done to lift our profile on campus. After all, we think that what we do here is very important and if people just KNOW what it is that we do (and what you all do as documented in this newsletter) the work will speak for itself.

Karl Dominey  
Academic Department Coordinator



Our extraordinary 2009 – 2010 D.U.G. Coordinators are:

**Gem Chema** (junior)

**Ivayla (Ivy) Ivanova** (junior)

**Miriam Joelson** (junior)

**Britney Jones** (senior)

**Ana Lopez** (senior – D.U.G coordinator 2008-2010)

**Lisa Rodgers** (junior)

**Caroline Segal** (junior)

**Martin Silva** (senior – D.U.G. coordinator 2008-2010)

**Ben Winkler** (junior)

This year, the Education DUG is back and better than ever! With the wonderful help of the Department Coordinator, Karl Dominey, and an expanding group of coordinators, we have had a very successful first semester. We kicked off the school year with a fall welcome back social that attracted current concentrators, as well as students who want to know more about our department and are considering declaring Education Studies as their concentration. Shortly after, we hosted a pre-registration social with Meeting Street cookies to share some insider details on the courses our department has to offer, and the professors who teach them.

Every semester, we aim to host at least one faculty member in the department for an informal 'Dinner and Dialogue' to hear about the work that he or she has done. This year, we had an amazing and informative Dinner and Dialogue with visiting lecturer and Director of Elementary Education, Carla Shalaby. We look forward to our next Dinner and Dialogue with Holly Harriel, the new director of Education Outreach!

We have to admit, we are most proud of hosting the department's first ever Education Department Research Fair last semester. Seven professors volunteered their time to set up stations in Sayles Hall to talk to any students who stopped by for discussion, treats, and hot chocolate. This fair was the perfect opportunity for the department's faculty to present their research, in addition to recruiting new undergraduate research assistants who were curious enough about getting involved. As one of the most active DUGs on campus, we are all dedicated to creating and maintaining a welcoming sense of community in our department. We look forward to coordinating another successful semester of events and activities. If you are interested in learning more about our departments, the events we host, or have any ideas and suggestions, feel free to contact us at: [education.dug@gmail.com](mailto:education.dug@gmail.com)

The Education DUG Coordinators



# GRADUATE PROGRAMS

## URBAN EDUCATION POLICY PROGRAM



**Mary Dillman – U.E.P. 2010**

After teaching for the past four years in Oakland, California, I started at Brown in the Urban Education Policy program this June. The first day of orientation occurred just three days after my last day of teaching, which needless to say left little time to transition! We were fortunate to take classes taught by Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) faculty on “Education Research Design and Methods” as well as “Structures and Systems in Urban Education,” benefiting from their considerable expertise and experience. We applied our coursework by completing research projects for various local community organizations. My team helped the Central Falls High School Transition Project assess the high school orientation program, career academies, and house system by administering surveys and conducting focus groups with parents and students. Other UEP teams conducted research practicums to assist Full Service Schools, the National College Advising Corporation, Providence Educational Excellence Coalition (PEEC), and the Rhode Island Afterschool Program Alliance (RIASPA).

A few weekend jaunts to Cape Cod and Martha’s Vineyard buoyed my energy during the busy summer session, which segued into equally full and productive fall and spring semesters. I’ve sought to build my analytical and quantitative skill set by strategically selecting electives. In the Fall I took “Social Science Data Technologies” and this semester I’m taking “Mediation, Negotiation, and Arbitration,” which are offered through the Public Policy department. Despite a packed schedule, I’ve found time to play on the Brown club field hockey team and went on a January excursion to Costa Rica for some much-needed respite from the New England cold. I’ve also spent a fair amount of time in nearby Boston interning in the Boston Public Schools Office of Accountability. My work has focused on enhancing system-wide and site-level capacity to use data to drive instructional decision making. It’s hard to believe that my time at Brown is already drawing to a close, though hopefully not without a few UEP wins in intramural softball!

