BU WHEELOCK

2020

HELP FOR ANXIOUS TIMES

ADVICE FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

+ A NEW ERA OF DEAF EDUCATION
+ EXPLORING HOW CHILDREN DEVELOP RELIGIOUS BELIEFS
+ AN ALUM PROMOTES EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EDUCATION

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

BU WHEELOCK
2020

Dean ad interim
David J. Chard

Assistant dean of development & alumni relations
Maureen M. Mollahan

Communications specialist
Carolyn Barrett

Graphic design and marketing specialist
Paige Kelly

Editor
Mara Sassoon

Senior graphic designer
Raquel Schott

Contributing writers
Rich Barlow, Marc Chalufour, Louise Kennedy, Andrew Thurston, Megan Woolhouse

Photo editor
Cherryl Hanson-Bull

Cover photo
Shutterstock

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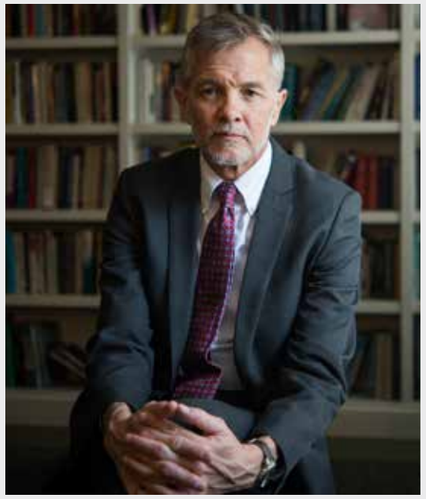

Cydney Scott

DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

I write to you during what has been the most surreal and challenging start to an academic year that any of us have experienced. The COVID-19 global pandemic, and the consequences it will have on our society, will be felt for many years to come. Certainly, the personal tragedies that many have experienced in terms of loss of life and livelihood eclipse any challenges we have had in returning to our campus.

Here at BU Wheelock, there is much to be grateful for. As I write this letter, Boston University has opened safely and has put in place numerous safeguards to ensure the good health of students, staff, and faculty. I am proud to be part of a university that has worked very hard to prepare and made it possible for students to pursue their degrees from anywhere in the world.

While the pandemic caused us to move to remote learning and working this spring, BU Wheelock faculty and staff continued the work we started last year of creating a meaningful strategic plan that will guide us for the next decade and help us achieve what we're calling the BU Wheelock GuideStar. Our GuideStar is what motivates us as a college. **Specifically, we are dedicated to transforming the systems that impact learning and human development for a thriving, sustainable, and just future in Boston and beyond.**

Our GuideStar is especially timely as we have watched communities struggle with the racist and unjust treatment that has pervaded the very places—including schools, hospitals, and clinics—where children and families are expected to grow, learn, and be healthy together. Our college plans to work together with our community partners to continue the difficult process of changing for the better. Our strategic plan will help guide us in our decision-making and will help us hold ourselves accountable as we work to help make Boston a more just and equitable place.

At BU's 2020 matriculation ceremony, Nahid Bhadelia, a BU School of Medicine associate professor of infectious diseases and the medical director of the Special Pathogens Unit at Boston Medical Center, spoke about her experience with epidemics, saying, "They serve as a mirror to our societies and time, they break us along our fault lines. They prey on those we fail to protect, and COVID-19 is no exception…it has sharply laid out the inequalities and the lack of access to care."

The stories in this issue of *BU Wheelock* magazine show how our community is uniquely prepared to address some of the greatest challenges we face as a society: systemic racism; exclusion; discrimination; economic, environmental, and social injustice; mental and physical health challenges. We are a team that can make a difference in very real ways to mend our fault lines. We have the capacity to create and share knowledge, to serve as allies and advocates for causes that will make the greatest difference in people's lives.

I hope you, our alumni and supporters, find the contents of the magazine as inspiring as I do and that you will take action in your community to further an important cause. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

David J. Chard
Dean ad interim and professor

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

BU Wheelock adds new PhD program in educational studies

BU Wheelock faculty conduct research that has a meaningful impact on education and society, from examining influences on low-income students' academic achievement, to looking at the impact of digital technologies on literacy learning, to investigating policies that affect teacher quality. Now the school has added a new PhD program that will train future researchers to inform the field's understanding of teaching and learning.

The PhD in educational studies, launched this fall, is designed to prepare students to become research-active faculty at leading universities. "The challenges and opportunities in education and human development demand rigorous research conducted by individuals who have strong methodological training," which the degree will provide, says David J. Chard, dean ad interim. Students receive full funding for five years and assist faculty in research and teaching, with a focus on one of four areas: educational policy studies, language and literacy education, math and science education, and special education. The PhD in educational studies joins two existing doctoral programs: a PhD in counseling psychology and applied human development and a revamped EdD in educational leadership and policy studies, which now includes a specialization in leadership in early childhood education through grade 12.

Those students in the new PhD program who are studying special education are part of Project LINC (Preparing Scholar Leaders to Study Interventions and Complex Systems), a new partnership with the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education. The US Department of Education awarded both institutions a total of $2.5 million to fund the initiative, which aims to prepare 10 leading special ed researchers—five at each school. According to Elizabeth Bettini, an assistant professor of special education, the BU Wheelock graduates will help fill a big gap in industry expertise. Although BU Wheelock's special education research faculty focus on understanding and improving the complex systems that shape the experiences and outcomes of students with disabilities, most researchers concentrate their efforts on testing interventions that impact learning and behavior. "Because we are doing a kind of research that is relatively unusual within our field, but that we think is really crucial for the future of our field," says Bettini, "we felt it was important for us to play a role in helping train the next generation of leading special education scholars."

Whatever program the new educational studies PhD candidates choose, says Chard, "they will find themselves studying practices and policies that impact the lives of children, youth, and families across Boston and will, in turn, be prepared to help contribute to the advancement of our field through their research."

➔ **For more information about these programs, visit bu.edu/wheelock/academics.**

iStock/Getty Images

Kieran Kesner

5 DISCOVERIES

What our research has taught us

1. Teacher research—in which educators investigate classroom practices and share their findings with their field—expands equity in teaching because it could enable a diverse pool of voices to be heard as experts. *Lecturer Megina Baker*

2. School leaders should rethink how they encourage teachers to reflect on their practice. Rather than solely through a data-driven lens, educators should contemplate their teaching through the core values and goals that made them go into that field. *Lecturer Rob Martinelle*

3. Ambitious math teaching practices—particularly those that give students access to rigorous content and detailed discussions—support the development of students as mathematical thinkers and doers via meaningful participation and deep conceptual learning. *Assistant Professor Lynsey Gibbons*

4. Educators can empower multilingual students by crafting curricula that represent the students' lived experiences and incorporating a diverse range of authors, narratives, and perspectives in the texts they teach. *Clinical Assistant Professor Christine Leider*

5. Special educators who teach students with emotional and behavioral disorders are more likely to leave their jobs if they spend more time planning outside school, supervise more paraprofessionals, have limited access to curricular resources, and serve more heterogeneous instructional groups. *Assistant Professor Elizabeth Bettini*

Landmark School in Beverly, Mass., specializes in teaching students with language-based learning disabilities.

SUPPORT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATORS

Partnership allows Landmark School teachers serving students with language-based learning disabilities to earn free BU degree

BU Wheelock has launched a new partnership with Landmark School, a Beverly, Mass., boarding and day school serving students in grades 2–12 with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities. Under the partnership, Landmark teachers can earn an EdM in special education from BU Wheelock at no cost to them.

There are around 50 teachers enrolled in the program, and Tara Joly-Lowdermilk, assistant dean of students at Landmark, says the school is already profiting from their experiences. "That benefit will ripple out through peer-to-peer interactions, ultimately affecting students at Landmark and many other settings."

According to Linda Banks-Santilli, associate dean for academic affairs at BU Wheelock, the intensive field expertise of Landmark teachers enriches the experience of their BU classmates and professors, too. "Our goal for this partnership is to bring the incredible talents and expertise of faculty, staff, and students at both institutions together to learn from each other," says Banks-Santilli ('85), "so that every child benefits from a well-prepared, well-educated teacher who is committed to ensuring that children with disabilities have all of the same rights and opportunities to succeed as others."

