

SPRING 2012

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY • GRADUATE SCHOOL OF Education

# connected

**A New REALM  
of Possibility**





## LETTER FROM THE DEAN

As Dean of the Graduate School of Education (GSE) at UC Berkeley, I am pleased to share with you this issue of Connected. In these pages you will meet some of our award-winning faculty and students and learn about the stimulating and intellectually vibrant work they are engaged in. You will also meet some of our alumni who are committed to giving back and changing the world for the better.

Our faculty are internationally renowned for their research and contributions to the field of education—from examining the growth of literacy and language among children, to understanding the development of mathematical and scientific cognition in a broad range of learners, to grappling with complex issues in school reform. It is an exciting place to study—a genuine community of scholars dedicated to improving our understanding of human development, learning and teaching, and the wide-ranging contexts in which they take place.

Students come here with the drive to excel and the ambition to improve education so that every learner has an equal opportunity to succeed. And they leave Berkeley with a multicultural experience unlike any other. It's the kind of experience that sparks innovative thinking and encourages a global perspective. It's the kind of education that the world needs today.

*There has never been a more important time to invest in future educators.*

I urge you to consider a gift to support our talented and committed GSE students today. Your interest and support enhances our ability to prepare the next generation of education scholars, recruit and educate the best possible teachers and leaders for our schools, and pursue a high quality education for all children.

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COVER PHOTOS **Front:** Team assignment for 9th grade students at REALM Charter School. **Back:** REALM 6th grader utilizes high-tech SMART board as well as low-tech (fingers and no. 2 pencil) for math understanding.



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## A NEW REALM OF POSSIBILITY

BY ABBY COHN

At REALM Charter School, it's okay for kids to play computer games, chat with their neighbors and think outside the box.

In fact, the new Berkeley school is so serious about redesigning education that even the furniture has gotten an extreme makeover. Students sit in sleek, salmon-colored chairs that roll, swivel and spin.

"The chairs are awesome," says 12-year-old Kaila Cherry, one of nearly 200 inaugural sixth and ninth grade students at the city's first-ever charter school. REALM, a middle and high school focused on technology, problem-solving and civic engagement, opened its doors last fall in a converted commercial building off bustling University Avenue.

Its free-wheeling furniture speaks volumes about the instructional vision of Principal Victor Diaz, a Graduate School of Education doctoral student, veteran urban educator and the school's founder.

"If we want kids to be flexible, kids to collaborate, kids to be creative, then the physical space needs to reflect that," Diaz says. Step into a REALM classroom and you'll probably find students clustered in small groups, talking freely and tapping away on laptops and iPads.

Technology is a cornerstone of the strategy for reaching—and teaching—students. REALM is equipped with smart boards, Wi-Fi and rolling carts of wireless computers. Through such youth-friendly tools, students are expected to learn about themselves, the world and their place in it. "Our desire is to have kids prepared for the 21st century and be able to affect change," says Diaz, who spent six years as principal of Berkeley Technology Academy (BTECH), the city's continuation high school.

A trim marathoner, Diaz is fueled by a big mission: He hopes to demonstrate that a tech-rich and child-centered model can reverse the persistent cycle of academic failure among poor kids and underserved students of color nationwide. In California alone, the high school graduation rate for African American and Latino students in 2010 was 60 and 69 percent, respectively, compared to 84 percent for whites.

"Schools are becoming antithetical to innovation, to growing the genius in young people," Diaz says. It's a story he knows well. Diaz drifted through six high schools

“This is the education I would have loved to have had as a kid.” JABARI MAHIRI



growing up and discovered, at age 23, that he was functionally illiterate.

Open to any youngster in or outside Berkeley’s borders, REALM had no trouble attracting a founding class. The student body is half Latino, 25 percent African American and 25 percent white and Asian. Eighty percent of the kids receive free or reduced price lunches.

Located two miles west of the Berkeley campus, REALM was shaped by collaborations with the GSE and is becoming a hub for GSE scholarship in the emerging field of digital learning.

Professor Jabari Mahiri, a noted expert in urban teaching and digital literacies, helped design REALM’s curriculum and serves as vice president of the school’s board. Two of REALM’s 10 teachers are GSE alumni and several Ph.D. students, including Pierre Tchetchen and Sepehr Vakil, are pursuing research there or pitching in to work with students.

“We can not only bring our expertise, but we can learn so much about the opportunities and challenges of teaching and learning in urban schools,” says Mahiri, who is also Diaz’s doctoral adviser.

Mahiri’s involvement began with the Diversity Project, a 1990s study that revealed a sharp racial gap in academic achievement at Berkeley High School. That research led to an 18-month partnership with Diaz at BTECH. Called the TEACH Project (Technology, Equity, And Culture for High-performing schools), the effort helped revitalize the continuation school and motivate its marginalized students by training teachers to use new media in their classrooms. It is the subject of Mahiri’s 2011 book, *Digital Tools in Urban Schools: Mediating a Remix of Learning*.

BTECH, a school with a predominately African American and Latino student body, was transformed from a “dumping ground” for kids with academic and discipline problems to a place where youngsters were engaged by podcasts and youth commentaries, blogs, digital photo projects and other forms of technology, Mahiri says. Under Diaz’s leadership, the school’s Academic Performance Index (API) scores rose 269 points.

Despite that progress, Diaz believed he could—and should—do more. He worried that many vulnerable kids still lacked the academic credentials for college or the skills to get ahead in a technology-driven world. “It became hard to sleep at night,” he says.

With REALM, Diaz saw a way to inspire urban students early on.

On recent visits to the school, Lawrence Hall of Science educators were guiding sixth graders through a hands-on lesson in plate tectonics. In a humanities class,



“If we want kids to be flexible, kids to collaborate, kids to be creative, then the physical space needs to reflect that.” VICTOR DIAZ





“I could be a founding teacher in a school trying to do these amazing things.”

KATE MOODY

Above: Kate Moody, M.A. MACSME '11

groups of ninth graders were bent over MacBooks, tapping out one-page essays on the theme of knowledge versus experience.

Elsewhere, a rainy day had scrubbed plans for a physics class to launch homemade rockets. Instead, students were playing computer games demonstrating the principle of projectile motion. In still another class, Kate Moody, M.A. MACSME '11, circulated around her room while her ninth graders tackled online geometry problems at the Khan Academy website.

Moody jumped at the chance to work there. “I could be a founding teacher in a school trying to do these amazing things,” she says.

REALM teachers often assume the role of guides and coaches rather than authoritative dispensers of knowledge. Teaching etiquette about when and how to use new media is part of their lesson plan. (In one class, students were warned: “If I find you on Facebook, I’m taking the computer away.”)

Four times a year, all classroom instruction comes to a halt. Over the next few days, students and staff engage in a schoolwide “design challenge.” The exercise, borrowed from the field of architecture, teaches kids to brainstorm, learn from mistakes and ultimately solve real-world problems. Previous challenges have addressed bullying and school improvement.

In a connected society, “It’s increasingly become a necessity to know how to work together, how to be part of a team,” says Diaz. “We need to teach those skills.”

Students also pursue participatory action research projects that teach them to explore and respond to an issue of personal importance.

Analyzing the impact of technology on REALM’s students and their approach to those research projects will be the focus of Aaminah Norris’s GSE dissertation. REALM’s integration of technology and civic engagement is “very much on the cutting edge,” says Norris. The fourth year Ph.D. student is especially intrigued by new media’s potential to improve educational access and equity, and stir young people to become active citizens.

REALM has experienced some growing pains and financial challenges in its first year. Diaz acknowledges, for instance, that not everyone supported the rolling desks and their \$600 price tag.

But overall, Diaz and Mahiri like what they see. “These kids are actively engaged,” says Mahiri. “For me, this is the education I would have loved to have had as a kid.”

## GSE RESEARCH DAY

BY ANDREW GALPERN

On April 6 the GSE celebrated Research Day 2012, an annual event that provides an opportunity for students and faculty to meet and to share their research and ideas in real time. With more than 100 students and faculty participating, the conference includes presentations that range from roundtables with students in the early stages of designing thesis and dissertation projects, to completed research ready for publication in some of the nation's top peer-reviewed journals.