## URBAN EDUCATION FELLOWS PROGRAM



**Emily Smith – English M.A.T. & U.E.F. 2010**

After working for several years I’ve really enjoyed being back in school, both as a student and as a student teacher. My favorite experience so far has been reading student essays comparing Jay Gatsby’s American Dream with a parent’s American Dream. My worst moment also involved *The Great Gatsby*; a student asked me if I was born in the

1920s. (Thank goodness I don't teach math!). I taught 11<sup>th</sup> grade English at Hope High School in Providence, which reminded me of how difficult, but exciting teaching can be. There is never a dull moment. As part of the Urban Education Fellowship program I feel lucky to have the opportunity to stay in Providence. I look forward to working with the diverse student body and strong alumni network here.

## MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING PROGRAM



**Eliana Reyes Castro – Social Studies/History M.A.T. 2010**

Greetings all,  
I hope this newsletter finds everyone in good spirits and health!

This time last year, I was just getting over the disappointment of not being selected for Teach for America. It was a humbling experience, and I began to wonder whether my application had betrayed me as incompetent. I cried a little and thought a lot. Then I talked to anyone who would listen and began considering other avenues into teaching. I had a very decisive conversation with the person I would consider my informal faculty mentor at Brown, and her confidence in me allayed some of my fears of rejection. I applied to the MAT program, and all throughout I had the continuous support of the entire program faculty, and I knew that that level of personal investment would also enhance my experience as an MAT candidate here. When I was admitted to this cohort, I hugged people, withdrew my other applications and never looked back.

Last summer was one of immense growth for me; I was finally using my human development background and leading a classroom full of students for the first time in Brown Summer High School. I came to care so much for them in so little time, and I admit that I cried after they left on the last day. I worked alongside some of the most caring people on this campus, and they challenged me lovingly. I made jokes about Maureen Sigler's huge belly nonstop. I also began to see Brown and Providence in a new light, finally letting go of campus a little bit to experience the Providence cultural panorama. I moved into a house with a chef and a medical student, with whom I eat a lot of good food and dance a lot of salsa.

I am now teaching 10th-grade U.S. History at Blackstone Academy Charter School in Pawtucket. I know that I still have so much to experience as a beginning teacher, but every day is a triumph. I also got engaged recently, so it's already been a year full of blessings!

Thank you to all the people that have touched my life this past year. I know that we will be connected in our love for what we do, for many more years to come.

Un fuerte abrazo,  
Eliana Castro

## NEW FACULTY 2009-2010

### Professor Carla Shalaby – Lecturer in Education and Visiting Director of Elementary Education



In June, I moved from Boston to start my new role as Visiting Director of the Elementary MAT program. By July, I found myself in a filled auditorium at 8:30 a.m. watching a riveting performance—a rising second-grader doing the tango on stage with one of our MAT students. “I want to teach you all something my grandfather in Atlanta taught me,” seven year-old Justice explained. Then he took Carrie by the hand, the music promptly began, and he led her across the stage to rousing applause and cheer.

Our intense, year-long MAT experience begins with *SummerPrep*, a free academic and social enrichment program serving the public schoolchildren of Providence, taught and led by our cohort of Elementary MATs. Seemingly overnight, “Carrie” becomes “Miss Champlin” and I get all the joy of watching her find her teacher voice, her teacher look, her teacher self... multiplied by 10 for each of my MATs! My time in *SummerPrep* was the perfect introduction to this job and to the Brown Department of Education, because it was about relationships. The warmth between Justice and Carrie was obvious, just as it is with all my MATs and the young children in their charge. Indeed, so much of the work of education is about the relationships we build—with our students, and their families, with the community, and with our colleagues. I have so valued the affection, support, and appreciation for relationship that is so obvious in the Teacher Education programs here at Brown. This is a group of teacher educators and MAT students who understand that each individual person matters and adds a uniqueness and an invaluable resource that should not be taken for granted. We educate teachers the way we hope teachers will educate young people—with love, personalization, and rigorously high standards.