MOST POPULAR: 2020

Five stories we don't want you to miss

Jamil Siddiqui (ENG'93, Wheelock'94, GRS'98), pictured above, won a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, the highest honor given by the US government to K–12 math and science teachers. The award, which comes with a $10,000 prize, is administered by the National Science Foundation. Siddiqui, who has been a math teacher at East Bridgewater Junior/Senior High School for more than 25 years, was also named the 2019 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year.

Kimberly Howard, an associate professor of counseling psychology and applied human development, was named chair-elect of the American Psychological Association's Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education. The coalition's goals include improving the quality of the psychology offered in teacher preparation and professional development; collaborating with other professions that address the needs of children in schools; and making education and schooling more central to the association's agenda. Howard will take over as chair in 2021.

In fall 2019, BU began a partnership with Boston Public Schools (BPS), which provides BPS employees discounted tuition rates when pursuing a master's degree, certificate of advanced graduate study, or graduate certificate at BU Wheelock. The partnership is intended to improve professional growth and development opportunities for BPS teachers and staff and ensure they are the most effective educators.

The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative provided funding to support a new partnership between BU Wheelock's CERES Institute for Children and Youth, the Boston Debate League (BDL), and the Henderson Inclusion School, a Boston Public School that serves students of diverse ethnic, linguistic, and ability backgrounds. The goal of the partnership is to develop tools that help foster a research-based continuous learning model—a professional development framework that involves constantly assessing and developing one's education practices—for teachers, schools, and the BDL. The CERES Institute is led by Jonathan F. Zaff, a research professor in applied human development.

BU Wheelock received a $500,000 gift to establish the Ruth Batson Impact and Equity Scholarship Fund, which supports Black and Latinx students earning graduate degrees in teacher preparation programs. The scholarship is named in honor of educator and civil rights advocate Ruth Batson ('76). Through leadership roles with the NAACP and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Batson helped push Boston toward the desegregation of its public schools.

5
IMPACTS

The ways we've helped make a difference

1. BU Wheelock joined a team of 11 peer colleges and universities to collaborate on an American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education project to help school districts address a profound need in recruiting and retaining special education teachers.

2. In April, graduate student Yanling Dai ('21) donated 200 masks to Boston Public Schools (BPS). The masks provided vital protection for frontline staff serving meals to students whose families rely on BPS to distribute up to two meals a day for their children.

3. Associate Professor Nate Jones wrote a brief for the EdResearch for Recovery Project, published by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, identifying the most effective teaching practices for students with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Read the brief at annenberg.brown.edu/recovery.

4. BU Wheelock hosted a summer webinar series to address equity and social justice in education, featuring conversations with academic and community experts. An archive of the webinars is available at bu.edu/wheelock/calendar/equity-social-justice-webinars.

5. In December 2019, BU Wheelock Student Services launched an on-campus food and essentials pantry for BU community members.

Kelly Davidson

Courtesy of BU Wheelock

Lucy Wheelock (back row, second from left) and the Wheelock School Class of 1903.

BUILDING ON LUCY'S LEGACY

Foundation honors Wheelock College founder and provides scholarships to support current and future educators

When Kyla McSweeney was a student at the former Wheelock College, the community of students, faculty, and staff she found there were "like family—we all were passionate about improving the lives of children and families. It's hard to explain how supported we felt by each other."

McSweeney ('94,'97) is president of Lucy's Legacy Foundation, a nonprofit that supports BU Wheelock scholarships, grants, and programming. The foundation was born from the former Wheelock College Alumni Association Endowment Fund, which was created, McSweeney says, to "support alumni of Wheelock College should the college no longer exist."

Last year, the foundation provided more than $100,000 to support scholarships for students who attended historic Wheelock College and are enrolled at BU Wheelock, as well as alumni programming. Soon, McSweeney and her fellow board members—Rachael Thames Basdekis ('07,'08), Shannon Joseph Fairley-Pittman ('08), Heidi Butterworth Fanion ('94), Kathryn Jones ('96), Bonnie Page ('76,'92), and Carol Sullivan-Hanley ('78)—plan to start a grant program to support BU Wheelock alumni projects that improve the lives of children and families.

"The experiences I have received as both a student and alum of Wheelock have guided my professional and personal life in ways I never anticipated when I left for college," she says. "I feel that being able to carry on that tradition is very important."

A VISION FOR A MORE EQUITABLE FUTURE

Dean David Chard discusses 2020's impact on education and human development, and how to move forward

BY MARA SASSOON

IN

spring, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread and schools closed, educators rushed to transfer learning experiences to Zoom and Google Classroom, while parents scrambled to teach *and* work. Many families lacked access to childcare, didn't have internet access or a laptop, missed needed school meals, and lost their incomes.

The pandemic's initial convulsions might be over, but more than six months later, we're still in the thick of it, with millions of kids learning at home or only in school for a few hours each day; many of the glaring inequalities highlighted in COVID's first wave remain. And it's all playing out in a year of reckoning over systemic racism, spotlighted by protests against police violence toward people of color. The events of 2020 rattled the fields of education and human development, and in doing so, exposed deep cracks in their foundations.

"We have to expect more of education systems," says Dean David Chard.

Cydney Scott

BU Wheelock spoke with Dean David Chard to discuss takeaways from the year and what the future of education and human development should look like, from providing better support for families to revamping schools' K–12 curriculum.

***BU Wheelock:* While this has been an exceptionally difficult year, it's also exposed many issues that have long been present in education and human development. What are some of the issues you saw highlighted this year?**

Chard: Probably one of the most significant issues that has been revealed is that parents and communities have different kinds of relationships with schools. The pandemic has revealed to us that low-income communities in particular—and most of those are disproportionately represented by communities of color—don't have as close of a relationship with their schools. As a result, schools don't know much about them. They don't know what their students' access to the internet is like, for example. When it came time to figure out how to communicate next steps, they didn't know anything about how to go about it. They didn't know how to make that shift to remote teaching and learning very swiftly. Even within a district like Boston Public Schools (BPS), it often came down to who was the leader of a particular school, because there were school leaders who were prepared for this and had forged relationships with their families. But there were many who had not. That says something about the way we think about quality education for marginalized groups.

Another major fault line is that we have not adequately provided for the care of children and families—their nutrition, mental health, physical health. And during this pandemic, people haven't had places to turn for help in those areas. The overlay of that with police violence, and the ongoing symptoms of systemic racism, has magnified and exacerbated the problem, and has left people vulnerable in so many ways. The people who have been hurt the most are the people who had the least to begin with.

What does a more ideal, equitable future of education look like?

That's a big question. First, we have to expect more of education systems. We've grown reliant on a very traditional brick-and-mortar approach to education because it served multiple purposes. It gave parents a way to go to work by providing a space for children to learn, grow, and develop. So it was historically intimately linked to our economic livelihood.

That has to change. We have to understand that children learn wherever they are, whether they're with a teacher, with each other, or with a caregiver of some sort. The pandemic has blown up the traditional model of education, and I don't think we'll fully go back to that model. There's a lot of innovation that has to be done. We've got these great technological tools and now we've become incredibly reliant on them, but how do you really learn through them, without necessarily being in a classroom or lab, touching things? We've not quite figured that out. There's still a lot of work that has to be done, but now is the time.

Another element of this—and this really is the intersection of some of the social justice issues highlighted by the pandemic—is the system we've always had was designed to drive large numbers of people through smaller and smaller filters, until we take a test to get into college. I really do believe that people are going to start saying, "Where did that get us?" We have wasted a lot of talent and we've seen a lot of people not have opportunities because of those filters. That's another thing we're going to have to spend a lot of time rethinking.

Do you see that happening down the line, getting rid of those filters?

We're starting to already see it in terms of higher ed. When I was president at Wheelock College, we stopped requiring the SAT. There's a movement afoot to say that those standardized tests are

just one data point. Is it meaningless? No. But, is it as meaningful as we've made it out to be? Certainly not. So, the question is, how do you get better information about students that is more interesting and helpful?

Education is one of the most traditional fields. There's a lot of work to do, and this pause is giving us some sense of where we need to begin to change policies. The predominant number of people who teach in schools are white women, for example. And we now know that if you get teachers who look more like the kids they're teaching, you actually get better outcomes.