The GSE Research Day 2012 organizing committee made a special effort this year to broaden and deepen our research community by inviting schools and departments across campus to participate and share their work and ideas on education, shining a light on the interdisciplinary nature of educational research.

This unique conference is remarkable in that it emerges organically through the efforts of graduate students in the GSE each year, and with faculty support and input from our entire community, it blossoms into something extraordinary. This combination of graduate students, local presenters, a local venue, along with local businesses that provide the food and services needed to produce a small conference, is a great reminder of what can happen when many hands and minds come together for a single purpose. It's also remarkable in that for a single day, Tolman Hall is transformed into a place where students and teachers can meet as peers, take time to pause and celebrate each other's research and ideas, engage in vigorous and cordial debates on educational issues, and ultimately remind ourselves of the value of our community and the important work we do in the world.

GSE Research Day is a free event and open to the public. For more information, please visit:  
[gse.berkeley.edu/admin/events/gseresearchday.html](http://gse.berkeley.edu/admin/events/gseresearchday.html).



The Berkeley Review of Education (BRE)—the peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal founded and staffed by GSE doctoral students—published its third issue this fall. This issue included an article by the GSE's own Usree Bhattacharya that critically examines the concept of the “West” in literacy theory, a groundbreaking conceptual piece on what authors Kate Pahl and Jennifer Rowsell have termed “artifactual critical literacy,” and a provocative article by Julian Vasquez Heilig, Amy Williams, Linda McSpadden McNeil, and Christopher Lee on the high attrition rates of Black male students in KIPP charter schools. The full issue can be accessed at [berkeleyreviewofeducation.com/journal-issues.html](http://berkeleyreviewofeducation.com/journal-issues.html).

In March, the BRE hosted a book talk and reception for Professor Kevin Kumashiro, author of the new book, *Bad Teacher! How Blaming Teachers Distorts the Bigger Picture*. Speaking to a room full of academics, educators, and students, Professor Kumashiro discussed the importance of reframing and reclaiming the public debate on who and what is to blame for poor educational outcomes. In April, the BRE board heads to Vancouver to chair an invited session at AERA. In a fireside chat primarily aimed at graduate students and early-career faculty, BRE editors Amy Stornaiuolo, Rebecca Anguiano, Arturo Cortez, and Huriya Jabbar, along with GSE faculty members Frank Worrell, Geoffrey Saxe, and David Pearson, share their insights on writing and editing for publication in a panel entitled “Demystifying the Publication Process: Insights from Journal Editors on Writing, Editing, and Revising Manuscripts for Submission.”

Former chief editors Amy Stornaiuolo and Susan Woolley graduate this spring, and Huriya Jabbar and Danfeng Soto-Vigil Koon take the lead for the coming year. In 2012-2013, the new editorial team plans to work closely with the faculty and students at the GSE and beyond to continue to recruit cutting-edge manuscripts for the journal, host events that touch on the most pressing education issues, and support and train graduate students in academic publishing. Expect to see the journal's fourth issue Summer 2012.

## DEBATE IS TAKING ROOT AT CAL PREP ACADEMY

BY KATY MURPHY

Last June, CAL Prep celebrated its first graduating class of seniors and every one of them was accepted into college. CAL Prep’s students are roughly 40 percent African American, 57 percent Latino and 4 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. About half are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch. Three out of four students have parents who did not attend college.



William Hampton is a junior at CAL Prep Academy, a public charter school launched in collaboration with UC Berkeley’s Graduate School of Education and the Center for Educational Partnerships, within the Division of Equity & Inclusion.

William Hampton, 16, describes high school debate as “the most elite of elite sports.” He and hundreds of other Bay Area students spend many a weekend and school holiday training for it—researching policy, crafting arguments, preparing rebuttals and, finally, going up against other teenagers who have been doing the same thing.

“I’m loving it, even though it’s like a job almost,” said Kwodwo Moore, a senior at Emery Secondary School who moved to the Bay Area from Philadelphia two years ago.

The Bay Area Urban Debate League is part of a national movement to bring the academically rigorous tradition to urban schools—an effort fueled by the 2007 film “The Great Debaters,” starring Denzel Washington. Oakland’s new teams launched in August 2008, just before the economic downturn began, but the league’s supporters managed to keep the fledgling program alive.

“It definitely helped our cause that there were so many debaters from back in the day that know how it changed their lives,” said Dmitri Seals, executive director of the Bay Area Urban Debate League.

The league has since grown from 24 students to about 350. A dozen schools in Oakland, San Francisco, Berkeley and Emeryville now have debate teams, coached by teachers. This season, beginners are debating community and police relations in the context of the Occupy movement. Space exploration and development are the issues at hand for their more advanced teammates.

Also this year, three of the league’s

captains—Moore, Hampton and Greg Belvin, of Oakland’s Skyline High—have tested their proposals for a different subject, improving public education, in a series of roundtable discussions.

Last week, Moore and Hampton met in the Oakland law offices of Meyers Nave with a small group of community leaders, including Oakland City Councilwoman Libby Schaaf and Rodney Brooks, chief of staff for Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson.

“Don’t throw any softball questions,” program director Perry Green told the group. “They’re ready for the hard ones.”

Moore argued for more cross-curricular courses and for placing a second teacher in some classrooms to help more students learn at their own pace. Hampton’s proposal called for easing up a “one-size-fits-all” high school graduation requirement to pass the courses needed to be eligible for a state university, a policy in place at his Berkeley charter school, California College Prep.

Hampton said that, as the event began and all eyes were on him, his heart raced, and he could feel his whole body pounding, like it always does before a competition. But then he felt the bass in his voice, he said, and his confidence took over.

Debate doesn’t just teach you about the issues, he said. “It teaches you how to win.”

Persuading his school to actually change its graduation requirements, however, might be Hampton’s biggest challenge yet. He presented his case to the administration, but he said the response so far has been, “Get over it.”

Reprinted with permission from *The Oakland Tribune* (Feb. 16, 2012)

# UC BERKELEY EDUCATION ISSUES FORUM

## Is There Hope for Interrupting Community Violence?

A panel sponsored by UC Berkeley addressed the issue of local violence and talked about how a Chicago program, illustrated in the film *The Interrupters*, is attacking the problem.

BY JUDITH SCHERR

There was more hope than hand wringing at the September panel discussion at the Brower Center on how to blunt violence in local communities. The dialogue centered on strategies depicted in the newly-released documentary *The Interrupters*.

The panel, sponsored by UC Berkeley, included Alex Kotlowitz, who co-produced the film with Steve James, Jabari Mahiri, professor in the Graduate School of Education, Emily Ozer, associate professor at the School of Public Health, Susan Stone, associate professor in the School of Social Welfare, Ron Smith, principal at West Oakland Middle School, and moderator Cynthia Gorney, professor at the School of Journalism.

*The Interrupters* focuses on three individuals, all reformed gang members. They are part of CeaseFire, a nonprofit organization that trains mostly formerly-incarcerated people to work on the streets of Chicago where they insert themselves into situations likely to explode into violence, such as gang retaliation.

CeaseFire looks at violence as a disease, a public health issue. “That takes morality out of the equation,” Kotlowitz said, before showing two clips from the film. “There’s no longer good and bad

people. It makes it easier to grapple with the actors.”

Social work professor Stone pointed out that methods used by the workers—known as “interrupters”—are different from the social work training people get at universities, where students are explicitly taught not to become personally involved with their clients. The Interrupters become highly involved, going to the homes and funerals of people they’re working with—even visiting them when they are re-incarcerated. She said that rather than CeaseFire workers becoming overwhelmed by the situations they get into, “I saw the Interrupters being healed themselves.”

Jabari Mahiri is a professor of education and works hands-on in the Berkeley public schools. He’s particularly involved in Berkeley’s new charter middle and high school REALM, Revolutionary Education and Learning Movement. He said that, in the right setting, teachers can do the job of the interrupters.

He pointed out several problems in the school setting. One is that there are few male teachers—and even fewer African American educators in the schools. “Sometimes the only African American man is the custodian,” he said.