I come to Brown as a former elementary schoolteacher and a doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Because I care so much about relationships in teaching and learning, I spend a lot of time thinking about what young people need to feel that schools relate to them—personally, culturally, racially, academically. I hope that my life and work, both in theory and in practice, will always be about creating classrooms that are liberating and humanizing for all of our young people. I hope it will be about supporting teachers in becoming activists who will stand alongside youth in the struggle for educational justice. And, I firmly believe in the potential of our Brown undergraduate and MATs to bring their extraordinary talents, passions, and commitment to bear on the young people’s struggle. I continue to be inspired and amazed by the students I am lucky enough to work with here at Brown.

I am proud of the work we do in the Elementary MAT program and feel that pride every time I visit one of our MATs in action... teaching squeamish second-graders to handle worms with care, reading aloud timeless picture books with themes of equality and

respect, helping young people to resolve their own conflicts, playing aloud the sound of crickets from a website on a laptop, modeling a journal entry from a whale-watching expedition, sharing multiple strategies for adding 2-digit numbers. I am proud and reassured every time an elementary teacher education program finds a space of home at an elite research university like Brown; when that happens, we are reminded that the work of teaching young children is deeply intellectual, rigorous, and critical work. Every time a parent sends her 5 year-old baby to school for the very first time—suddenly looking so grown up with that backpack strapped on and the lunchbox dangling from one hand—that parent is reminded that elementary teachers and schools are incredibly important. I only wish each of those parents could have the comfort of meeting one of our Brown MAT graduates at the classroom door.

## NEW STAFF 2009-2010

### **Eric Rollins '09 – Project Research Coordinator**

It's hard to keep track of all the pressing concerns in education as 2010 begins. I have only begun focusing on solely education since I started as project research coordinator in October. Since then, I have witnessed the dart throwing of Race to the Top, as well as the fear and heartache of nationwide budget cuts and subsequent effects on cities and towns. However, the dim light sliding underneath education's door mount is probably as fateful as in any public corridor. In visiting schools in Chicago and Evansville, Indiana this past fall, it is palpable that school leaders are innovating at break-neck speed and with empowered enthusiasm. Parental involvement in the classroom, installing differentiated learning, and embracing the President's call for more "data-driven decisions" are practices now expected and encouraged; they are no longer novelty school practices. As I work on several projects under Dr. Wong this year and the next, it is obvious that I will be witness to the implementation of a new education culture in public and private schools at all levels and disciplines. Behind the public debate over reallocating resources, waves of grant money, state reforms, and performance pay are hard working, innovative teachers and principals, holding up high expectations for themselves and their students in a way that will probably go unnoticed until the legislative dust settles. It's my opinion that heated public debate often indirectly affects common practices by lighting the fire and withholding the water until the sector uniformly embraces change, even if that change comes in forms they never imagined in bills or calculated political rhetoric.

With the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, a district of 23,000 students on the western Kentucky, southern Indiana border, Brown has a two year partnership to provide internal and external wisdom and training to a cadre of their fifty most successful and promising leaders. Besides a visit by all fifty to five different high-performing urban schools in Chicago before Thanksgiving, a team of top EVSC officials indulged in a cutting edge management reform seminar presented by some of Chicago Public School's

top brass – Dr. Wong, Ann D’Abrosca, and myself all joined in their journey. I also helped coordinate the EVSC’s most recent training; a visit by two directors of research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s en vogue Value-Added Research Center. Dr. Chris Thorn and Dr. Ernest Morgan gave the cadre a behind-the-scenes look at the new wave of teacher performance accountability. Connecting Brown, the EVSC, Chicago Public Schools, and the Value-Added Research Center in Wisconsin in a network of training, exposure, resources, and best practices in and of itself is a paradigm for future school leadership professional development. This project, among the others on which I work, perpetually reminds me that the “cultural change” – firm quantitative analysis with network-building and resource sharing – I heard about in seminars at the Taubman Center (I’m a 2009 MPP recipient) represent the present, and not just the future, of education policy.

