

THE CHALKBOARD

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A Special Issue on High School Reform

Greetings From the Dean

Deborah Shanley

Dean, School of Education

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

This final issue of the Chalkboard for the academic year 2003-2004 provides the opportunity to pause and reflect on some the accomplishments of the members of the School of Education.

Our stories focus on projects we are currently engaged in with our collaborators across the borough in a variety of high school settings where we have been collectively busy building new relationships and strengthening old ones. Taubman, Giles, Forbes and Stuart-Dick describe our efforts in curriculum development, networking with other agencies and creating safe, creative and academically rigorous educational environments and options. These projects are thriving and we committed to sustaining them in an atmosphere of limited resources and constant change.

It is clear that when we work in close partnership with teachers, administrators, parents and community organizations, we can make a difference in the lives of those we care most about—the children and youth of this city—as well as promote the recruitment and retention of skilled teachers and leaders.

I am proud of our faculty and project directors and pleased to share their stories with you.

The Bushwick School for Social Justice

Peter Taubman, associate professor and assistant dean, specialized programs

In September 2002, the Department of Education put out a call for proposals for the creation of twenty-four New Century high schools. The New Century High Schools Initiative—managed by New Visions for Public High Schools and emphasizing small schools, school-level partnerships, and the gradual phasing out of large, low-performing high schools, to be replaced by these smaller schools—had already opened seventeen New Century high schools and was looking to expand the program.

In October, two teachers at East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC) High School in Bushwick, Mark Rush and Matt Corallo, and Matt Ritter, who had taught at EBC and was pursuing a master's degree at Teachers College, decided to act on the ideas they had been exchanging about starting their own school. The three had worked for several years with children from one of the poorest and most challenged areas in Brooklyn and had read widely and thought deeply about the best way to educate them. Upon hearing about the call for proposals from Sylvia Rabiner, who was working for the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA) and was a coach at EBC, the three teachers decided to submit a proposal for a New Century high school. They knew they had to work fast because they were late in submitting the concept paper. Proposals from other groups were streaming in, and those groups had already formed teams and

found a lead partner and administrator.

For the next several weeks, the three teachers met frequently to make up for lost time and attended a series of professional workshops held by the Brooklyn Superintendent's Small Schools Office. Then late one night Ritter came up with the theme for the school—social justice—and the pieces began to fall into place.

Knowing they needed a lead partner, the three teachers approached ISA, but as the relationship didn't materialize, Rush, a former student of mine, approached me. At the time, I was the graduate deputy and head of adolescence education and special subjects at the Brooklyn College School of Education. I suggested that Lorraine Gutierrez, a doctoral student in curriculum and urban education at Michigan State University, be included on the planning team. She, too, had been my student at Brooklyn College and had also been a student teacher in Rush's English class. Conversations between the group and Dean Deborah Shanley of the School of Education resulted in an agreement that Brooklyn College would be the lead partner. The benefits of the partnership were reciprocal—the New Century school would have collaborative opportunities with the Brooklyn College faculty in adolescence education and special subjects as well as resources and entree to several other organizations and college departments; the School of Education would have opportunities for student teacher placements, fieldwork sites, and a collaborative relationship.

While discussions were proceeding, Rush learned that a community organization was required as a partner, and Brooklyn College did not fit into that category. In their search for a partner committed to social justice, Rush and Corallo discovered Make the Road by Walking, an activist community agency that had been gaining publicity for its work in advocating for residents of Bushwick. Whether it was advocating for student rights, tenant rights, welfare rights, or rights of access to public resources, Make the Road was becoming an effective organization capable of attracting hundreds of people for demonstrations and community meetings. Oona Chaterjee, head of Make the Road, was soon convinced of the planning team's commitment to social justice and to educating the youth of Bushwick. By late November, Make the Road was part of the team. It was assumed that, given its location, the new school would open in Bushwick High School, thus the name Bushwick School for Social Justice (BSSJ).