We have to figure out how to make teaching more appealing to a broader demographic of people. Part of the way we want to do that at BU is by opening up the curriculum so that people have a chance to see all of the connections to teaching. Education is just one part of what our school does. There may be a lot more BU students out there who would find our work appealing and would be drawn to it if it wasn't so narrow, if they had a chance to really engage in the City of Boston, get to know people, and understand how communities function and what their role could be within that picture.

"WE KNOW NOW THAT IT IS AS IMPORTANT TO BE GOOD AT RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AS IT IS TO BE A MASTER OF YOUR CONTENT KNOWLEDGE.... IF PARENTS DON'T KNOW THEIR CHILDREN'S TEACHERS, THEN HOW LIKELY IS IT THEY'RE GOING TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM ABOUT THE NEEDS OF THEIR CHILDREN?"

So the pandemic was kind of the nudge that was needed?
It wasn't just a nudge—it was a slap in the face.

How can our society, and our schools in particular, better support families in educating children?
According to federal data, children spend about 14 percent of their time in school. Only 14 percent. So, why do we give schools such importance? I think the way schools might think about this "new school" idea is their linkage to nonprofits, after school programs, faith-based organizations—whatever it happens to be—where they can find families and develop relationships with those families.

In some ways, it's an opportunity for schools to think more fundamentally about their job and not assume they're everything, because kids don't spend the majority of their time in school. They're out doing other things, but most schools do not have relationships with those other things. It's really important that those relationships exist and happen.

At BU Wheelock, we've started that by identifying some Boston-based nonprofits like the Boston Debate League, and 826 Boston, which is a writing program for kids in some of the high schools in Boston. They're very strong nonprofits, and in most cases, they are working inside the schools. So BPS is clearly doing this. They understand that they can have a greater impact on children and families if they're involved in a larger chunk of their life. We're likely to see schools do more of that.

Times of crisis often give birth to innovation. Have you seen any examples of innovation in education during the pandemic?
It's a little bit early to say what kind of innovation has come out of the pandemic and what's going to stick around. We're still in it. In some cases, it's made further use of what was innovative. Zoom was hardly this powerful before the pandemic. Now, I have conversations with people in South Africa, Australia, and all over the place. Innovation in education has been a very slow process. We're much more likely to invest in the development of video games than we are to invest in the development of educational games or educational tools. This may change that.

We also have researchers at BU Wheelock who have been toying with the use of simulation software—for teacher training, for example. That has become much more serious because one other cumulative thing with the pandemic is we have a major teacher shortage. Frankly, we have a teacher crisis in the United States. There is a great need to train teachers. Now, we're using simulation software for student teaching opportunities.

How does this year change what we teach our children? There have been a lot of calls for schools to revamp their history curriculum, for instance.
Yes, there needs to be change. If you follow history education in the United States—almost anywhere in the world, really—it's whoever is in power who gets to decide what gets taught. I lived and taught in southern Africa during the end of the apartheid era and it was amazing that what all kids were taught was a complete falsification of history. But, it served the power structure. And, of course, that's what happened here. We whitewashed history in the United States.

As far as pedagogical changes, in an area like literature, we need to expand our understanding of what good literature is and read a broader cross section of authors, moving away from the traditional canonical way of thinking—not that the canon is all bad, but there are a lot of great authors who children don't get exposed to early on.

We also need to rethink what it is schools really need to teach. Teachers should ask, "Why am I teaching this content?" We have so much access to knowledge, with Google and such, and that's only going to get better. The focus should be more on how do you teach students to be able to interpret knowledge, contextualize it, and analyze it critically. How do you teach people to use that information that is so readily available? That's what schools have not done. State by state, we have 50 sets of standards that are very, frankly, 1980s. They're looking backward and not forward. I hope the pandemic will accelerate change.

Has this year inspired any reimagining of courses that are taught at BU Wheelock?
Oh, yes. We were actually moving in this direction before the pandemic, but we will be eliminating all of our undergraduate majors. We are proposing a single undergraduate major that will be called Education and Human Development. It is designed to give students who are interested in human service work—teaching, child life, counseling, etc.—a chance to sample content and experiences more broadly across the University, which will help shape their understanding of how one serves in these roles. That will hopefully be in effect next fall.

Right now, if you come to BU and you want to be a math teacher, first of all, you have to know that you want to be a math teacher, and then you take a very regimented curriculum to do so. With the single major, we want to give students two years to be in Boston serving in organizations, nonprofits, and social service agencies to really understand how they work and the issues they tackle. Then, by year three, they begin to make a decision about an area they want to pursue, but are well informed about its history and landscape.

We're looking at what makes teachers effective. We know now that it is as important to be good at relationship building as it is to be a master of your content knowledge. That requires teachers to practice relationship building. How do you get to know the parents of your students? If parents don't know their children's teachers, then how likely is it they're going to communicate with them about the needs of their children?

We're also looking at some significant changes at the graduate level. Our faculty are developing a proposal for a master's degree in antiracism in pedagogy.

And we're also rethinking our early childhood education programs to be more community oriented and transdisciplinary. Families interact with community health centers, faith-based organizations, shopping centers, and all kinds of nonprofit organizations, and we don't prepare early childhood leaders to think about—if they're going to run a prekindergarten center in BPS, for instance—what they need to know about the community around them and how they utilize the resources of that community to maximize the impact of their prekindergarten work.

"INNOVATION IN EDUCATION HAS BEEN A VERY SLOW PROCESS. WE'RE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO INVEST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIDEO GAMES THAN WE ARE TO INVEST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL GAMES OR EDUCATIONAL TOOLS. THIS MAY CHANGE THAT."

None of these ideas and issues are unique to the pandemic, but when you layer on everything we've experienced this year, it really does raise a lot of important questions about how we move forward.

What are some causes for optimism that we can take from this year?
The pandemic has illuminated our interdependence, and shown us it could be our lifeblood, but it could also be our detriment if we can't learn how to work together.

I think if we, as a society, throw ourselves behind some of our other major problems, like systemic racism and climate change, with such vigor, it would be interesting to see what we could accomplish.

The pandemic is also, thankfully, opening up our eyes to really intersectional issues in education. For example, in my field of special education, people have said for years that children of color are overrepresented. In fact, it's not exactly true. In some communities with a predominantly white population, children of color are disproportionately identified as having disabilities. But, in communities with a higher percentage of people of color, they're underrepresented in special education, and some students are missing out on services that they would need. So, in one instance they are probably not needing the services, but are wrongly identified, based on their race or ethnicity, as needing them. In another setting, they're not being identified, and they're not getting the services that would help them. This year in particular is causing us to look more carefully and thoughtfully at such issues.

I think in our darkest days during this pandemic, many of us felt like things couldn't get better. But, I think people now have a sense of urgency that is motivating some really exciting changes. So, my hope is back.

THE ADVOCATE

Julie Duran works to improve equitable access to education even in the face of COVID-19 and acts of racism and police brutality

BY **MARA SASSOON** / PHOTOS BY **MICHAEL D. SPENCER**

In mid-March, after Boston Prep's administration decided to close the 6–12 charter public school and move classes online because of COVID-19, Julie Duran and a team of teachers began assembling a makeshift warehouse in the school cafeteria. From it, they doled out Chromebook laptops to every student—most from low-income communities in Boston's Hyde Park, Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan neighborhoods. That was only the start. For students who didn't have internet access at home, the school arranged for wireless hotspots or paid lapsed bills. It also provided breakfasts and lunches to students and their families—not just in the spring, but throughout the summer, too. And when they learned that parents who'd lost their jobs weren't able to pay bills or buy groceries, the school established a family fund to help pay for utilities, food, medical expenses, and more. They are continuing these efforts this school year.

"We already knew that some of our students are coming from neighborhoods that are often neglected, that don't have all the resources that they need," says Duran (CGS'06, ENG'09, Wheelock'10), Boston Prep's high school principal. "Schools like Boston Prep have been supporting communities even before the pandemic. It's unfortunate that it took the pandemic to highlight for others not living in our communities the inequities that have been in existence for so long."

The events of 2020—from the pandemic to acts of police brutality and racism—made Duran realize her work beyond academics is more important than ever.

"Ultimately, our state governments have failed our communities over and over. Boston Prep provides specific academic programming to ensure students succeed through college, but we also look at the wellness of our community. It's about standing with our community."