## YOUR CONCENTRATION ADVISORS

Growing the Education Studies Concentration and exposing more and more students to the work we do (and the work to be done) in the field of Education has been a priority of the Department since Professor John Tyler initiated this newsletter 4 years ago. Two-and-a-half years ago our current Chair, Kenneth Wong, charged me and the people listed below with the task of 100% growth in two years. We are not there yet but we are starting to get close! With the strong and committed leadership of our Senior Concentration Advisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies, Luther Spoehr; the almost impossible charm of our Sophomore & Junior Concentration Advisor, Professor Cynthia García Coll (students seem to walk into her office with a question and walk out again as Education Studies concentrators); and the kind and devoted wisdom of our Honors Advisor, Professor Jin Li I think we have come as close as anyone could.

Karl Dominey  
Academic Department Coordinator

### **Luther Spoehr – Senior Concentration Advisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies**



#### **The Education Studies Concentration**

The undergraduate concentration continues to thrive, with 28 seniors slated to graduate in May 2010 and 30 juniors already in line for May 2011. Both groups are pretty evenly divided between the Human Development and History / Policy Areas of Emphasis. Starting this year, the Registrar informs us, the transcript will have room for both the concentration designation ("Education Studies") and the Area of Emphasis designation, an improvement that will obviously provide a more complete, instant description of what the student has been studying.

As for me, I continue to teach my rotation of courses on the history of higher education plus EDUC 1200 (History of American School Reform), serve as senior concentration advisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies, advise first-years and sophomores, participate in various colloquia at the Sheridan Center, and act as academic liaison to the men's basketball team. Off campus I do professional development seminars for high school history teachers and work with the education and publications programs at the Rhode Island Historical Society. It all keeps me out of trouble and off the streets, and is a lot of fun besides. May each of you find a career that brings you as much joy.

### Professor Cynthia Garcia Coll – Junior/Sophomore Concentration Advisor



#### Thinking About Your Education at Brown

As an Education concentrator, you have to....

So now you are an education concentrator. What to do? At Brown we pride in helping to open horizons, some never before opened. So what are the things that, to heighten this shared goal, you should be sure to do as a concentrator?

- Get to know your professors: many of us are at Brown because we love teaching, and we love contributing in any way we can to your growth and development. What is unique at Brown is that you have access to professors in ways that many of our peer institutions do not offer. How to get to know us? Of course taking classes is one way, coming to our office hours, just to chat about life options is ok, doing independent studies, research opportunities like UTRAS ( due early February), Mimi Sherman, and Solsbery ( due in April) offer , or simply volunteering/ getting hire to assist on the Professors' research offer another set of ways. Do visit the department web site. Find out about our research interests and knock on our doors!
- Become part of the community: One of the nicest things about the Education Department is that we are truly a community. Do not miss on that! (Seniors can tell juniors things about themselves, and about us; juniors can tell sophomores.) Be part of the DUG and attend its activities. Hang out before and after class. The relationships you are making now can last a lifetime! And you all have been hand-picked to come to Brown because of some special attribute. Learning from your peers is a must. Attend the colloquia and job talks. Find out what is the cutting edge research is nationally and internationally; find out what local, national, or international efforts—research or practical—we participate in. We have excellent speakers coming as a part of our two colloquium series: the Urban Education policy series and the Center for the Study of Human Development series. There are always opportunities to meet the speakers before or after their talks

- Do a capstone or honors thesis: Consider strongly making this senior project one that reflect and rounds up from an academic perspective extracurricular work or interests that you have developed over the past several years. (Or, if a topic has presented itself to you forcefully only, say, in your sixth semester, then work with a faculty member on defining this in such a way that you can do a major project to learn more about it during your senior year.). Think about using that senior year to become an expert, in some fashion, in an area. This might even be one that you will be able to talk about to potential employers or graduate schools in a truly informed way. Many students after graduation talk about the intensive senior-year experience as the best part of their Brown education. And involve more than one professor. You will be becoming expert enough that multiple perspectives will challenge and inform you especially...and it will not hurt when you turn out to need those three letters of recommendation in the near future.
- So explore, stretch beyond the comfort zone and appreciate the resources that we have; the answers will come in time.