And he talked about another societal problem: guns. Before there were so many guns on the streets—and on TV and in video games—youth solved their differences in less lethal ways, he said.

“People had fights and disagreements, but they didn’t end with the devastation that we see going on now,” he said, adding, “We need to start getting serious about gun control.”

Another policy question, brought out to a degree in the film, was the need for jobs for young people — and particularly,

jobs for people getting out of prison. “That’s a political problem,” commented one member of the audience.

Dr. Jeff Ritterman, Richmond city councilmember, also in the audience, agreed. “The question of jobs is paramount for us, and it is racialized,” he said. “The more unequal the society becomes in terms of income, the more people end up in jail.” He said people need to eat and will enter the violence-prone “underground economy” if there aren’t other options.

When people in the audience spoke, it became evident that many were doing some of the same work as the interrupters in the film. Regina Jackson is executive director of the East Oakland Youth Development Center. She said her program works with young people “so they can learn to value their lives [and] begin to see their path to greatness.”

In that vein, she said the EOYDC worked with youth to create a volume of poetry called *Y U Gotta Call It Ghetto?* which encouraged introspection among the teen authors. “Every opportunity to succeed is one more bud that gets to open,” Jackson said, explaining that while the program is small, its work is important for the youth and for the community.

The audience reserved its greatest applause for three of the young people Jackson had brought with her—authors of poems in *Y U Gotta Call It Ghetto?*

Jamal Racheed, 17, read one of his poems, which talks, in part, about working “through difficulties/to discover mysteries/about myself.”

And he closed out the program with some words of promise. “One of the things I was asking myself was, ‘Do people still believe in hope?’”

He answered his question, pointing to himself and the two other teen authors standing before the crowd. “Not to be cocky,” he said, “I think we’re examples of hope.”

Courtesy Judith Scherr, *Berkeley.Patch.com*

## CYNTHIA COBURN **A Conversation with a Rising Academic Star**

BY PAMELA ABRAMSON

She leads the life of an accomplished scholar: She has two active lines of research; pens dozens of journal articles, book chapters and grant proposals; teaches PhD students; sits on professional commissions and advisory boards and gives lectures on her research around the country: one week (this) last winter, she traveled to the east coast twice, and gave three different talks on the work she has done on math curriculum and how it played out with teachers in California public schools.

Meet the very prolific Cynthia E. Coburn, 44, an associate professor of Policy, Organization, Measurement and Evaluation (POME) at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Education.

In 2011, she received one of the highest honors bestowed on educators, the prestigious Early Career Award, given by the American Educational Research Association (AERA). With an interest in public education and propelled by her passion for her work, Professor Coburn runs a series of studies on the relationship between instructional policy and classroom practice. She has investigated this issue as it relates to both reading policy as well as the scale-up of an innovative, early education math curriculum. She also studies ways to make educational research more relevant to both policy and practice.

"I often think that my work is about bringing lessons from schools to policy makers," said Professor Coburn. "I think a lot of policy makers have these ideas that they are going to magically transform public education without really understanding the complexity of schools and the complexity of classroom change. I see part of my work as helping policy makers get smarter."

Recently, on a layover at Logan Airport (where she had just given a talk at Harvard and was on her way to Pittsburgh to lecture at Carnegie Mellon University) Professor Coburn took the time to talk to ConnectED about a beautiful career.

PAMELA ABRAMSON: You've been interested in reading policy since you researched your dissertation in Bay Area elementary schools in 1998. In 2002, while you were an assistant professor at the University of Pittsburgh, you started another important study on reading policy.

PROF. COBURN: It was around the time of No Child Left Behind, and I did a study on a very specific and far-reaching state program for young children called 'Reading First.' The question for me was, if policy makers were investing all this time and money on development and materials, did it have an impact on the way teachers did their work, because that is what will actually impact learning? More recently, I applied these questions in the context of mathematics education and I studied the scale-up of an elementary mathematics curriculum. It was the same kind of puzzle: which is, policy makers have these ideas about how to improve instructions. Does it actually matter to teacher practice?

**And what did you learn?**

The first thing is, it's a long way between policy and practice, and that way is mediated by a range of actors. (Policy-making doesn't just happen up top. It's a multilevel process that gets reshaped and reformulated at multiple layers of the system as policies get implemented.)

The second thing we're learning is that the social and organizational conditions for teachers really matters. When they're asked to take a new instructional approach, they turn to their colleagues and ask them what they think. So they make decisions about what ideas to take to the classroom in conversation with their colleagues. In schools where teachers actually work in depth with one another, you're much more likely to see substantive change in classroom practice. Teachers need substantive interactions with other teachers.

**Has the relationship between policy and practice improved over the last decade?**

The policy world right now is pursuing a series of moves that's really leaving instruction behind in a lot of ways—with one big exception, and that's the new adoption of the Common Core Standards. It's a policy that focuses on very rich issues of teaching and learning. It's an attempt to put forth ambitious approaches to instruction that will require districts and teachers to make changes in the way they do things. At the same

“In schools where teachers actually work in depth with one another, you’re much more likely to see more substantive change in classroom practice. Teachers need substantive interactions with other teachers.”



time, they’re trying to do this with greatly reduced resources. Many districts, especially in California, have decimated their professional development budgets.

**You study public schools, for which you are a big proponent. Your mother was a public school teacher and you went to public schools as a girl growing up in Philadelphia. You have said that you have always been interested in public education. Can you talk about the path that has taken you to Berkeley?**

When I was an undergraduate at Oberlin College, I was really interested in big ethical questions. I wanted to think about how we do the right thing and other issues of social justice. I turned to philosophy classes, and I was influenced by the kind of thinking, reasoning and writing that you do when you engage in philosophical questions. That, and the push to always ask the hard questions, to surface underlying assumptions and to view situations from many different perspectives and angles.

However, by the end of my Oberlin career I was feeling frustrated by ideas and not having a lot of action when what I really wanted to do was bring both to bear on the real world.

**You eventually went to Stanford University for your MA in Sociology and your Ph. D. in Education. Before that, you lived in Boston where you worked at an educational advocacy organization committed to improving public schools for both poor and immigrant students and students of color. How did that influence you?**

In that job, I worked both at the policy level and directly with schools that were trying to improve learning for immigrant students. I realized that there was a tremendous disconnect between the discourse in the policy world and the day-to-day work in the schools. What that disconnect meant was that you could have the best policy in the world, but that only provided a window of opportunity for change. It didn’t ensure that things would actually happen on the ground in schools and classrooms.

**You also have a second line of study. Please explain.**

I study the relationship between research, policy and practice. I think a lot of researchers do work that they hope will be policy-relevant, and then wring their hands when it’s not: when policy makers ignore it or educators ignore it. Yet, we can actually learn about the relationship between research and practice. We can study when and under what conditions research can make a difference for policymakers and practitioners.

Right now, I’m involved in a number of efforts in California and nationally to bring researchers and practitioners in closer proximity, so researchers can do a better job of learning from practitioners what is important to study.

**You’ve been at the Graduate School of Education at Berkeley since 2005, for most of your very prolific accomplished academic career.**

**Any correlation?**

I think Berkeley is a real special place. I feel proud to be part of the public education system in California. It’s a very diverse campus filled with people who are passionate about public education and who really want to make a difference. The people in our practitioner’s program, our doctoral students, I’m surrounded by a lively bunch of committed people. I gain a lot of energy from that.

I’m also terrifically interested in what I do and for that, I feel lucky. Not everything I do or write is profound and far-reaching, but every now and then, there’s a piece that seems to resonate with policy makers and practitioners—and that’s enormously gratifying.

## RANDI A. ENGLE **An Emphasis on Engagement**

PAMELA ABRAMSON

It's called the Discourse, Interaction and Learning Lab (DILL, for short), and it is the home-away-from-home for Randi A. Engle, the Graduate School of Education's Associate Professor of Cognitive Science and the Social Context of Learning. It is where undergraduates, graduate students, post-docs and various collaborators gather to work on Professor Engle's many research projects.