Duran, who was a first-generation college student, is determined that all students should have access to quality education—with equal learning and achievement opportunities no matter their background or personal circumstances. And that didn't change in the pandemic. Boston Prep has a robust team of academic and social-emotional support staff to help students every step of the way. Each student is paired with a faculty advisor, and alumni are even given help through their college careers. Boston Prep prides itself on having all of its graduates, most of whom identify as nonwhite, ethnic minorities, accepted to four-year colleges. In the US, 14 percent of Black adults and 11 percent of Latinx adults hold bachelor's degrees, compared with 24 percent of white adults.

CULTURE SHOCK

The daughter of El Salvadoran immigrants, Duran grew up in Los Angeles, Calif., in a neighborhood that was predominantly El Salvadoran and African American. She joined BU's biomedical engineering program—and found the University a culture shock. "It was the first time I left my community. And my community was predominantly Black and brown," she says. "The Howard Thurman Center was a big saving grace for me. I was able to go there and find people who understood what I was feeling. I was able to have honest conversations with them and they provided resources for how to not only navigate BU culturally, but also academically."

While she worked toward her engineering degree, Duran also tutored children through BU Upward Bound and the BU Initiative for Literacy Development (BUILD). It wasn't until her senior year that she realized these tutoring jobs were her favorite part of the week. One day, as she headed into a research lab, all she could think about was getting through the hour until it was time to tutor. "That's when I thought, 'What are you doing with your life? You're doing the wrong thing and you're about to graduate.'" That night, she decided to apply to BU Wheelock's Master of Arts in Teaching program, with a focus on math.

Duran knew that she eventually wanted to "educate other students like me," working to address the very skill gaps she realized she had when she got to BU. "I was fully aware in college that I had some skill deficits. It's tough finding that out then," says Duran. She taught math at Cape Cod Technical High School in Harwich, Mass., then joined Boston Prep, where she taught eighth grade math and was the chair of the math department before becoming principal last year. "It feels like a scramble because you have a short amount of time to accelerate learning and fill these gaps that have formed over so many years."

"The one thing we do need to be able to say to our students is 'We love you, and you are safe here' and show that we mean it through our actions."

At Boston Prep, staff at the college and career counseling office lead the Persistence Project, an initiative the school implemented to make sure that students—many of whom, like Duran, will be the first in their families to earn a degree—continue to succeed once they matriculate at college. Besides providing students with college preparatory and counseling services throughout their time at Boston Prep, the school offers support services to graduates, including tutoring, professional development opportunities, book stipends, and emergency financial support. Students are paired with an alumni counselor whose full-time job it is to follow up with them throughout their college careers.

"Schools like Boston Prep have been supporting communities even before the pandemic. It's unfortunate that it took the pandemic to highlight for others not living in our communities the inequities that have been in existence for so long."

Alumni counselors also gather important data from graduates that help inform how Boston Prep's curriculum is shaped. "We ask graduates to tell us what in the curriculum has served them and what we need to go back and fix," says Duran.

All of those efforts are paying off. More than half of Boston Prep's alumni from the first three graduating classes, the Classes of 2011–2014, successfully earned a bachelor's degree within six years—a rate nearly twice that of their peers nationally and four times that of low-income youth across the country. For the 10th year in a row, 100 percent of Boston Prep's most recent graduates, the Class of 2020, were accepted to a four-year college. At graduation, every single student had planned to matriculate to college this fall, despite the challenges and uncertainty posed by COVID-19.

LISTENING, LEADING

While the school's mission is to ensure that all of its students have a pathway to college and through college, Duran says she is invested in their personal growth, too. "It's also about a student knowing who they are and how they fit into the world." Duran and the rest of Boston Prep's leadership and staff have ramped up efforts to connect and build relationships with the school's students and families, especially as the pandemic has forced everyone to be apart. Over the spring semester and summer, Boston Prep hosted a series of student and family town halls outside of class to discuss current events. The first was in the wake of the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, as protests broke out over police brutality against people of color.

"Our students were definitely feeling all of this emotion and bringing it into the classroom," says Duran. "We wanted to create a space for students, families, and faculty to share how they're feeling and what they're going through."

That town hall spawned a series of other virtual discussions for those students who wanted to continue the conversation. Duran says she was inspired to see that students wanted to lead these talks.

"It just created a space where we felt like we were together and were able to honestly talk about what was going on," she says. "It made us all realize that we need to keep having these other moments where it's not just about the academics. We need those conversations where it's not just about what you're feeling in response to the greater problems in the world, but also more about, 'Where are you right now?' and 'How are you doing?' Because it shouldn't take these crimes that are happening in the world for us to talk."

Duran believes it is important to listen to what students are feeling and thinking and give them what they want out of their school. In fact, many course offerings have been shaped by student requests, including a new ethnic studies curriculum. Duran also continues to help lead efforts to improve the school's work in diversity, equity, and inclusion, including having conversations with her colleagues on checking their biases in the classroom.

"We don't have all the answers," she says. "But the one thing we do need to be able to say to our students is 'We love you, and you are safe here' and show that we mean it through our actions." W

HELP FOR ANXIOUS TIMES

FACULTY OFFER ADVICE FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN A YEAR MARKED BY A PANDEMIC AND CONTINUED POLICE BRUTALITY

BY ANDREW THURSTON / PHOTOS BY KELLY DAVIDSON

THE LAST TIME MASSACHUSETTS ASKED ITS RESIDENTS TO GO INTO LOCKDOWN WAS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 2013 BOSTON MARATHON BOMBING.

As police closed in on the suspects, residents were told to shelter in place. Confined indoors, Jennifer Greif Green and her husband, then a high school teacher, talked about how he should discuss the events—a bomb that killed a child, a suburban gunfight, a tense manhunt, frightened families hiding at home—with his students.

"He's used to being able to prepare for class in advance and has enough experience to have a pretty good idea for how conversations will progress," says Green, an associate professor of special education and a child clinical psychologist. "But with something like this, it felt much more uncertain."

Green's husband became a frontline mental health resource for his students. Unlike most of his colleagues, he at least had an expert to go to for advice. Later, Green turned the postmarathon experiences of teachers like her partner into a research project. She found they were attuned to their students' psychological distress, but that many schools lacked plans to help them do anything about it.

After a turbulent—often heartbreaking—2020, dominated by lockdowns and punctuated by acts of police brutality and racism, children of all ages are experiencing unprecedented levels of trauma and anxiety. In May, an American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California survey found more than half of students may now need mental health support.

But as educators grapple with the ongoing crises, many still don't have the resources—or training—they need to identify and help students in need. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends one psychologist per 500 to 700 students; the national ratio is closer to one per 1,400 and, in some states, one per 5,000. And that was before school budgets—and staff positions—were cut because of the COVID-19 recession.

"Everyone I've talked to in schools feels like the needs of their students outweigh the support they have," says Green.

She and her colleague Amie Grills, a clinical psychologist and member of BU's mental health task force, are working on new projects and resources to support teachers dealing with the impacts of a trying year—and to help bring about systemic change.

"There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Reaching more kids is highly necessary, and schools are a really good way to do that," says Grills, a professor of counseling psychology and applied human development who's also examined how trauma after events like residential fires, extreme violence, hurricanes, mass shootings, and sexual assaults shapes children's well-being. "It's important to break down those

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barriers to care, to say mental health services are an important part of a bigger public health need; we need to develop strategies to support schools to be part of that."

HELP FOR TODAY

The trouble for many teachers—even during a normal year, with regular, in-person classes five days a week—is that anxiety is especially hard to spot.

"It's often misunderstood, or people mislabel what's going on with kids who are anxious," says Grills. "The anxiety is causing them such internal distress, but it's hard to see that."

Despite its hidden nature, anxiety can often explain sagging classroom performance, faulty emotional regulation, or inattentiveness. Green advises teachers who see unusual behavior to consider mental health issues as a possible cause. At the height of the first rush of COVID-19 lockdowns, she developed an online stress education program to help teachers already dealing with a spike in student anxiety. Created in partnership with the Medway, Mass., Public Schools, which also provided funding, it walks teens through the basics of stress and its symptoms, finishing with a series of coping strategies and other well-being tips. (The free course is available at jenniferggreen.com/stress.)

"If there's a student with their head down on a desk, there are a number of different ways that a teacher might interpret that behavior," says Green. "It might be that they're tired, but it might also be a sign of depression or anxiety."