### Professor Jin Li – Honors Thesis Advisor



Hello, Education Studies Concentrators (and future Concentrators!). As your Honors thesis advisor, I would encourage you to consider writing an Honors thesis. Have you thought or talked to your peers about it? If you have, that is great. If you have not, it's time to think about it. Many students who have completed their Honors theses found this experience most rewarding. Although this is a challenging process, you will be able to accomplish this capstone project because faculty, staff, and your peers are here to support you. Each year in the spring, we hold a session on the Honors thesis where we discuss what this process entails and how we support Honors thesis writers. So please pay attention to the upcoming announcement, and we hope to see you at the session. Meanwhile, please don't hesitate to contact me at [Jin\\_Li@Brown.edu](mailto:Jin_Li@Brown.edu) or just drop by (my office is 208 Barus Building) during my office hours Tue 12:00-2:00 and Thu 2:30-3:30. I would be very happy to talk to you about your interests and ideas.

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# FACULTY RESEARCH



**Professor Dan Bisaccio – Lecturer in Education and Director of Science Education**

## **Student Thoughts & Reflections from HabitatNet Biodiversity Research at the El Eden Ecological Reserve**



Students become scientifically literate by doing science as science is done. Whether in the field or classroom, we need to engage young students with the “undertaking” of science as an active process / verb.

Essential Question: What do secondary science students need to know or do to become scientifically literate?

Field and laboratory experience pedagogical goals need to consider the following:

- (1) Continually strive toward mastery of the *skills* and content as outlined in the NSTA and state departments of education standards for science education.
- (2) Continually understand, appreciate, and be able to apply emerging content and skills in the sciences / technology to be informed and scientifically literate in today’s world.
- (3) Develop “scientific habits of mind” that include: scientific inquiry, methodology, data collection, and data analysis as well as being able to communicate their findings effectively.

What are the *Science Curriculum Skill Areas*?

\*Scientific Inquiry

- \*Scientific Methodology
- \*Designing and Conducting a Scientific Investigation
- \*Field & Laboratory Data Collection, Analysis, and Presentation
- \*Integrating Mathematics & Technology Skills

Melding active / real research with pedagogy to address scientific literacy is one way to take on this challenging essential question with content and skill acquisition for students.

Last year, I wrote a short piece for this publication on HabitatNet's student research goals. This year it seemed worthwhile to include intrepid high school student adventurer-researchers voice's to our ongoing HabitatNet project.

17 high school students from RI and NH as well as one secondary science teacher accompanied MAT/ biology candidate Gordon Fitch (2010) and I to the El Eden Ecological Reserve located in the Mexican state of Quintana Roo this past January, 2010. Prior to our trip to El Eden the students meet with me for several weeks (all coming in after school) to learn about tropical terrestrial ecology and biodiversity assessment methods. Our fieldwork at the reserve included primary biological diversity research data that was submitted to conservation agencies in Mexico, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Smithsonian Institute's Monitoring & Assessment of Biodiversity Program. Their final field report submitted to those agencies included individual student projects and seminar discussions on global conservation issues that gave student voice to this most compelling issue.

The following short quotes are representative of their affective comments, discussions, written pieces, and drawn experience maps that many of the secondary students shared with us.

“Encouraged is the first word that comes to mind when I think of HabitatNet at El Eden. I am encouraged to travel the world and see what is out there. I am encouraged to study the rain forest, something I have never before. I am encouraged to visit other areas of natural study around the world. I am encouraged to take an active part in things that are larger than myself.”

“Mexico was one of the best experiences I've ever had. Everything about the trip was amazing and I'd go back in a heartbeat. I hardly have any questions in school, in Mexico I had a million questions.”