With her youthful exuberance (on this particular day, she is running late and still wearing her bicycle helmet) Prof. Engle, 44, looks like she could be one of her own graduate students. She is, in fact, a noted innovator on many topics—including engagement in learning and how to sustain it over time.

She is best known for studying “intellectually powerful learning environments” and has identified four principles that foster “productive disciplinary engagement.” In partnership with other scholars she has also used the four principles to come up with a set of five instructional practices that teachers can use to facilitate effective discussions. And that's only part of it.

“My teaching and advising are also extremely important to me,” says Engle, who arrived at Berkeley in 2005. “I'm always looking for ways to help my students realize their potential, whether they are planning to become wise teachers, innovative researchers, or both.” This semester she is teaching an introductory seminar on “Discourse and Learning in Mathematics and Science Classrooms” that provides foundational perspectives on how language, communication and social interaction influence learning. She also is enjoying serving as a faculty advisor for a new course called “Teacher Research into Revolutionary Approaches to Mathematics and Science Education” that was designed by a group of prospective math and science teachers who want to take research about innovative teaching and find ways to implement it in real classrooms.

One recent Tuesday afternoon she had a rare window of opportunity to talk about her four principles, five practices, how she got to be the person that she is and her academic life—which is thriving. “I just got tenure last spring so in theory, that gives me lots of time to do lots of things,” she smiles. “In truth, we are humans and not immortal, though it would be nice.”



“There are different kinds of social realities that affect how kids engage in learning, and that can't be ignored.”

**PAMELA ABRAMSON:** What is your approach to educational research?

**PROFESSOR ENGLE:** There's a lot of research focusing on what is not ideal about educational systems and teaching. I believe if we're going to make real sustained improvements in education, we also need to harvest from what's already going well and spread it around to more places.

So my research focuses on finding cases—and they do exist—where teachers are doing things that are really effective. Then, I use my own research skills to confirm that what they are doing is, indeed, effective, and to understand *how* and *why* it works. That understanding is crucial, if you're going to adapt it to another classroom situation.

Other colleagues at GSE are also working on issues of usability—like Cynthia Coburn who is trying to make certain aspects of school more useable. I'm trying to find things that are worth using—so I can understand them deeply.

**Your research is unique in others ways too.**

Most research on issues of engagement and learning focuses on the nature of the disciplinary content. My work complements this by zeroing in on the social contexts in which learning takes place. There are many social factors that can dramatically affect whether and how kids engage in learning, and that can't be ignored. So I look at how the social interacts with academic content.

I purposely structure my research so I go back and forth between mathematics and biology, two very different disciplines that I greatly enjoy. This helps me figure out which aspects of my educational theories are likely to apply across disciplines versus what is specific, for example, to mathematics instruction. That process allows me to develop general principles for supporting and sustaining students' intellectual engagement.

A growing community of researchers and educational designers has drawn on the “four principles for fostering productive disciplinary engagement”—research for which you are well known. I know that “Problematizing, Authority, Accountability and Resources,” have been part of your academic life's work for more than a decade. Is there even a simple way of explaining them?

We have learned that if you want to get kids deeply engaged in intellectual work in which they will make progress over time, you have to find a task or problem that's challenging but also intrigues them. It can't be so simple that it's not a problematic or too complicated that they can't get started. At the same time it has to relate to something students care about while also embodying important disciplinary ideas. However, creating such problems, or “Problematizing,” has to be balanced with the “Resources” you provide students for addressing such problems. If the problem is: how do you design a rocket to go as high as possible, you have to provide relevant measuring tools and the time to figure out how to use them.

At the same time, students need an opportunity to work on their own ideas and to share what they're really thinking, even if it could be wrong. (Kids don't like to be wrong so this can be difficult to achieve.) However, giving students' intellectual authority has to be balanced by accountability. Students need to learn to evaluate their ideas by constantly explaining why what they are doing makes sense (given the other things they know and accepted disciplinary norms). In doing so, they often revise their ideas for the better.

**How did you come up with these four principles?**

It came out of analyzing a case from *Fostering Communities of Learners*, a program launched in the 1990s by Ann Brown and Joseph Campione, legendary former Professors here at the Graduate School of Education.

A group of 5th graders unexpectedly got passionately involved in a problem that had to do with taxonomy, or the biological classification of species. They were arguing about whether orcas (or “killer whales”) are whales or dolphins. This became an intellectual issue over weeks—even after the class had moved on to other topics. Over time these students made great progress in their thinking, and the puzzle for us was to explain what had supported that. The four principles were a key part of the answer. My collaborator Faith Conant and I then examined a whole slew of other effective educational programs that fostered that kind of engagement and discovered that they also embodied the four principles.

I understand that math coaches throughout the Pacific Northwest are using “the five practices for facilitating discussions” and that these practices are being incorporated in the professional development of teachers in some of the biggest urban districts in the country.

**What are these practices that you and your colleagues identified?**

Anticipating, monitoring, selecting, sequencing and connecting student responses to mathematically rich problems: The very best teachers, even before class begins, are working through problems in many different ways, so they are rarely surprised by a student strategy. Then they monitor how students are solving the problems rather than waiting at their desks. This allows these teachers to select particular student strategies to feature in a subsequent whole class discussion, sequence them in coherent ways, and connect them with important mathematical principles. As a result, teachers are able to build on students' ideas while also making sure that students end up learning what they really need to know.

**What are you working on now?**

My current project is funded by a five-year CAREER award, from the National Science Foundation. It focuses on new ways teachers can encourage students to continue to use what they have learned rather than forgetting it as soon they walk out of the test. Our research team is finding that differences in how teachers talk about the process of learning and students' roles in it can dramatically affect how often students apply what they have learned. For example, in our first study students used twice as much knowledge when the instructor talked about students as actively contributing to an ongoing conversation that extended across times, places, and people.

**When did you know you wanted to be a learning scientist?**

I got interested in cognitive science, linguistics, and psychology as an undergraduate at Dartmouth. I took a job my junior summer with the psychologist Robert S. Siegler at Carnegie Mellon. He was making his first foray into the field of cognitive neuroscience by studying a former businesswoman who had severe difficulties with basic arithmetic as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning. As part of assessing her understanding of numerical magnitudes we unexpectedly ended up dramatically improving her understanding of the conceptual structure of the number system. What was amazing was that we were able to document the process as it was happening. From that moment on I was hooked on investigating the moment-by-moment processes of learning and how to go about supporting them.

## NA'ILAH SUAD NASIR

### Advancing Equity in Education

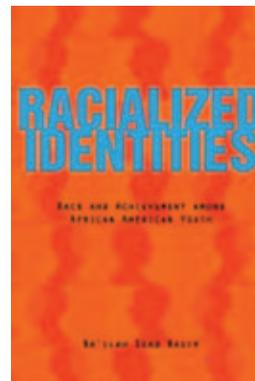
BY ANDREA LAMPROS

Associate Professor Na'ilah Suad Nasir is a new bright light on UC Berkeley's faculty—leading research and teaching in educational equity—but she is no stranger to Cal. Nasir was a UC Berkeley undergraduate in the early 1990s, double majoring in social welfare and psychology, mothering her young baby, working 30 hours a week, and earning top grades—all before age 21 when UCLA snapped her up into a Ph.D. program. “I was a focused student,” she explains with a laugh.

UC Berkeley recruited Nasir back to campus from her post at Stanford University four years ago to join the Haas Diversity Research Center (HDRC). The HDRC is devoted to research in educational, health and economic disparities, LGBT equity, disability rights, and more. Last year, the center received a significant boost from the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund as part of a \$16-million investment in the UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity.

“It is fitting that Berkeley be a real hub for the scholarly study of race and equity issues, as well as support for the policy world in thinking through new ways of addressing the vast inequalities that exist in our society,” says Nasir, a faculty member in the School of Education and a leader of the HDRC's educational equity cluster.

Dean Judith Warren Little, from the Graduate School of Education, says Nasir and her colleague Janelle Scott—another recent HDRC hire—are helping to attract top graduate students to Berkeley. She calls Nasir a leader and a bridge builder.



“She’s someone who really sees how issues of equity and diversity play out through one of society’s major institutions—our education system—and more broadly in communities,” says Little. “Her research is exactly in the spirit and mission of Berkeley as a public university.”