The team drafted a proposal for a radical curriculum based on social justice, collaboration, and critical self-reflection. The school we imagined would be democratically run. Students and parents were to be included on the planning team, and their voices were to have a weight equal to those of the faculty and the principal. The curriculum, envisioned as academically rigorous and college preparatory, would consist of a humanities interdisciplinary curriculum, "Revolution and Rebellion"; a math curriculum, "Radical Equations," involving the Algebra Project, a science curriculum, "Environmental Justice"; and a literacy elective, "Ink." Advisories would meet daily and offer opportunities for addressing student, school, parent, and community concerns and issues. A weekly town hall meeting would bring students and faculty together for presentations and community building. Finally, the habits of mind articulated by the Coalition for Essential Schools would be infused throughout the curriculum.

The concept paper was submitted on December 9, 2002, and officially accepted a week later. The planning team was awarded \$10,000. Over the next couple of months, we held regular meetings to flesh out the proposal and submitted a final version to the Small Schools Office on February 24, 2003. It was approved on March 7, and three weeks later the final interview took place before a panel consisting of representatives from the Council of Administrators and Supervisors (CAS), the United Federation of Teachers, New Visions, and the city government. On March 31, the Bushwick School for Social Justice was formally recognized as a school.

Initial joy at having the proposal accepted was quickly replaced by a sense of urgency. With only five months before the opening of the school, the planning team had to hire five teachers and a principal and devise a plan to implement the curriculum and governance. By June, after interviewing more than thirty candidates for the position of principal, the planning team hired Terry Byam along with two math teachers, two science teachers, and an ESL teacher, two of whom were Teaching Fellows enrolled at Brooklyn College.

In mid-summer the team learned that the city would be mandating a new ninth-grade language arts curriculum called Ramp Up to Literacy, which allowed only certain schools to have waivers. Furthermore, the city required block scheduling and Math A for ninth graders. The news had a profound effect on the envisioned curriculum. English would now be a scripted program, advisory groups originally scheduled to meet every day at the same time would have to meet at different times, and the math curriculum would leave little room for innovation. Despite attempts to exempt the school from the new regulations, the waiver was denied.

To further complicate the situation, the team received news that enrollment would be increased by an additional twenty-five students. Thus, the planning team had to go back to the drawing board to devise accommodations.

During the summer, the team attended Ramp Up development workshops and went to curriculum and school planning retreats and workshops hosted by ISA and New Visions and occasionally run by Hollyce Giles, program head of the Brooklyn College School Counseling Program. The team and the newly hired teachers also spent the summer cleaning and fixing up the recently procured classrooms on the third floor of Bushwick High School and furnishing them with new books and computers. In September, 139 ninth

graders from Bushwick and East New York—nearly 50 percent more than had originally been anticipated—came to BSSJ. Many of them were self-selected, having attended school fairs in the summer, and several were “over-the-counter” students who arrived at the last minute. Almost 16 percent spoke only Spanish, and about 18 percent were labeled special needs students.

Questions about advisories, governance, Ramp Up, and new teachers quickly emerged. The mandates from the Department of Education had forced a different kind of curriculum. “Revolution and Rebellion” was replaced by Ramp Up and a social studies curriculum entitled “From Dust to Democracy.” Rather than a block of humanities, the curriculum shrunk to four forty-five-minute periods of social studies. Block scheduling and Math A replaced “Radical Equations.” “Environmental Justice” and “Ink” survived, as did advisories and the town hall meetings. Teachers improvised off the city-mandated curriculum and were soon seeing the positive results of their efforts. Attendance rates were very high relative to other high schools with the similar profile. Students were engaged in advisories and participating in the student government and school governance committees. Presentations at town hall meetings were succeeding; one of them, “Bathroom Justice,” was presented on WBAI, 99.5 FM radio.

At the end of the first semester, 70 percent of the students had passed all their courses—a very high rate for the borough. The school received a midyear evaluation of 95, exceeding standards set by the Department of Education. Furthermore, Make the Road by Walking had integrated parents into the school and set up an extensive after-school program for BSSJ students. Thanks to their work, the community of Bushwick understood the commitment.

Success at BSSJ was also noted by the increasing number of Brooklyn College groups that wanted to get involved. The Program in School Counseling established a graduate seminar at the school and placed intern counselors there. Professor of Psychology Nancy Romer’s Community Partnership Program at Brooklyn College offered after-school services. College Now offered programming in theater and tutoring.

Of course, tensions and setbacks arose and were dealt with. Questions of governance remained, and real concerns were expressed about the value of advisories. A January retreat led by Giles, Assistant Professor David Forbes, and myself, which addressed issues of leadership, led to a draft for a formal system of governance based on collective decision-making. Another retreat on advisories was held in March, and workshops on curriculum development are planned for the spring.