“My work at El Eden sparked within me a deeper passion and desire to pursue field biology. I gained new knowledge about how precious tropical forests are to healing our planet. El Eden is a place where the gaps between humans and nature fuse and become one.”

“El Eden was the most incredible experience I've ever had. I will never forget the friends I made and the things I learned.”

“El Eden Reserve was a phenomenal place. It only reaffirmed my desire to become a field biologist.”

The field report from January, 2010 and student projects are posted on the HabitatNet website:

([http://www.sprise.com/shs/habitatnet.aspx?id=5366&ekmense=c580fa7b\\_244\\_](http://www.sprise.com/shs/habitatnet.aspx?id=5366&ekmense=c580fa7b_244_))

Being scientifically literate begins with students doing science as science is done.

“Complexity excites the mind and the discovery of pattern rewards it.”

Ken Miyata, Adrian Forsyth (from: Tropical Nature)

### Rosa Cho – Assistant Professor of Education



This July an article titled, Maternal Incarceration and Children’s Adolescent Outcomes: Timing versus Dosage?, will be published in Social Service Review. The paper examines the differential effects of maternal incarceration by timing and dosage on adolescent children’s high school dropout rate as well as on the rate of admission to a correctional institution. Results indicate that only boys are sensitive to the timing of maternal incarceration in which exposure during early adolescence is associated with the largest negative school outcomes.

Boys are found to be more sensitive to the frequency of maternal incarceration whereas girls are more sensitive to length, but both display sensitivity to dosages of maternal incarceration that are in the unexpected direction.

In addition, I recently completed a paper empirically testing three mechanisms commonly suggested to disadvantage youths whose mothers are incarcerated in prison or jail -- separation, change in guardianship, and stigmatization. Findings reveal that adolescent children are at greater risk of school dropout during the year(s) their mothers are incarcerated, but these effects are not observed to last after her release from prison or jail. Children who are removed from maternal guardianship and placed under paternal guardianship or under the guardianship of a non-relative adult are observed to have lower odds of school dropout than children who remain under maternal guardianship after the mother’s incarceration. Lastly, stigma associated with maternal incarceration is not found to place adolescent children at greater risk of school dropout even after controlling for school quality.

## Jack Demick – Adjunct Professor of Education

### Ongoing Research Projects:

***Cognitive Style and Its Development.*** Cognitive styles, or characteristic ways of processing information that relate to aspects of psychosocial functioning, have received considerable attention in the human development literature. This experimental research program focuses on updating Witkin's (1967) field dependence-independence (FDI) cognitive style construct (e.g., those who use cues from the visual field vs. from their own bodies, respectively). For example, it does so by: identifying a third type of individual, namely, the FDI-mobile individual; examining distinctions among FDI and other (e.g., learning, motivational) styles; uncovering relations between FDI cognitive style and world view in diverse individuals during ontogenesis; and assessing the effects of a match/mismatch between students' and teachers' cognitive styles on student achievement and school enjoyment. Methodologically, the program includes the generation of a new computer version of the Embedded Figures Test (EFT) and the updating of the classic EFT and Rod-and-Frame Test (RFT) manuals.

***Psychology of Adoption and Foster Care.*** This research program aims to provide a more balanced scientific account of the institutions of child adoption and foster care than has previously appeared in the literature. Current studies include: a large-scale community survey of attitudes concerning adoption and foster care toward dispelling common myths; examination of the role of adoptive status in peer popularity; effects of open versus closed adoption (communication vs. no communication between adoptive and birth-parents) on children and their families; the role of parental sexuality (heterosexual, gay, lesbian) on adopted child outcome; individual differences in the salience of adoptive status in identity formation; adaptation in families with both biological and adopted children; and the roles of both adoptive and foster care status for classroom and educational policy more generally.