Nasir’s current research focuses on racial stereotypes about school and how young people make sense of these stereotypes and develop responses that affect their academic achievement. She is also evaluating the nature of schooling for incarcerated youth, who are largely men and boys of color, the educational opportunities provided within prisons, jails, and juvenile halls, and the role of education in their lives.

Nasir has examined mathematical thinking and learning in out-of-school activities like basketball and dominoes, looking to arenas where teaching and learning is organized in ways that support a wide range of learners, and where African American learners are not marginalized. These studies have important implications for how we organize teaching and learning in schools, says Nasir.

She explains that African Americans participating in these outside-of-school activities assume a level of competency and are given the right tools to increase their abilities. They watch experts, build on a set of skills (from small to big), have opportunities to practice, and are accountable for playing their part in a collective outcome. Nasir says this mode of learning diverges significantly from how mathematics is taught in school.

The middle of three sisters and daughter of a landscaper and a legal assistant, Nasir says attending East Bay public schools—where children come from both “the hills and the flats”—exposed her to diversity and disparity.

She attended El Cerrito High where she was one of three African American students in her honor’s English class. “That experience was striking to me,” she says. “It was my first exposure to how stratification was reproduced in school.”

At UC Berkeley, Nasir studied alongside her mother, Leslie

“It is fitting that Berkeley be a real hub for the scholarly study of race and equity issues, as well as support for the policy world in thinking through new ways of addressing the vast inequalities that exist in our society.”



Stone, who had transferred from a community college to finish her undergraduate degree. Now Stone works as a legal assistant at Berkeley Law.

Nasir says she was influenced by pioneering Berkeley faculty members, such as African American studies professor Barbara Christian, whom she called “a strong and nurturing woman.” She says Professor Roy Thomas, also from African American studies, encouraged her to pursue graduate school.

Nasir took his advice, heading from Berkeley to UCLA’s School of Education to earn her Ph.D. in psychological studies in education (with a focus on human development) in 2000. She later joined Stanford University’s School of Education faculty, winning an Early Career Researcher Award from Division G of the American Educational Research Association in 2006 and a coveted teaching award in 2007. She has published in *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, the *American Educational Research Journal*, and *Educational Researcher*.

Her recently published research in her book *Racialized Identities: Race and Achievement Among African American Youth* is unique in its attention to the challenges that social and educational stratification pose, as well as to the opportunities that extracurricular activities can offer for access to learning. The book brings a deeper understanding of the local and fluid aspects of academic, racial, and ethnic identities.

Nasir, 40, is a dedicated researcher and teacher—designing courses that draw students from across campus. Her class “Race, Culture, and Identity in Urban Schools” helps students study urban schools as a part of a broader system of social stratification. The course looks at how students in urban schools come to a sense of themselves as students, as members of cultural and racial groups, and as young people in America.

With colleague Janelle Scott, Nasir developed and now co-teaches “Research Advances in Race, Diversity, and Educational Policy,” a course taken by students from many disciplines —

from cell biology to ethnic studies. Nasir and Scott are also mentoring a cadre of graduate students who are interested in educational disparities.

Nasir’s style of research and teaching is considered “engaged scholarship” that connects UC Berkeley to the broader community in significant ways.

She says her students have internships in local classrooms that provide opportunities to try out and understand more deeply the theories studied in class. “That’s my definition of engaged scholarship — it’s not volunteer work separate from what you’re learning,” she explains.

“In some ways, institutions are just the people who are a part of those institutions,” says Nasir. “For the people who I’m working with, I am UC Berkeley.”

The mother of three daughters, ages 13, 15, and 20, and a son age 7, Nasir says she’s thrilled with Berkeley’s commitment to pursuing equity and inclusion. “The idea of being part of a move on campus to build on the long history of thought at Berkeley on issues of race, and culture, and equity in an interdisciplinary way is really appealing to me,” says Nasir. “There’s a new energy around it.”

For more information on the Haas Diversity Research Center visit UC Berkeley’s Division of Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity website at [diversity.berkeley.edu](http://diversity.berkeley.edu).

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Esmat Hegazi '15



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## ALAN SCHOENFELD

### Awarded Highest International Distinction in Math Education



Alan Schoenfeld, a professor at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Education, has received the 2011 Felix Klein Medal for Lifetime Achievement from the International Commission on Mathematics Instruction. The award is the highest international distinction in math education.

BY KATHLEEN MACLAY

Schoenfeld is the second American scholar to receive the honor that was instituted in 2003, and the fifth winner of the prize. He will be honored by the committee in ceremonies in Seoul, Korea, later this year.

“I love mathematics, and I love helping teachers and students learn about the riches of mathematical thinking and problem solving,” said Schoenfeld, the Elizabeth and Edward Connor Professor of Education and an affiliated professor of mathematics. “It’s great to be recognized for working on things I’m passionate about.”

In its awards citation, the International Commission recognized the outstanding achievements made in the past 30 years by Schoenfeld in mathematics education research and development.

“Schoenfeld developed a keen interest in mathematics education early in his career, and emerged as a leader in research on mathematical problem solving,” according to the commission citation. “He shows a lifelong pursuit of deeper understanding of the nature and development of mathematical learning and teaching. His work has helped to shape research and theory development in these areas, making a seminal impact on subsequent research.”

Schoenfeld also was commended for his fundamental theoretical and applied work connecting research and practice in assessment, mathematical curriculum, diversity in mathematics education, research methodology and teacher education.

He has more than 200 highly-cited publications in mathematics education, mathematics, educational research and educational psychology, including his groundbreaking book, “Mathematical Problem Solving” (1985).

After obtaining a B.A. in mathematics from Queen’s College, New York, in 1968, and an M.S in mathematics from Stanford University in 1969, he earned a Ph.D. in mathematics at Stanford in 1973. He became a lecturer at UC Davis in 1973, and in 1975 became a lecturer and research mathematician at UC Berkeley. After academic appointments at Hamilton College and the University of Rochester, Schoenfeld returned to UC Berkeley in 1985 to develop the mathematics education group.

He has been an elected member of the U.S. National Academy of Education since 1994 and served as its vice president from 2001-2005. He also was president of the American Educational Research Association from 1999-2000.

# MARK WILSON

## Elected to National Academy of Education



Graduate School of Education professor Mark Wilson has been elected to membership in the National Academy of Education (NAEd).

The Academy consists of up to 200 U.S. members and up to 25 foreign associates who are elected on the basis of outstanding scholarship or outstanding contributions to education. Founded in 1965, the mission of NAEd is to advance the highest quality of education research and its use in policy formation and practice. Since its establishment, the Academy has sponsored a variety of commissions and study panels that have published influential proceedings and reports.

Wilson is the eighth member of UC Berkeley's School of Education to be selected. Other members are Andrea diSessa, Marcia Linn, Judith Warren Little, P. David Pearson, Geoffrey Saxe and Alan Schoenfeld. K. Patricia Cross is an emerita member of the National Academy.

A professor in Policy, Organization, Measurement and Evaluation, Wilson

directs the Berkeley Evaluation Assessment Research (BEAR) Center, and has written several books and articles. His interests focus on measurement and applied statistics. He was a member of the Testing and Assessment Panel of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences panel, and currently chairs a National Research Council committee on assessment of science achievement. He has received a lifetime appointment as a National Associate in recognition of his extraordinary and distinguished service to the National Academies, and was recently elected as the President of the Psychometric Society for 2011-2012. He is founding editor of the new journal: *Measurement: Interdisciplinary Research and Perspectives*.

# FRANK WORRELL

## Earns APA Presidential Citation



Professor Frank C. Worrell has been honored with a Presidential Citation from the American Psychological Association (APA) for distinguished and

exemplary contributions and service to APA's Division 16 (School Psychology).

The award was given in recognition of Worrell's many contributions to psychology in testing and measurement, school psychology training, racial identity theory, and talent development.