Overall, BSSJ has shown that small schools with dedicated teachers, innovative curricula, solid leadership, and partners who are intimately involved can flourish. Even in the face of city mandates, they are able to offer students an education that is not only influenced by the needs of students, parents, and the community but also opens up other worlds for those students, worlds in which they can be successful.

Making It Work: Supporting Staff and Community at Bushwick High School for Social Justice

Hollyce Giles, associate professor and program head, Guidance and Counseling; **David Forbes** and **Haroon Kharem**, assistant professors

Associate Professor Hollyce Giles, Director of the Teaching Fellows program Stephen Phillips, and Assistant Professor Lynda Sarnoff were the key Brooklyn College team members who helped create the initiative for New Visions High Schools in Brooklyn. Giles had designed the parent and community engagement component whereby a local community group, Make the Road by Walking, conducted interviews with Bushwick residents to ascertain what kind of school they wanted for their community. The project resulted in a document, “Ask Us,” which Giles presented at other schools and a parent engagement workshop. As a result, Make the Road by Walking signed on as the community organization for Bushwick School for Social Justice (BSSJ).

Since September 2003, Giles and David Forbes, assistant professor, guidance and counseling, have been acting as consultants to the BSSJ faculty, conducting group and individual sessions aimed at forging an alliance between the school and the community. In the fall they conducted a workshop, “Creating a Relational Culture,” and subsequently offered additional training through meetings at which people discussed issues on a one-on-one basis. Participants identified their common interests and learned how to use small groups to address their concerns. In a further effort to strengthen the parents’ relationship with the school, Giles and Forbes conducted a school-community walk, in which pairs BSSJ staff members visited homes of parents in the neighborhood to discuss their ambitions for the school. This information was then shared with school governance and staff.

BSSJ faculty members attended an overnight retreat that focused on building school and community relations, a unique effort that benefited educators, school administrators, and students. By encouraging parents to articulate their vision proactively rather than wait to be asked, Make the Road by Walking reinforces the partnership among a public high school, a grassroots community organization, and Brooklyn College (through the Institute for Student Achievement).

The success of BSSJ continues to unfold as the result of an adventurous partnership in school and community development: Two

sections EDUC 712.2, "Study of School, Community, and Institutions," currently meet at BSSJ as do third-level fieldwork students for their high school internship workshop on advisory groups. Reciprocally, BSSJ uses the Brooklyn College Department of Education's Ramp Up to Literacy social studies curriculum, which is designed for alternative educational settings. Assistant Professor Haroon Kharem team-teaches a ninth grade social studies class on democracy and social justice that critically examines democracy as practiced in other countries, specifically focusing on his students' countries of origin. Students are encouraged to consider how the relationship of the United States with those countries might affect the way in which democracy is practiced. Students will spend a semester conducting research on a country of their choice and present their findings in oral and written presentations. The curriculum is being developed for the coming academic year and will emphasize critical reflection on the Constitution and U.S. democratic institutions.

A STAR Is Born: The Science, Technology, and Research High School at Erasmus Hall

Dacota Stuart-Dick, **Brooklyn College administrator, STAR High School,** and Wilda Gallagher, **Chalkboard editor**

Through collaborative action, teaching, and research, we develop our students' capacities to create socially just, intellectually vital, aesthetically rich, and compassionate communities that value equity and excellence, access and rigor.—Brooklyn College School of Education mission statement

Brooklyn College and School of Education faculty are reaching beyond the walls of academe to share expertise and resources with the school community in a way that realizes one of the basic tenets of the school's mission—the support of academic equity, access, and rigor. With a \$400,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, administered by Jobs for the Future through the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, the STAR High School at Erasmus Hall was established as an initiative among the New York City Department of Education, the Brooklyn College Early College Initiative, and the CUNY Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education Partnership School. This long name translates into an innovative mini-school-within-a-school whose goal is to provide the educational experience in science and research that enables high school students to both prepare for and undertake college-level work.

The school opened its doors for the first time on September 8, 2003, with a total enrollment of seventy ninth-grade students. Over the first six months, enrollment increased to seventy-six, and the school hopes to add 125 entering freshmen over the next three years, increasing the student population to five hundred. Admission to the school is based on attendance records, interest in science, and a letter of recommendation from a junior high school teacher or guidance counselor.