***Developmental Life Transitions.*** We all experience transitions on a daily basis. However, using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, this research program examines *critical* person-in-environment system transitions from infancy through old age. For example, current investigations are exploring: the transition to a variety of educational contexts (e.g., nursery school, elementary school, middle school, high school, college, graduate school); the transition to parenthood; the transition to a variety of occupational choices (e.g., teacher, professor); the transition to mental health; and the transition to retirement. The program welcomes participants who wish to study a particular life transition of their own choice. However, developmental analyses of beginning teachers as well as more seasoned ones would be most welcome.

## Cynthia García Coll – Robinson and Barstow Professor of Education, Psychology and Pediatrics



Our lab has been working on several projects looking at resilience in immigrant children and adolescents. Using two national databases we are looking at the ways that neighborhoods, schools, peers and families contribute to success for immigrant groups and why we often see more positive outcomes in foreign-born adolescents than in their US born peers. Brown undergraduate Oluwadamilola Olatunji and summer Leadership Alliance participant Jose Lumbreras will be presenting findings from this project at the upcoming meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescents. Their work shows that obesity rates rise with each immigrant generation, while grades decline. In addition, they will discuss how health behaviors and neighborhood climate may play a part in these changes.

We are working hard on an edited book entitled Is Becoming American a Developmental Risk, which looks at this topic from a variety of angles and includes work from researchers across the county and we are excited to be partnering with the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity and the Taubman Center for Public Policy in the creation of a research brief that will focus on ways that practitioners and policy makers can translate research into meaningful practice.

In addition, in efforts to make our findings more accessible, we have two new websites: one exploring the conference results and a new blog on immigrant kids. Please let us know what you think!

<http://newimmigrationbeat.blogspot.com/>  
<http://brown.edu/Departments/Education/paradox/>

Contact us at [Childdevelopmentatbrown@gmail.com](mailto:Childdevelopmentatbrown@gmail.com).

## Jin Li – Associate Professor of Education and Human Development



### European American and Chinese Immigrant Children's Learning Beliefs and Related Socialization at Home

My research focuses on how children across cultures and ethnic groups develop learning beliefs, how they are socialized in this development, and how their beliefs influence their actual learning and achievement. My research involves preschoolers, schoolchildren, and college students in the United States, China, Taiwan, and Germany. Currently, I am conducting a longitudinal research project that was funded by the Foundation for Child Development and the Spencer Foundation. We follow three groups of 4-year old children and their mothers for three years: middle-class European American, middle-class and low-income Chinese immigrant children (100/group with a total of 300). We collect data from children themselves, parents, mother-child interactions, and teachers. Empirical

methods include children's achievement tests, story completion, parent interviews, mother-child conversations, mother-teaching-child, mother diary, mother survey, and teacher ratings of children's learning and social adjustment. We analyze our data with mixed methods. Currently some 35 undergraduate and 6 graduate students from across the campus work on the research project.

We have been collecting data for the past 3.5 years. While this process will continue for another two years, we have also been analyzing some data. Our first set of analyses was to examine children's purposes for school learning and how they might be related to their achievement by ethnicity and SES. We found that 4-year old children in all three groups are able to express many purposes for school learning such as intellectual, social, and affective benefits. Chinese immigrant children elaborated more on taking learning serious and parental expectations. European American children referred more to positive affect for themselves. All three groups of children had reading and math achievement above the national mean. However, Chinese immigrant children's oral expression was below the national mean with the low-income group 1.63 standard deviation below the national mean, which is very low. Moreover, how well children expressed learning relevant purposes predicted how well they achieved in both oral expression and reading/math. These findings provide evidence that children's learning beliefs matter, and helping preschool children develop learning relevant beliefs is likely to increase their achievement. These findings also pose challenges to the long-held Asian American "model minority" image. We hope to analyze more data to shed light on the development of children's learning beliefs in general and immigrant children's development in particular.

### **Deborah Rivas Drake – Assistant Professor of Education**



My research seeks to illuminate the processes by which young people make sense of their place in society, especially in terms of race, ethnicity, and social class. Currently, my research focuses on two questions: (1) How do schools, families, peers, and communities shape the development of ethnic identity in adolescence? and (2) How do youths' beliefs about ethnicity and opportunity inform their academic and psychological well-being? I am particularly interested in the interplay between social identity development, perceptions of opportunity, and educational success as well as psychological health, and I examine these issues across the span of adolescence through young adulthood.