Green says the National Association of School Psychologists (nasponline.org) has lots of mental health resources—for parents, too—including advice for talking about COVID-19, trauma, and loss. Grills recommends anxietycanada.com and the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies website (abct.org), which both have free resources and programs.

In her research, Grills has built mental health support programs that can be incorporated into normal classroom activities. One is a 10-minute cognitive behavioral intervention for anxiety designed to be delivered daily in a school setting by a teacher. Along with colleagues at the University of Texas at Austin, she's testing its efficacy among children who might be falling behind their peers in reading.

"If your child is struggling in school and they're having difficulty learning to read, does that make them anxious or is it the kids who are really anxious who are preoccupied by that and can't focus?" says Grills. "We found it's actually both—a chicken or the egg situation."

Her program integrates "evidence-based cognitive behavioral therapy skills and self-efficacy building strategies" into small group reading lessons.

"One of the critical aspects of this program is that it is brief and integrated in this way," she says. "If a kid is struggling with learning, the last thing a school wants to do is pull them out of instruction time."

HELP FOR TOMORROW

Unlike many past traumatic events—a hurricane that tears through a town, a bombing in a city—COVID-19 didn't spare any states. The need for more student mental health support is universal.

"THERE ARE NO IFS, ANDS, OR BUTS ABOUT IT. REACHING MORE KIDS IS HIGHLY NECESSARY, AND SCHOOLS ARE A REALLY GOOD WAY TO DO THAT. IT'S IMPORTANT TO BREAK DOWN THOSE BARRIERS TO CARE, TO SAY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF A BIGGER PUBLIC HEALTH NEED; WE NEED TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS TO BE PART OF THAT." ***AMIE GRILLS***

Because of the scope of the problem, many changes have to come at the state level, says Green. She recommends states update their licensure requirements to include mental health education for all new teachers. At the moment, although BU Wheelock offers classes on emotional and behavioral disorders, there's no obligation in Massachusetts or most other states for preservice teachers to understand the basics of supporting students with mental health issues.

"The state licensure issue is one we need a lot of advocacy around," says Green. "Studies show up to 40 percent of adolescents will have a mental health problem at some point, yet our teachers who are spending the most time with students are not being prepared to support them."

With Melissa K. Holt and Kathleen Corriveau, both BU Wheelock associate professors, Green recently began an evaluation of online avatar programs that aim to give preservice teachers more experience spotting mental health issues. The programs, from health simulation company Kognito, replicate conversations with students and coach participants on specific strategies.

"We've been looking to see if it could help teachers before they even start teaching to feel more confident and prepared to address the mental health needs of their students," says Green, whose study is funded by the Spencer Foundation. BU already offers a higher education–tailored Kognito program to its faculty and staff.

Grills wants states to hire mental health experts, too—people schools and districts can turn to for advice about problems and potential solutions. "Districts don't know which programs are good versus those that are not," she says. She gives the example of off-the-shelf mental health curricula. Sold by companies through slick websites and glossy brochures, they can seem like a compelling, prepackaged solution. But Grills says many aren't supported by evidence; in fact, she says, some may do more harm than good.

"What we see is schools and teachers struggling and not having a deep bench background in mental health," she says.

Racial discrimination is also a factor in the provision of care. In April 2020, Green and Elizabeth Bettini, a BU Wheelock assistant professor of special education, were coauthors on a study that found Black and Latinx students were much more likely than their white peers to be removed from their classes—even their schools—and placed in settings serving students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Green has also started a new project, funded by BU's Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health, to examine the role of police in responding to mental health crises, such as when a child's behavior escalates or if they fight with a teacher.

"If the school had sufficient mental health providers on-site, that would be a time to get a school psychologist or counselor involved who might be able to help with de-escalation or change the direction of the situation," says Green. "When schools have limited resources, they will often call on the police."

Both Green and Grills hope the crises of 2020 help raise the importance of evidence-based mental health provision in schools.

"It's making me want to redouble my efforts to support student mental health and well-being," says Green, "and focus on social and emotional development and how to move that from the sidelines of schools into their central mission and permanent structure."

"THE STATE LICENSURE ISSUE IS ONE WE NEED A LOT OF ADVOCACY AROUND. STUDIES SHOW UP TO 40 PERCENT OF ADOLESCENTS WILL HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM AT SOME POINT, YET OUR TEACHERS WHO ARE SPENDING THE MOST TIME WITH STUDENTS ARE NOT BEING PREPARED TO SUPPORT THEM." ***JENNIFER GREIF GREEN***

A FRIEND TO FAMILIES

Once a patient at Boston Children's Hospital, Miranda Day now works to help the families of a new generation of patients

BY **MARC CHALUFOUR** / PHOTOS BY **MICHAEL D. SPENCER**

Miranda Day ('03) is the director of family and volunteer services at the Hale Family Center for Families at Boston Children's Hospital, which provides programming and amenities to support patient families.

Miranda Day was one year old when she first visited Boston Children's Hospital (BCH) for treatment of scoliosis and a tethered spinal cord. That rare condition, where the base of her spine split in two and attached to tissue near her tailbone, required her to return frequently throughout her childhood for additional treatment. Day's earliest memories of those visits are of the small touches that made her feel special during a challenging time: a cup of chocolate pudding and the gift of a doll wearing a cast just like the one she was about to receive. After one surgery left Day ('03) immobilized by a torso-length brace, she rode in a colorful cart through the hospital's garden.

"My parents and doctors gave me every opportunity to be the person I wanted to be and made sure there wasn't anything that was going to set me back," Day says. To help Day's family manage life away from home, her doctor let them use his office phone. He would also help Day's mother find a spare bed in a nearby nurse's dorm for longer stays.

Day, now the director of family and volunteer services at BCH, is in a position to do the same for a new generation of patients. She manages more than 50 staff members and 700 volunteers who collectively run a range of programs, including comfort dog visits, wellness classes, and two communal family houses—none of which existed when Day was a patient. Her job, and her department, represent an emphasis on family-centered care that's becoming more common across the healthcare industry.

Like the rest of that industry, though, Day and her staff had to reinvent much of what they do for the COVID-19 pandemic. Even working remotely, her goal remained the same: "The hope is that families can put their energy and focus on the place that they need it most."

HELPING HANDS

Walk into BCH's main lobby and the first thing you'll see are the glass doors of the Hale Family Center for Families. It provides a hub where families can find just about any amenity they could need during a stay at the top-rated children's hospital in the country.

"Children's Hospital does a really great job at giving patients and families hope and direction in their healthcare—but there's a lot of other things that still have to go on simultaneously in people's lives," Day says. That's where her staff, who run the Hale Center, can step in and offer emotional and logistical support. The center's staff and volunteers also serve satellite campuses in the Massachusetts towns of Lexington, North Dartmouth, Peabody, and Waltham. In Boston alone, they might help 1,000 families and patients in a normal week.

Since Day's own childhood visits to BCH, a growing body of research has shown that play and recreation for children and support interventions for families can help pediatric health outcomes. BCH has invested heavily in those areas, not only expanding family and volunteer services that Day manages, but also child life services, which works more directly with patients. A close relationship with BU Wheelock has helped.

Suzanne Graca ('89), a child life specialist at BCH and a clinical instructor in BU Wheelock's child life program, says that this prioritization of child life programs at both institutions has helped BCH provide a powerful, holistic approach to pediatric healthcare. "We see the family through the child, and Miranda's team gets to know the child through the family," she says. Graca estimates that more than three-quarters of the 60-person child life staff at BCH graduated from Wheelock.

Day began her BCH career as a child life specialist shortly after completing an internship there and receiving her master's in child life and family-centered care from Wheelock.

"As my career path started to evolve, I realized that supporting programs and resources to do the work that is meaningful to patients and families—that is something I'm pretty good at," she says. So, after 14 years in child life and managing the hospital's creative arts program, Day moved over to administration as director of family and volunteer services.

The Hale Center's programs provide parking and housing assistance, yoga and Reiki classes, support groups, work space for parents, basic necessities like toiletries and emergency clothing, even a bottomless pot of hot coffee—all of it free for any guests of the hospital. "If we can help with that, it makes every day a little bit better," Day says.

Since Day's own childhood visits to Boston Children's Hospital (BCH), a growing body of research has shown that play and recreation for children and support interventions for families can help pediatric health outcomes. BCH has invested heavily in those areas.