Students will have the opportunity to complete at least 30 of the 120 credits needed to graduate from Brooklyn College. Faculty members from Brooklyn College and Erasmus are working together to craft and implement an interdisciplinary curriculum that includes strong high school-level science courses and credit-bearing courses at Brooklyn College using technology and interactive assignments.

At the outset of the fall semester, the STAR High School and Brooklyn College began developing a collaborative relationship through college seminars for the first cohort of students. Professor of Education Rosamond Welchman and Professor of Chemistry George Moriber have been working with science and mathematics teachers at the high school on a weekly basis to assist with pedagogy and help ensure that appropriate connections are developed between the high school and college-level courses.

The ninth-grade curriculum consists of English, global studies, mathematics, the living environment, biology, and a research-based science course. To work on research projects, the STAR students began to use the Brooklyn College Library. In July 2003, Provost Roberta Matthews invited students and their parents to the campus for an orientation session and tour. Each student was given a special ID card that permits access to the library through June; the cards will be renewed for June 2005 when the spring session ends. Library staff conducted research workshops with the students in October, November, March, and April. Each ninety-minute session addressed general and subject encyclopedias, microfilm use, compact shelving, resources in the Special Collections area on Brooklyniana, and the reference collection. Students were taught how to use CUNY+, reference books, and general databases to gather information on such research assignments as the history of Brooklyn, historical aspects of Manhattan, the Indus Valley civilization, the world's great scientists, famous non-American women, and biographical sketches of noted Erasmus Hall graduates.

A STAR High School Advisory Committee has been meeting monthly to identify and develop the courses that will compose the early-college high school curriculum. Members of the committee are Provost Matthews, Dean of Undergraduate Studies Ellen Belton, STAR High School Principal Henrietta Coursey, Brooklyn College Administrator Dacota Stewart-Dick, and Brooklyn College faculty members George Moriber, Chemistry; James Nishiura, Biology; Stephen Phillips, Education; Theodore Raphan, Computer Science and Information; Martin Schreiber, Biology; Ellen Tremper, English; and Rosamond Welchman, Education.

In the first six months of operation, the committee has:

- established college seminars for the first cohort of students;
- identified college-level courses that will become the core of its curriculum;
- developed a professional development program for teachers supported by funds from the Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education; and
- formed a school leadership team consisting of parents, Brooklyn College and Gateway partners, the STAR principal, and teachers, including a representative of the United Federation of Teachers, who are responsible for developing the comprehensive educational plan for the school.

The work of the committee has been greatly supported by the use of off-campus retreats aimed at defining the vision and charting a course for the school's development. From all early indications, the birth of this STAR has been a success.

News and Notes

Faculty

Noel Anderson, assistant professor, and Colleen Larson, New York University, cowrote the article "Striving for Freedoms to Achieve: A Study of African American and Latino Males in College Preparation Programs," in *Educational Administration Quarterly* (spring 2004).

Alberto Bursztn, associate professor, will edit *Special Education Today: An Encyclopedic Guide* (Greenwood Publishing Group). Bursztn contributed a chapter to *The Monograph on Pre-referral Intervention Strategies for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Learners* (New York State Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, 2003). He made a presentation, "Second Language Learning and Disability: Can We Tell the Difference?" at the January kickoff of the New York City Department of Education's English Language Learners Academy for Teachers.

David Forbes, assistant professor, presented a paper on his work on meditation and masculine gender identity development at the Third Annual Southeastern Conference on Multiculturalism in Education and Counseling, in Savannah, Georgia, in February. His chapter on the role of the counselor in urban schools will be published in *Nineteen Urban Questions: Teaching in the City*, edited by **Shirley Steinberg**, **Joe Kincheloe**, and **Deborah Shanley** (Peter Lang, forthcoming).

David Fuys, professor and program head, adolescence mathematics education, is providing staff development in mathematics at St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf. During the fall term, he and his EDUC 44 student **Francine Steinhaus**, who is deaf, collaborated with student teachers on demonstration lessons and activities aimed at developing new practices through observation and discussion.