The APA statement reads: "Worrell has provided exceptional leadership and outstanding scholarship in areas of vital importance such as raising achievement levels of at-risk populations, preventing school failure, promoting the needs of gifted adolescents and increasing teacher effectiveness. He has channeled his expertise to the design and evaluation of psychosocial constructs and empirical studies of achievement and student evaluation and has served as an APA representative to the Joint Committee for the Revision of the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing.

In addition to his membership on the Board of Educational Affairs, Dr. Worrell has also been their invaluable liaison to the Teachers of Psychology in the Secondary Schools. His exceptional service to the APA also includes serving on the Presidential Task Force on Reducing Educational Disparities and the Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education. In recognition of numerous achievements and contributions, as well as the respect and admiration he generates on the part of his colleagues in the APA community, we present Dr. Frank C. Worrell with this presidential citation."

Worrell also received the 2011 Chancellor's Award for Advancing Institutional Excellence and was recently elected Fellow of International Psychology (Division 52) and a Fellow in the Association for Psychological Science.

## ROSA GUZMAN

### Sharing Lessons Learned

BY AMY CRANCH

Some people who grow up in rough neighborhoods can't wait to leave—for good. Others leave only to return with a fervent resolve to create change.



Rosa Guzman M.A. '12—a student in the Graduate School of Education's Multicultural Urban Secondary English (MUSE) program and a fellowship recipient—is a first-generation Mexican American who grew up in an impoverished community south of Los Angeles. Many of her peers became pregnant, joined gangs, or dropped out of community college.

"I spent time on the wrong side, but I didn't want to be a part of it," says Rosa, who is the first in her family to attend college. "My life, my struggle, is my motivation to succeed."

The two-year MUSE program is preparing Rosa to teach English in urban middle and high schools, particularly to second-language learners, while also empowering her to take a proactive stance on issues of equity in the classroom—an area that, unfortunately, she understands all too well.

Mrs. Saxton made the difference.

As a child, Rosa's first language was Spanish, and she was placed in an endless cycle of seemingly low-achieving English Learning Development (ELD) classes. "It was like a scratched CD—relearning the same material over and over again," she recalls. "I dreaded school."

It wasn't until she met her high school English teacher that her options broadened. Mrs. Saxton motivated her to excel and instilled the idea that she could accomplish whatever she set her mind to. By her junior year, Guzman had tested out of ELD and become an honors student.

"Mrs. Saxton worked hard to make sure I had what I needed," she says. "I was one of the ones she wanted to save. 'She changed me. That's why I wanted to be a teacher.'"

As an undergraduate at Chico State University, Rosa began interning in classes for English language learners at a nearby high school. She wanted to help students transition into regular classes

and asked their teacher for advice.

Rosa was told that the students had no chance to make it to college—"They had already burned that bridge," the teacher said.

Despite feeling disheartened, Rosa didn't give up. She developed a workshop in which college students shared their personal stories of success with the ELD students. "I was able to lead by example and let it be known to students that the dream of obtaining a higher education degree is possible," she says.

Rosa's leadership and tenacity made her a perfect candidate for Berkeley's MUSE program and for one of the graduate teaching fellowships funded by Andrew and Helen '22 Neumann.

Established in 2001 as a charitable trust when the Neumanns were 99 and 100 years old respectively, the fellowships are intended to support students who are passionate about the craft of teaching and endeavor to make a difference.

"We are grateful for the Neumanns' foresight and generosity," says Judith Warren Little, dean of the Graduate School of Education. "Since most aspiring educators cannot anticipate high salaries after graduation, financial support is critical to ensuring that they meet their own dream for an education, while impacting the students, families, and communities they will one day serve."

As part of MUSE, Rosa is now teaching English full time at Berkeley High School and forging a powerful vision for the potential in teaching and learning. She hopes to stay at Berkeley High for five years and then may pursue a Ph.D. in education. Eventually, she wants to return home to Southern California.

"You have to be there for them and tell them, 'You're a learner,'" says Rosa, whose commitment to students is palpable. "I want to do for my students what Mrs. Saxton did for me."



## MONICA SIRCAR

### Cell-ebating a Scholar

BY ABBY COHN

For Monica Sircar, being a good teacher is a work forever in progress.

"I'll always have something I can learn," says Sircar, who wraps up her Master's and Credential in Science and Mathematics Education (MACSME) program in May.

Thanks to a fellowship from the Knowles Science Teaching Foundation, the newly minted biology teacher will keep honing her skills. The prestigious five-year program helps promising science and math teachers launch their careers with professional and leadership development, teaching tools and a peer network.

At a time when the United States faces a shortage of science and math teachers, Sircar and two Berkeley classmates were among 36 nationwide recipients of 2011 Knowles fellowships. Already, the program is "a great source of inspiration," she says.

Science fascinates Sircar. Growing up in the Midwest, she would explore nearby creeks and cart home tadpoles, snakes and other specimens in buckets. "I think biology is beautiful and exciting," she says, with characteristic enthusiasm.

Sircar saw teaching as a way to blend her passions for science and people. But some of her teachers and college classmates discouraged that choice. After graduating from Stanford in human biology, she became a lab research assistant. The work left her "socially starved."

That's when Sircar took the plunge, accepting a job teaching science to Montessori middle-schoolers. Sircar loved interacting with the students, sparking new ways of thinking, and being part of a lively community. "I learned that teaching was the right choice for me," she says.

She also concluded she needed grounding in educational principles and practice—and that's what brought her to MACSME. "I knew my ideas could be better and I wanted to be pushed," she explained. Berkeley's two-year program delivered on those expectations.

Sircar can't wait to return to teaching. She hopes to create a classroom where students take risks and "where they're comfortable to say, 'I don't know.'"

## JOHANNA LANGILL

### Exponential Teaching

BY ABBY COHN

Johanna Langill started teaching in her Sacramento garage. At age 9, she created a make-believe classroom for her younger siblings (she has six of them), and bribed them with stickers to do homework.

"I used to have a bell I'd ring," Langill recalls of her one-room "school" that transported *Little House on the Prairie* to the suburbs.

Today, Langill is as energized by teaching as ever. On the path to becoming a high school math teacher, she is completing her first year of the Master's and Credential in Science and Mathematics Education (MACSME) program. "I know I love teaching," she says. "I realize I'd been role-playing it all my life,"

Familiar with the frustrations that cause many young teachers to burn out, Langill doesn't plan on becoming a statistic. "I'm in it for the long haul," she says.



## AMY STORNAIUOLO

### New Platform

BY ABBY COHN

The Arab Spring demonstrated how social media can inform and mobilize entire populations of people. At the Language, Literacy and Culture program, UC Berkeley doctoral candidate Amy Stornaiuolo has explored the power of social networking to educate.

“More and more educators are recognizing the importance of connecting in this way,” says Stornaiuolo. Digital video, blogs, chatting and other forms of social media are “kind of the tools of the age.”

Stornaiuolo, a May graduate, has been the research coordinator for Professor Glynda Hull’s Space2Cre8 project connecting youth around the world via social networking. Her



dissertation investigates how teachers in four countries incorporated social media into their classrooms—and the challenges they faced.

This fall, Stornaiuolo will continue her explorations of new media at the University of Pennsylvania. She has landed a prized assistant professorship in literacy education. “A whole new chapter is beginning,” says the Bay Area native and former college lecturer.

By harnessing new media, Stornaiuolo sees many opportunities to promote literacy, bridge international understanding and create informed global citizens. But learning how to connect is a learning process in itself. Early on, teachers in her study felt rudderless without a curriculum. Students had trouble communicating with long-distance participants they didn’t know.

“Social networking is about interaction, connections,” says Stornaiuolo. Over time, some teachers forged collaborations and their students began “a whole interesting interchange of blogs, videos, questions and answers.” Those digital conversations covered such topics as poverty, gangs, everyday life, the media’s portrayal of adolescents, and domestic violence.

Exceptionally active at GSE, Stornaiuolo was the editor of the Berkeley Review of Education, a new educational journal focused on diversity and equity issues.

She spent her childhood bussing tables, washing dishes and working as a waitress at her family’s restaurant, Pompei’s Grotto, on Fisherman’s Wharf. “I can do everything except cook,” she quips. Her husband, Vincenzo, does cook—he’s the restaurant’s executive chef—and will transition to Philadelphia with her.