CORONAVIRUS CHANGES

With the COVID-19 pandemic impacting all aspects of the healthcare industry, Day and her staff reimagined their entire operation in March. "Everything we offer is very patient- and family-facing," Day says. "Our wellness program was all about touch and engagement." Most of the center's resources are focused on serving critically ill patients and their families, a population that's been present throughout the pandemic.

"Everyone might have a health scare in their life, from a broken bone to an allergy or bee sting to something more monumental like a chronic condition, but that doesn't mean it should define you. Being able to help someone cope with that moment in their life is really meaningful."

The center's lounge and meeting area capacity was reduced, volunteer programs suspended—even the coffee service was cut off. The center's staff adjusted, maximizing the virtual resources available to them. They even found some advantages to working remotely.

When volunteers were prevented from taking comfort dogs into patient rooms, they were trained to conduct virtual visits online, engaging the kids on the other end of the connection by letting them ask questions or prompting the dogs to do tricks. "Now we're reaching areas that we didn't reach before," Day says. "Places like the bone marrow transplant floor, where the risk of infections is too high and we couldn't bring the dogs to before—now we can."

A Spanish-language parents' group also flourished online, drawing more parents than had participated in person. "That's been a real success story—to find value in that conversation, to connect and build relationships," Day says. "I'm really proud of that group for being able to tackle some difficult topics."

Yoga and Reiki classes also migrated online, while logistical offerings like parking support and laundry services continued on-site, managed by a scaled-back staff. Day only stops in once or twice a week, working from home the rest of the time. "I went into this job for the people, for the children and families, and it's hard to not see anyone," Day says.

She misses the experience of watching someone's shoulders relax when they realize something has been taken care of, but she's also realistic about when that opportunity will return. "We're slowly thinking about what we look like post-COVID," she says. She expects that her team's in-person services and programs will be phased back in very slowly—and some not at all until there's a COVID-19 vaccine available.

For now, Day remains focused on making each patient's stay a little easier. "Everyone might have a health scare in their life, from a broken bone to an allergy or bee sting to something more monumental like a chronic condition, but that doesn't mean it should define you. Being able to help someone cope with that moment in their life is really meaningful." W

A NEW ERA OF DEAF EDUCATION

BU researchers inspire a bilingual approach to teaching deaf children

BY **MEGAN WOOLHOUSE** / ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ALDO CRUSHER**

When Boston's Horace Mann School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing celebrated its 150th anniversary in November 2019, it achieved another milestone: it became the only "dual-language school" in the US to teach both American Sign Language and English.

To an outsider unfamiliar with the world of deaf education, the move might not seem very dramatic or edgy—but it was. American Sign Language isn't universally embraced in deaf education; most deaf children in the US are taught the same English curriculum designed for hearing students.

And many pay the price academically: deaf people consistently attain lower levels of education than hearing people. According to the National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes, 83 percent of deaf adults complete high school, compared to 89 percent of hearing adults, and far fewer continue their education in college.

"We've always used ASL," says Maritza Ciliberto ('91,'93,'95), Horace Mann's principal, "but not with the intentional approach that we have in the last few years. The emphasis prior to that was always learning English and spoken language, which is not feasible for all students."

Feasibility is key, because many students at Horace Mann, which serves young people in kindergarten through grade 12, face unique challenges; most of its students are profoundly deaf and their first language is not English. On the 2017 English and mathematics state MCAS tests, Horace Mann students in grades 3–8 were ranked as "not meeting expectations," scoring significantly lower than their district peers. The school's five-year graduation rate has been just 23 percent.

For the faculty in BU Wheelock's deaf studies program, who have been on the vanguard of philosophical changes in deaf education that promote sign language, Horace Mann's new dual-language designation by the school district and the state was a cause for celebration. BU has a connection with Horace Mann stretching back to its founding—many deaf education students complete fieldwork at the school or, like Ciliberto, take permanent jobs there—and its deaf studies faculty have long lobbied the state for a revamp of deaf education. They point to research that shows the school's new approach should help turn those test scores around.

"Historically, teaching deaf children ASL has often been seen as a last resort, only worth pursuing if schools can't

“The dual-language designation takes learning ASL and English—becoming bilingual—as an accomplishment that deserves recognition. It is a remarkable act of justice.” Naomi Caselli

teach them to hear and speak. In this framing, learning ASL is a sign of failure,” says Naomi Caselli, an assistant professor of deaf studies at BU Wheelock. “The dual-language designation takes learning ASL and English—becoming bilingual—as an accomplishment that deserves recognition. It is a remarkable act of justice.”

SEEDS OF CHANGE

In the 1800s, schools banned sign language in favor of teaching deaf students to speak, read, and write in English like “normal” people. Inventor and BU professor Alexander Graham Bell, whose wife and mother were deaf, was one of those who favored suppressing the use of sign language. Bell taught at Horace Mann before and during his time as a BU professor in the 1870s, working with students to help them learn to speak English. Teaching sign language, he once said, would be “contrary to the spirit and practice of American institutions.”

The way of thinking he championed only really began to change in the last 50 years, although debate around it remains contentious.

Robert J. Hoffmeister came to BU in the late 1970s, arguing that teaching methods that shunted aside ASL were based on a myth that learning sign language would prevent deaf children from excelling in English.

Then and now, Hoffmeister says, society had been conditioned to view deafness as a negative—a condition in need of fixing.

“This is where we run counter to the medical profession,” says Hoffmeister, a professor emeritus and coauthor of the landmark text *A Journey Into the Deaf-World*.

More than 90 percent of deaf children are born to hearing parents, most of whom rely on the medical establishment for guidance, he says. Technological advancements in cochlear implants and other supports often give parents hope that their child will develop speech. Few ever meet other deaf people and most elect to pursue a spoken language as a primary communication method. Hoffmeister says the reality is that there is no cure for deafness and his research has shown that the more fluent a student is in ASL, the better able they are to learn, think, and acquire additional knowledge.

The child of deaf parents and a fierce advocate for Deaf culture when it was not a popular stance, Hoffmeister says incremental changes in deaf education in the last 15 years, including the dual designation at Horace Mann, are cause for optimism.

“I’m hopeful for the future,” he says. “For a long time, I felt like a lone wolf in this field.”

DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM

One of the latest advances was made by BU Wheelock researchers Todd Czubek (’92,’98, GRS’17) and Kristin DiPerri (’04). They recently created the first ASL/English bilingual curriculum for deaf students and have been invited to schools around the world to share it.

For years, Czubek worked as an elementary school teacher for deaf students in New Mexico. In the absence of an official bilingual curriculum, he and his colleagues adapted lesson plans for hearing children, teaching deaf children about English and grammar when they did not yet have a foundation in spoken English. His students simply weren’t making progress, he says, so he began looking at ways the school’s curriculum fell short.

Those lesson plans, Czubek says, make assumptions—that students are growing up in homes with accessible language models and that they will come to school well equipped to use their first language—that are not always true for deaf students. “Frequently, deaf students are coming from homes where they aren’t getting a foundation in language—not just spoken language, but access to language, period. And we’re asking deaf kids who don’t have this foundation to practice something that they just don’t know,” he says. “There are certainly examples of deaf students who come from signing homes and develop a first language who do well. Those kids typically are the ones who outperform those who don’t come from signing homes. So, I was like, ‘Wait a second, we need to back up.’ There needs to be a curriculum that makes sense for those kids who come in who haven’t developed a language and whose access to the world is primarily visual.”

The curriculum builds on ASL, using it as a scaffolding for students to later learn English. “We want students to be able to understand, study, and leverage all that they can learn and master about a visual language and then take that metalinguistic awareness that they developed in their first language and be able to apply it in a second language,” says Czubek. He and DiPerri designed a “concurrent curriculum” where students first learn about a grammar principle in American Sign Language. Once they’ve mastered that, they go on to study how that same grammar principle is realized in English. “The curriculum begins as really fundamental, making sure that students grasp how language and ideas are organized. The modality difference between English as a spoken and written language and ASL as a signed language presents a huge chasm that has been really hard for our field to cross, but this curriculum allows us to do so.”

Czubek and DiPerri based the curriculum on a program they developed at the Scranton School for Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing Children in Pennsylvania in collaboration with the Learning Center for the Deaf’s Center for Research and Training in Massachusetts, which is run by Hoffmeister. The results over several years of testing were “consistently incredible,” Czubek says, with the majority of students in the program performing at or above levels of English proficiency and general knowledge.