Currently, I'm analyzing data to understand the role of family and peers in the ethnic identity attitudes and beliefs of Latino students, who are severely underrepresented in higher education.

My goal is to better understand these socialization experiences and identities, in turn, support their academic and social success in college. If you're interested in volunteering as a research assistant, please email me at: [deborah\\_rivas@brown.edu](mailto:deborah_rivas@brown.edu)

## Tracy Steffes – Assistant Professor of Education



My main research project is book in progress, tentatively titled *School, Society, and State: A New Education to Govern Modern America, 1890-1940*. It examines the expansion and systematization of public schooling in the early twentieth century as a national state project, a major public policy response to the challenges of industrialization. It utilizes a variety of historical sources to analyze the expansion of state-level governance, the growing legal authority of the state over children, and the de facto national system of schooling that emerged as new expert norms and practices were diffused in the period. I am currently conducting the final research for the project and hope to be finished writing within the next year.

I am also working on a small project about history teacher preparation with the National History Education Clearinghouse, joint initiative of the Center for History and New Media of George Mason University, Stanford University, the American Historical Association, and the National History Center. Along with researchers in four other states, I will be analyzing state requirements and university preparation of history teachers in essays and an on-line public forum designed to stimulate comparative conversations about history teacher preparation and standards. I have been lucky to have excellent undergraduate research assistants to help with both projects!

## John Tyler – Associate Professor of Education, Public Policy and Economics



In the past year I have been involved in two primary research projects. The first is an examination of how we use both student test scores *and* peer observation evaluations to identify effective teachers and effective teaching practices. As you probably know, the area of identifying effective teachers is one of the most important and most hotly discussed topics in education today, from the federal to the local level. The work that my coauthors and I are doing is getting national attention and even though the work is in the very early stages we are being asked to present at national conferences, to groups of state legislators who are planning state responses to the Race to the Top initiative, and to local school districts who are seeking better ways to identify their good and less good teachers. The other project is an examination of how teachers use student test score data to inform and improve their instruction. Again, this is a much talked about topic and while almost every district in the nation now purports to be a “data driven” district, we actually know very little about how teachers actually use student performance data when it is delivered to them in ways that should make for easy and ready analysis. My project promises to bring some much needed information to that topic. One of the aspects of this project that I like best is that it has allowed me to hire and work closely with two Brown undergraduates who have provided excellent research assistance.

## Kurt Wootton – Research Associate in Education



After directing the ArtsLiteracy Project in the Education Department for eight years, I have moved to Merida, Yucatan, Mexico to establish an international education center and lab school called Habla: The Center for Language and Culture. Habla continues to have strong ties to the Education Department and Brown University. We have been working with education department faculty Shirley Brice Heath and Dan Bisaccio and have been designing a project to explore the intersection of education, the arts, and science in international settings. Building on the theory and practice of the ArtsLiteracy Project, last summer we launched an international teacher institute exploring ways the arts, literacy, and language education. Several Brown students and faculty attended last summer and registration is now open for the 2010 Teacher Institute (<http://www.habla.org/en/for-educators/teacher-institute/>). We look forward to deepening our relationships with the education department in the future and providing educational opportunities that reach across countries. At the same time education professor Eileen Landay and I have been completing a book on the ArtsLiteracy Project with the support of the Ford Foundation.



*Brown professor Nidia Shumacher displays her work at the 2009 Habla Teacher Institute*

## IN MEMORIUM

*'The first object of any act of learning, over and beyond the pleasure it may give, is that it should serve us in the future. Learning should not only take us somewhere; it should allow us later to go further more easily.'*

- Ted Sizer, *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School* (1984)



**THEODORE (TED) SIZER**  
**JUNE 3 1932 - OCTOBER 21 2009**