Langill believes in support systems—and is grateful for hers.

Along with the training, mentoring and community she has found at MACSME, Langill received a 2011 fellowship from the Knowles Science Teaching Foundation. (Candice Director ’11 and Monica Sircar are the Graduate School of Education’s other 2011 math and science awardees.) The five-year Knowles program provides young teachers with professional development and other forms of assistance to ease their transition into the classroom.

Homeschooled as a child, Langill hopes to instill in her students the same thrill for “learning how to learn” that she experienced.

In one way or another, Langill has always been a teacher. She has worked as a sign-language interpreter and spent two summers teaching in Central America. After earning her math degree from UC Berkeley, she was a long-term substitute in high school algebra. In addition, she has studied international approaches to math education at Cambridge University.

When she graduates from MACSME next year, Langill wants to teach introductory math to underserved students and give them the skills and confidence to advance. “Education,” she says, “should be a means for empowerment not disempowerment for kids.”

“English is not quite as foreign to Indians as some would have us believe.”

## USREE BHATTACHARYA

### Berkeley Blog: An Accent on English

BY USREE BHATTACHARYA

My father recently recounted an anecdote from his post-graduate years at the University of Moscow in the mid-1960s. He and his friend—we’ll call him Dr. Ramanna—were chatting amongst themselves on a cold, wintry day, surrounded by a slew of Russian colleagues. One Russian gentleman seated nearby inquired: What languages were they speaking in? My father responded, a little taken aback, that they were speaking in English, since my father’s first language is Bengali, and Dr. Ramanna’s first language was Telegu and they did not have any other common language between them. The Russian gentleman shook his head incredulously and commented that it sounded as if there were speaking in two different languages! The Bengali and Telegu of their linguistic inheritance, thus, transformed their English into sounding like it belonged to two different tongues.

The story elucidates something that generally receives too little attention in claims made about spoken English within the country: that it is often distinctly colored and shaded depending on the regional markings it carries within itself. “Indian English” is not a uniform, monolithic entity, but a lively,

colorful, shape-shifting version that acquires a distinct character as it moves fluidly differentially across different linguistic spaces.

As an international graduate student in North America, I’ve faced questions over the issue of my own accent. In my first week as a graduate student, some twelve years ago, in a small town in northern Ontario, Canada, I went to the local bank to open a checking account. The bank manager refused to believe that I had just arrived from India, and appeared suspicious, because, as she said, I spoke English “like them,” and it wasn’t possible that I had “just” arrived. She did not relent until I showed her my passport and entry papers, with the arrival date clearly marked. It was obvious that she had anticipated “broken” English and a thick accent, because that’s just how Indians (as a lot) are expected to speak, as some (if not many) imagine. I defensively launched into a narrative of how I’d also lived in the US for a couple of years between the ages of nine and eleven, and that seemed to make my story more “palatable.”

Though I haven’t experienced quite that level of skepticism again, I have encountered folks who remarked that I spoke English well “for an Indian.” It’s never easy to figure out how to respond



to such a statement. A “thank you” seems highly inappropriate. English is not quite as foreign to Indians as some would have us believe (neither, on the other hand, I’d contend, is it quite as much “ours” as others have previously claimed).

Within India, the story is different, but not always less painful to negotiate. During our vacation in India this summer, my (American) husband and I met with a north Indian educator in a UP village, with whom I have collaborated professionally over the past several years. After we exchanged pleasantries in Hindi, I introduced him to my husband. In somewhat timid English, he asked my husband: “Do you like India?” My husband responded: “I love India!” That very instant, the educator turned to me and said in Hindi: “Your English is OK, it’s good, but — they speak differently, his English is better.”

It took all of three words — and most crucially, an American tongue (and, possibly fair skin) — for him to determine that my capabilities in English were inferior to my husband’s. It’s instructive — and sad, that how we speak a language sometimes frames us in ways that even our own words can’t.

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Usree Bhattacharya is a PhD candidate in  
Language, Literacy, Society and Culture

## NINA D'AMATO

### S.F. Marine helps lift Afghan province's schools

E. B. BOYD, SPECIAL TO THE *CHRONICLE*  
(05-16) 04:00 PDT Helmand Province, Afghanistan ~

Two years ago, the only schools open in Marjah, an agrarian town in the heart of Helmand province, were run by the Taliban. They were closed to girls and did little more than teach the Quran.

Today, the Marines and Afghan security forces have taken control of Marjah, whose mud-brick homes are spread over lush fields crisscrossed with irrigation canals. Several new schools have opened, and about 1,000 children are enrolled, including about 50 girls.

Maj. Nina D'Amato, a Marine reservist and former assistant principal at a San Francisco school, was a key part of that transformation.

After being called to Afghanistan early last year, she worked with Afghan officials and international reconstruction teams to get the province's school system functioning again. D'Amato said Marjah is an example of the progress that can be made in Afghanistan when there are enough security forces to make residents feel safe.

"Security defines this landscape completely," she said. "Communities will not plan for education unless it's safe and secure."

#### "TENT SCHOOLS"

D'Amato, 37, should know. During her year in Afghanistan, she worked to identify communities that were ready to start sending their children back to school. She renovated buildings that had fallen into disrepair and helped set up "tent schools" for communities where buildings needed to be built.

A critical part of her work was convincing families and teachers that it was safe to go back to school. In a region where schools have been targeted by the Taliban in an attempt to sever connections between local communities and the nascent government, opening a school is no guarantee that any of the local folks will show up.

"They're emerging from 35 years of violence, so they're understandably a little tentative about which narrative they want to embrace," said D'Amato.

While the work of assisting Afghan authorities on education has fallen on nongovernmental and aid organizations in other parts of the country, those organizations are staying away from Helmand, said Liz Baker, a civilian official of the U.S.-NATO coalition, which works with the Ministry of Education in Kabul. In 2009, a Marine push was begun in the province, with more than 10,000 troops sent in, many of them part of President Obama's hotly debated surge.

#### MAJOR BATTLE

Marines went house to house and tromping across fields in their efforts to clear the Taliban out. About 8,000 troops participated in the fight for Marjah a year ago. With 1,000 insurgents holed up there, it was the biggest battle in Afghanistan since the U.S. invasion nearly a decade ago.

After that battle, much of the work of restoring the schools has fallen to the Marines - in part because they have the resources and because getting the schools running dovetails with their mission to bring security to Helmand.

"To increase the perception of security, you make sure the schools are functioning," D'Amato said. "That allows people to send their kids. Then this waterfall effect happens. All of a sudden, people are sending their kids to school, and then people are walking through the streets, and then people are opening businesses. And when you're opening businesses, everybody perceives that security is good."

D'Amato said a hopeful sign came last fall in Garmsir, a sleepy town south of Marjah along the Helmand River, which runs the length of the province and waters the fields that fuel Helmand's economy - much of which is tied to poppies.

"The Taliban came in one night and burned down a school," D'Amato said. In the past, such events could chill a community's willingness to keep going. But "the next morning, the community asked the security forces for tents," D'Amato said. "They put the tents up and by noon they were running classes."

"It's exciting to see that," she said.

#### S.F., SANTA ROSA TIES

D'Amato was born in San Francisco and moved to Santa Rosa when she was 7. As a student at the University of Washington, where she later graduated, she felt a call to public service. She considered the Peace Corps but instead joined the Marine Corps, on active duty, in part because of its focus on leadership and management.



When her Marine duty ended, D'Amato joined Teach for America and taught in East Palo Alto - the most challenging job she's ever had, she said, including her military service.

After serving in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, she went to work at A.P. Giannini Middle School in San Francisco and later worked toward a graduate degree at UC Berkeley's Principal Leadership Institute.

In late 2009, Marine reservist D'Amato was called to serve on the U.S. military's civil affairs team and landed in Afghanistan in spring 2010.

#### UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

Although the battles with the Taliban make southwestern Afghanistan one of the most dangerous parts of that country, D'Amato jumped at the chance to lead the education efforts. "I knew I'd never have the opportunity to do something like this again," she said.