PIONEERING A DUAL-LANGUAGE DESIGNATION

Such advances, as well as the broader advocacy of faculty like Hoffmeister, have deeply influenced Horace Mann’s Ciliberto, a graduate of BU’s deaf studies program.

A teacher at Horace Mann for more than a decade, beginning as a paraprofessional, she hopes to build on Czubek and DiPerri’s curriculum as part of the school’s dual-designation effort. For the last three years, students at Horace Mann,

“The modality difference between English as a spoken and written language and ASL as a signed language presents a huge chasm that has been really hard for our field to cross, but this curriculum allows us to do so.” Todd Czubek

who are taught by teams of ASL and English teachers, have been immersed in sign language learning from the time they enroll in kindergarten.

By giving deaf children the opportunity to learn ASL and English at a young age, she says, the school will be improving their ability to connect with their peers—and the world. W

LEARNING FAITH

Kathleen Corriveau
is on a mission to find out how children around the world develop religious beliefs

BY **RICH BARLOW** / PHOTO BY **CHRIS McINTOSH**

If you're a religious person who has been a subject in theology research, don't take this personally. Kathleen Corriveau says you're too WEIRD.

That's not a dig at the devout. WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) is the demographic description of the subjects who dominate studies of religious cognition, says Corriveau, an associate professor of applied human development. Those studies are rife with Christians, who are less than one-third of the world's total population, she says. This leaves a gaping hole in our understanding of how the majority of children in religious families around the world learn their religious beliefs and practices: stereotypes they hold about their own and other religious groups; how such stereotypes influence their interactions with people; and how they juggle their understanding of the supernatural with what they learn about science.

A global problem takes a global solution, and Corriveau is part of an ambitious one.

She and Rebekah Richert of the University of California, Riverside have received the second-largest grant ever from the John Templeton Foundation—$10 million over five years—to build a worldwide network of scholars to study those questions and how generations transmit and receive religious belief.

The Developing Belief Network is not the first such world-spanning collaboration in psychology research. "But we believe ours may be the first that truly allows for the study of diverse cultures using behavioral measures," says Corriveau, who spoke with *BU Wheelock* about the project.

***BU Wheelock:* Why is this research necessary?**

Corriveau: In psychology, there is a long history of making global inferences from samples of convenience. One recent paper reviewing developmental psychology studies found that less than 3 percent of participants came from South America, Africa, and Asia—which contain almost 85 percent of the world population. So our hope is to include scholars in the network and participants in our fieldsites that will allow us to explore what is culturally unique about belief formation and what is more universal. We think that by understanding the diversity of how young children are growing up, that will help to elucidate all of the common experiences that unite rather than divide us.

How many researchers do you hope the Developing Belief Network will have?

We are planning to keep the network somewhat small, around 10 to 20 researchers [at] at least 10 to 12 sites. We were amazed by the interest, especially in the middle of a pandemic. We are not yet sure which countries will be included, but ideally, we would like to include researchers and countries that highlight cultural and religious diversity while allowing for theoretically rich comparisons.

How many subjects do you hope to study?

The number of participants will be somewhat dependent on the fieldsites chosen. Ideally, we hope to include about 100 families per fieldsite, which we will study for three years. We are planning to pool the data for analysis purposes.

Why study children and religious beliefs?

Many concepts in religion cannot be observed through firsthand observation. The same is true in science; just look at how we've modified our behavior based on a virus none of us can see without a microscope. So we're very interested in how these concepts are discussed with children.

Given that we are hoping to capture diversity in belief formation across a variety of cultures, it is very likely that we will include participants who might identify as atheist or humanist. Indeed, in research we recently completed in Iran, China, and the US, we were able to include families in all countries who identified as secular.

"We think that by understanding the diversity of how young children are growing up, that will help to elucidate all of the common experiences that unite rather than divide us."

Are there particular faith traditions that you hope to include in the network's research?

Yes, the vast majority of research exploring the development of religious cognition has focused on Judeo-Christian beliefs, and too often does not include other religions. So we are hoping to include participants from a diverse sample, including monotheistic and pantheistic religions, as well as other cultures with a variety of supernatural and spiritual beliefs. Definitely Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, but then also indigenous communities with a variety of spiritual practices, such as the Shuar in Peru or the Maya in Mexico.

What methodologies will the studies use?

Our grant timeline is structured such that the first year is set aside to have conversations across the network to decide on a shared methodology. For that reason, we don't have a set design yet. In general, we're hoping to include measures that have been shown to be important in social cognitive development, such as children's developing understanding of mental states (for humans, as well as supernatural entities) and children's developing executive functioning abilities.

We're also imagining we will have some controlled experiments and some natural language samples to explore subtle differences in the language around how natural and supernatural entities are discussed. For example, adults often include what are called "modulations of assertion" when talking about supernatural entities, like saying, "I believe in God," but these are rarely included when talking about natural entities, like saying, "I believe in germs." W

COMMUNITY: ALUMNI

NOTES AND NEWS FROM YOU

Reflections at 101

Eileen (Maguire) Hawkes (Questrom'38, Wheelock'40) celebrated her 101st birthday in May, and reflects on her "very interesting" life. "I attended CBA [now Questrom] for two years when I was called in by the dean, who informed me there were no female accountants, only bookkeepers. He said the only professions for women were teaching or nursing. Nursing required starting over, so I transferred to SED [now Wheelock] and decided to teach accounting. I taught in New Hampshire, New York, and Massachusetts. When I got married, I was fired. In those days, female teachers were not allowed to be married," she writes. "We moved to California, where we were welcomed and our salaries more than doubled in one day. I have done a great deal of traveling. I have been to every continent (including Antarctica) and I have visited over 100 countries. I relate all this information to share my motto: Use it or lose it!"

An Inn for Active Military and Veterans

At The Loft at Hobble Inn B&B in Stowe, Vt., any veteran or active military and a guest can stay for one week, completely free. Mary Skelton ('70), who owns and operates Hobble Inn B&B, writes that she created The Loft—a one-bedroom, fully furnished and equipped condo located on the upper floor of a 150-year-old carriage barn attached to the inn—to honor her late father, late husband, and late father-in-law, all of whom were US veterans. Her oldest son is also an officer in the Marine Corps. "The response from guests is so heartwarming. It is a special place to relax, recharge, reconnect, and reenergize," Skelton writes.

Learning at CERN

Yaron "Roni" Teich ('16), a physics teacher at Somerville High School in Somerville, Mass., spent two weeks of summer 2019 just north of Geneva, Switzerland, where he and 45 fellow science educators from 33 different countries learned about the history, structure, and groundbreaking science behind the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) as part of the CERN International High School Teacher Programme.

Teich and his cohort toured the facilities at CERN, which is home to advanced machines related to particle physics. They got an up-close look at the Large Hadron Collider, the world's largest and most powerful particle accelerator, and took part in lectures by some of the top scientists in the field, learning about what the future of particle physics might look like. The program provided Teich a deeper understanding of CERN and particle physics, which he has taken back to his lessons at Somerville High School.

Physics teacher Yaron Teich ('16) spent two weeks of summer 2019 at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN).

REMEMBERING
LOVIDA HARDIN COLEMAN, SR.

Courtesy of Yaron Teich; Courtesy of Hardin Coleman

Lovida Hardin Coleman, Sr. ('44) passed away on May 25, 2020. Coleman, who earned a degree in elementary education from BU, was involved in many charitable and civic engagements, having served on the boards of schools, museums, and historical sites around Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., including the Germantown Friends School, the Barnes Foundation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Sidwell Friends School, and the National Gallery of Art. She established a scholarship at BU Wheelock for "future generations of educators who share her belief that education is the core of a democratic and just society, and that a well-trained teacher is the core of quality education."

It was during her studies in Boston that she met William T. Coleman, Jr., who would go on to become a noted civil rights attorney and serve as transportation secretary under President Gerald R. Ford. They married in 1945 and, in part thanks to his work, Coleman would meet almost every US president since Eisenhower and travel the world, including China, Russia, Brazil, and Western Europe. A New Orleans native, Coleman was known for her hospitality and for her cooking, particularly her gumbo. She loved entertaining guests—famous politicians, lawyers, and friends alike.