Phyllis Gold Gluck, professor, participated in Marks for Meaning: A University Council for Art Education Forum on Visual Arts Assessment, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in February. Gluck is a member of the executive board as well as a past president of the organization.

Yoon Joo Lee, assistant professor, presented three papers at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association in San Diego: "Action Research: A Teacher's Response to Children's Conflicts in an Early Childhood Special Education Classroom"; "Understanding Early Childhood Leadership: Emerging Competencies and Individual Differences" (coauthor); and "Manipulative Managers and Devilish Dictators: Teachers' Perspectives on the Dilemmas and Challenges of Classroom Leadership" (coauthor).

Lisa Novemsky, assistant professor, wrote the article "Using a Community of Inquiry for Science Learning or 'The Story of It,'" in *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* 16, no. 4 (2003).

Carolina Mancuso, assistant professor, graduate program in literacy, and **Barbara Rosenfeld**, assistant professor, are coauthors of "Chocolate for Us, Technology for Them: A Team-Teaching Experience," which has been accepted for publication in the journal *Taboo*. In October 2003, they copresented "Making Technology Changes through Team Teaching," at the Association for Educational Communications and Technology 2003 International Conference in Anaheim, California, and "Technology and Team Teaching: Modeling for Graduate Literacy Research Students," at the Thirty-fourth Annual Conference of the Northeastern Educational Research Association in Kerhonkson, New York.

Priya Parmar, assistant professor, and **Shirley Steinberg**, associate professor and program head, graduate literacy, presented a

lecture, "How 'They' See Us: Media Representations of Women," at Brooklyn College in March. The session was cosponsored by the School of Education, the Women's Studies program, the Women's Center, the Department of Film, and the Revolutionary Alliance of Womyn.

Florence Rubinson, assistant professor, had two chapters published in February: "The Graduate Program School Psychology: Imparting Responsive Practice," in *Constructing Quality Colleges of Education* (Peter Lang, 2004), edited by **Joe Kinchloe**, **Shirley Steinberg**, and **Alberto Bursztn**; and "Urban Dropouts: Why So Many and What Can be Done?" in *Nineteen Urban Questions: Teaching in the City* (Peter Lang, 2004), edited by Kinchloe and Steinberg. She is working with preschool teachers from Warbasse Nursery to provide a series of antiviolence workshops for parents of preschool children in the Coney Island community.

Dean **Deborah Shanley** was elected chairperson of the Great City Colleges of Education Committee within the Council of Great City Schools, a coalition of sixty-one of the nation's largest urban public school systems. The coalition serves as the national voice for urban educators and works to promote urban education through legislation, research, media relations, instruction, management, technology, and other special projects designed to improve the quality of urban education.

Deborah Shanley and **Régine Latortue**, professor of Africana studies, received a grant of \$145,637 from the New York State Department of Education to establish a Haitian Language Technical Assistance Center at Brooklyn College.

Deborah Shanley and Assistant Dean **Kathleen McSorley** were members of a panel, "Impacting Urban Education: Using the NCATE Assessment to Leverage Systemic Change," at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, in Chicago in February.

Assistant Professor **Barbara Winslow** wrote the chapter "Feminist Movements: Gender and Sexual Equality," in *Thematic Essays on Gender Issues in World History* (Blackwell Press, 2004).

Student Tutors Reach Out

The School of Education is proud to acknowledge the work of the following students, who are volunteer tutors with the Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service, www.bbcs.org:

Tara Furguele, education major; classroom assistant/observer at Waverly Child Care Center

Felicia Henderson, early childhood education major; tutor for at-risk children at Bed-Stuy Family Center

Demetra Philippou, early childhood education major; after school tutor, P.S. 306

Sherrol Reid, early childhood education major: after school tutor, P.S. 91

Lakisha Spears, education and art major; after school tutor, Round Child Care Center

Congratulations!

The following received PSC-CUNY Research Awards for 2004: Assistant Professors **David Forbes**, **Yoon Joo Lee**, **Carolina Mancuso**, and **Barbara Winslow**.

In Memoriam

We note with sadness the passing of two valued colleagues: **Estelle Green**, adjunct assistant professor and a dedicated member of the Early Childhood Program for many years; and **Ronald Fry**, who shared his extensive experience in school administration as a long-time adjunct assistant professor in the administration and supervision program. They will be greatly missed.

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