Working in Helmand was a far cry from teaching in San Francisco. She had to don a uniform every day, and a helmet, flak jacket and rifle every time she stepped off base. She commuted by helicopter from Marine headquarters at Camp

Maj. Nina D'Amato, a 2008 graduate of UC Berkeley's Principal Leadership Institute and Marine Corps reservist, was deployed to Afghanistan for a little over a year to help get the education system in Helmand province, a Taliban stronghold, up and running. In this photo, D'Amato is viewing the remains of the 6th century monumental statues of standing buddhas carved into the cliff that were dynamited and destroyed by the Taliban, Bamyan Province, Afghanistan.

Leatherneck near Marjah to the Helmand capital of Lashkar Gah, 20 miles away, because driving was not an option.

But the differences went deeper. The literacy rate in Helmand is less than 20 percent - just 4 percent for women - far below literacy rates in the Bay Area.

And while colleges and universities in the United States turn out thousands of teachers and administrators every year, three decades of war have left Helmand with a dearth of educators. Also lacking was a system to measure progress.

D'Amato worked with Afghan officials to set up a plan to track how many schools were open and how many children were attending because "the number of schools open is always an indicator of security." It was a measure of how well the Marines were doing their job.

Afghan officials didn't see her only as a military officer carrying out orders, she said. They recognized her as an expert on issues important to them.

### CURRICULUM CHALLENGE

Helmand's curriculum was another challenge. Drafted in Kabul, lesson plans were in Dari and had to be translated into Pashto, the language of the southwest. In places where the national curriculum hadn't been implemented, D'Amato and her cohorts on Marine civil affairs teams had to persuade school officials to edit materials inherited from the Taliban. Images of AK-47s were removed, as were instructions on how to spot a Soviet soldier.

While progress has been made in getting girls into school, they make up just one-fourth of the 85,000 children in Helmand schools, according to data collected by the Marines. D'Amato said that is a result of the conservative nature of the province and the fact that Taliban are still around.

"You don't take any risks with your women or girls when the Taliban are in charge," she said.

Military leaders in Afghanistan would like to transfer responsibility for education to nongovernmental organizations, but that is not likely to happen for a while, said Baker of the U.S.-NATO coalition.

When D'Amato arrived a year ago, 103 schools were open in Helmand, although many were "barely functional," she said. When she left 380 days later, 115 brick-and-mortar schools were open and working, according to the Marines' figures, along with another 30 tent schools.

"Schools evoke a lot of hope in people," she said.

This article appeared on page A-1 of the San Francisco *Chronicle* May 16, 2011.

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Maj. Nina D'Amato at Forward Operating Base in Helmand Province, southwest Afghanistan waiting for a pick-up from a V-22 Osprey.



### Field Update from Maj. Nina D'Amato

D'Amato is currently on Capitol Hill as a Congressional Fellow to U.S. Senator Robert P. Casey (D-Pa.), chair of the Joint Economic Committee. Her work focuses on appropriations.

Last summer, she was involved with Singularity University, a program at NASA Research Park in Mountain View that trains leaders to use exponentially advancing technologies to address pressing global issues. D'Amato led an international group of women participating in a project that leverages interactive media to educate girls in the developing world. Her interest in that effort was inspired by her work opening schools in Afghanistan.

"Try as we might, the challenges to building brick and mortar schools and cultivating a system to sustain them are prohibitive compared to building a communications tower and distributing cell phones," she says. "Our goal is to bring the classroom to girls and their families through a mobile device: smart phones, tablets, laptops, and legacy SMS devices."

In the future, D'Amato hopes to pursue a dissertation in education exploring technology as a tool for facilitating student learning.



## ALICE MIANO

### *“¡Quiero estudiar!”*

BY ABBY COHN

Ali Miano, PhD '10, was driven by a story that needed to be told. That story—the subject of her Graduate School of Education dissertation—examined seven Mexican immigrant mothers and their fierce dedication to the education of their children and themselves.

Above: Marie and Lauren Manley share the joy of graduation with their mother Ali Miano.

“¡Quiero estudiar! Mexican Immigrant Mothers’ Participation in Their Children’s Schooling—and Their Own,” details how women with little or no formal schooling were champions of education. It was named the 2012 Outstanding Dissertation by the American Educational Research Association’s (AERA) Family, School, Community Partnerships.

Debunking negative perceptions that less educated Latinos are detached from their offspring’s schooling, Miano found the parents heavily involved, but in unconventional ways. “Perhaps a mother couldn’t read to her children, but she got the children to read to her,” says Miano, who tracked first-generation women in the Silicon Valley enrolled in an adult literacy program.

The *mamás* orchestrated what Miano calls a “family literacy network” that tapped the skills of all family members to support the educational process. Older children, for example, would be enlisted to help younger siblings with their school work. The mothers faced many financial

and personal hardships. Still, they provided for their children, participated in school and community activities, and attended class themselves.

Miano overcame obstacles of her own during her decade-long doctoral studies. She juggled a fulltime job as coordinator of Stanford’s Spanish language program, a long commute, the parenting of two school-aged daughters, and ultimately, her husband’s battle with incurable brain cancer.

Miano’s husband, Mike Manley, died in 2006. She filed her dissertation on May 10, 2010, on what would have been his 56th birthday.

“Quitting was just not an option,” says Miano, who drew inspiration from the mothers she met. “These were women who had struggled mightily in many ways. I couldn’t abandon this idea of paying tribute to them.”

AERA hailed Miano’s dissertation as “exemplary research that pushed the boundaries of our field and challenged commonly held stereotypes and assumptions about immigrant mothers.”

## BRINTON FAMILY ENDOWS CHAIR IN URBAN TEACHING

BY STEVE COHEN

UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Education has received an endowment gift of \$1 million from the William and Mary Jane Brinton family that, combined with a match from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, will create a new \$2 million William and Mary Jane Brinton Family Chair in Urban Teaching. The Brinton Chair will honor the family's lifelong commitment to support the preparation of classroom teachers at the School of Education. A search will begin soon for a distinguished faculty member and scholar

with passion and leadership in urban teaching and teacher education.

"We are thrilled and grateful for this inspiring gift, which will have a broad impact on strengthening the school's capacity to advance research on urban teaching and teacher education, and on our ability to develop committed and skilled teachers for urban schools," said Dean Judith Warren Little.

"Our family is proud to be able to carry forward our mother's vision to provide support for leadership in urban school settings," added William Brinton.

The endowment will also continue

to support GSE students through the Flanders Fellowship program, established by Mary Jane Brinton in honor of Professor Emeritus Ned Flanders in 1984. To date, more than 350 urban schoolteachers have been supported through the Flanders Fellowship program.

The gift was presented by the Brinton children—William, Delia and Katherine—at GSE's 8th Annual Scholarship Tea on Nov. 3. Other guests included Mary Flanders; Mary Catherine Birgeneau; Melissa Eiler White '94 and GSE Advisory Board members Kerri Lubin '78 and Mike Wood '79.



Delia, Katherine and William Brinton celebrate with Dean Judith Warren Little at the GSE Scholarship Tea.



Scholarship sponsors Kerri Lubin '78 and Mark Lubin '77 congratulate MACSME student Hilary Maynard, an aspiring science teacher

Aspiring Teachers (left to right): Hilary Maynard, Nick Belotti, Rosa Lee, Michael Mischali, Danielle Barnett

Dean Judith Warren Little congratulates Rosa Lee, a GSE alumni award winner and aspiring math teacher



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Prospective students are invited to visit classrooms, labs and residence halls, and attend faculty talks. Young ones can explore museums and play interactive science games. Families are encouraged to join campus tours and take in spectacular cultural performances.

On Cal Day, the Graduate School of Education is hosting the 16th Celebration of Children's Literature and Literacy in the Education-Psychology Library, Tolman Hall, 2nd floor.

This year we are expanding our universe to focus on literacy and to increase public awareness and community support for local literacy efforts. This free public event provides a unique opportunity for children, parents, grandparents, teachers, librarians and other children's book lovers to meet acclaimed authors and illustrators, participate in fun reading and writing activities, and learn about new research on literacy. Meet local authors

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