Coleman was predeceased by her husband and daughter, Lovida Hardin Coleman, Jr. She is survived by her two sons, William Thaddeus Coleman III and Hardin Coleman, dean emeritus of BU Wheelock; two daughters-in-law; four grandsons; one granddaughter; her brother; and many nieces and nephews.

PUBLISHED

BU Wheelock alums in print

Patrick Diamond Book Art: *Come Sunday*, 1976, courtesy Romare Bearden Foundation

Harriet Hodgson ('57) *The Grandma Force: How Grandmothers are Changing Grandchildren, Families, and Themselves* (Boutique of Quality Books, 2019), her 37th book, discussing the powerful role grandmothers can play in their grandchildren's lives.

Sheri Koones ('70) *Downsize: Living Large in a Small House* (Taunton Press, 2019), which provides advice for efficiently using space in homes that are 2,000 square feet or less.

Patrick Diamond ('72,'73) *The Incredible Joy of Collecting African American Art: My Journey from Frog Town, S.C., to the National Gallery* (AK Classics, LLC, 2020), which follows Diamond's path from growing up in poverty in South Carolina to becoming a passionate collector of African American art. Learn more at incrediblejoyofcollecting.com.

Rita Losee ('73, Sargent'91) *Soaring Seniors: Stories, Steps and Strategies for Living Full-Out After Fifty, Sixty, Seventy...* (AuthorHouse, 2018), which Losee wrote to "change the beliefs and behaviors of seniors, or soon-to-be seniors, from focus on the four Ds—diminishment, deterioration, disease, and death—to a period of thriving, physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and financially."

Robert Schachter ('75) *Mindfulness for Stress Management: 50 Ways to Improve Your Mood and Cultivate Calmness* (Althea Press, 2019), which includes 50 techniques to deal with various types of stress.

Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault ('79) *Living When Everything Changed: My Life in Academia* (Rutgers University Press, 2019), a memoir describing how a Catholic girl from small-town Nebraska discovered her callings as a feminist, an academic, and a university administrator.

Carla Meskill ('82,'88) *Teaching Children Online* (Multilingual Matters, 2019), describing best practices in online education.

Cara Koch ('90) *From Heartbreak to Healing: Resolving Parental Alienation* (Perreten Press, 2020), which reveals the consequences of a child being turned against one of their parents and provides advice of what to do if one experiences parental alienation.

Michelle Manes ('93), **Bowen Kerins ('97)**, and **Kevin Waterman ('04)** *Linear Algebra and Geometry* (MAA Press, 2019), an introductory textbook "written in a friendly, approachable voice."

Bernice Lerner ('01) *All the Horrors of War: A Jewish Girl, a British Doctor, and the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), which traces the converging stories of Rachel Genuth, a Jewish teenager in a concentration camp, and British Brigadier H. L. Glyn Hughes, a doctor who helped liberate Bergen-Belsen. Lerner is Genuth's daughter.

Matthew Robinson ('10) *Lions, Tigers, and...Bulldogs? An unofficial guide to the legends and lore of the Ivy League* (BookBaby, 2019), which explores little-known facts of Ivy League colleges.

Jennifer Helfand ('12) *The Life of Zerah* (Mosaic Street Press, 2018), an illustrated spiritual allegory about a seed that wants to become a tree in the hopes of finding love, published under Helfand's pen name, Jordana Chana Mayim.

AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Patricia Ann Clark ('78) received the 2019 Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she earned her PhD in 1993. She is professor and chair of the early childhood department at Ball State University.

Karen Hebert-Maccaro ('00) became CEO of Babson Executive Education, which runs programming that focuses on developing an entrepreneurial mindset.

Amanda Szaraz (CAS'04, Wheelock'05) was named the 2019 Illinois School Counselor of the Year by the Illinois School Counselor Association. She is the counselor at A.N. Pritzker School, where she has advocated for systemic change that allows students to have increased access to their school counselors. Szaraz also implemented a project to help close the achievement gap between Black students and their white and Latinx peers through targeted interventions and mentoring.

Pamela (Osing) Jenkins ('05,'06) was honored as the Maryland Pupil Personnel Worker of the Year 2018–2019 by the Maryland Association of Pupil Personnel. Jenkins was a school counselor for 10 years before becoming a pupil personnel worker. She advocates for students and serves Charles County Public Schools in the areas of attendance, discipline, counseling, residency, homelessness, and crisis support.

GOT NEWS TO SHARE?

We'd love to hear from you at wheelockalum@bu.edu.

BU WHEELOCK ALUMNI AWARDEES

BU Wheelock honored exceptional graduates at its second annual Alumni Awardees ceremony—conducted virtually this year—on October 1. This year's winners were:

Linda Banks-Santilli ('85), associate dean for academic affairs and a clinical associate professor at BU Wheelock, was recognized with a distinguished contribution to the alma mater and alumni

Julie Duran (CGS'06, ENG'09, Wheelock'10), high school principal at Boston Prep in Hyde Park, Mass., received a young alumni award (see story on page 10)

Saki Iwamoto ('10,'11), a health and wellness educator with the Boston Children's Museum, also received a young alumni award

Oneida Fox Roye ('91,'16), the director of English language arts and literacy, K–12, for Boston Public Schools, won the Lucy Wheelock Award; and

Jane Nady Sigmon ('72), a senior advisor in the US State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, was given the Global Impact Award.

WHY I GIVE

CAROL KORNITZER ('66) SUPPORTS FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

Growing up in eastern Tennessee, Carol Kornitzer felt she had few career options.

"For my era, it was really hard," she says, "because women were very limited in what we could do: nurse, teacher."

Instead, because she had loved acting in high school, she came to Boston University's College of Fine Arts to study theater. In her junior year, though, "I walked into the building and this light bulb went off in my head: 'I don't belong here. This is a creative place, and I am definitely more academic,'" Kornitzer ('66) says. "Now what am I going to do?"

Her roommate, a speech pathology major, supplied the answer: Kornitzer switched majors (and BU schools), then worked as a speech pathologist in hospitals before taking a break to raise her children. Eight years later, she felt too far behind to go back. So, again, now what?

"When you decide you're not going to do something," she says, "it's hard to figure out what to do next."

Her husband, John, suggested she take accounting classes, which she would find useful in helping to start the couple's asset management company.

"I loved being back in school," Kornitzer says—and, she adds with a laugh, "getting away from the chaos of two children."

Now retired from that second career, Kornitzer joins her husband in giving back. They focus their philanthropy on the arts and education.

"My husband was first-generation to college," she says, "and he always had a feeling for people who can't afford to go."

That's why they recently established a Century Challenge scholarship that will be awarded preferentially to first-generation students at BU Wheelock.

"For us to support someone who would not have had a chance to go—that's where we're coming from." And, as Kornitzer knows herself, a college degree—and even courses outside one's eventual major—opens doors that might otherwise remain closed.—*Louise Kennedy*

PHOTO BY RYAN NICHOLSON

BY **MARA SASSOON** / PHOTO BY **CYDNEY SCOTT**

JAVIER RIVERA ON HOW COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS HIGHLIGHTED THE TENACITY OF TEACHERS—AND THE ABILITY OF STUDENTS TO ADAPT

Javier Rivera was in the final semester of his master's in special education when the COVID-19 pandemic forced Boston Public Schools to move classes online. While the switch to remote teaching was an arduous task for many educators, it was one that was particularly challenging for Rivera (CAS'18, Wheelock'20): he was working with students in grades 1–3 with autism and developmental delays as part of a student teaching practicum.

According to the Autism Society, autism is often characterized by a preference for routine—transitions can be tough for people with the developmental disorder. Before the pandemic, Rivera and his supervising teacher at the Orchard Gardens K–8 School in Roxbury, Mass., made sure to have clear and explicit routines for the students.

"Everyone knew what to expect," Rivera says. Those routines evaporated overnight when school buildings closed. "There was very little precedent to springboard from when remote learning began. Teachers were mostly left to figure it out on their own."

Besides needing to adapt lesson plans and digitize materials, Rivera says he and his supervising teacher also needed to gauge their students' thresholds for online learning. But once they settled on an approach and established a routine, they found online learning provided some fun moments for their students. One student even learned how to compose emails and would send them updates. "She got a real kick out of using emojis—moments like these brought light to our dark circumstances."

Rivera is now teaching kindergarten and first-grade students with autism at Sumner Avenue Elementary School in Springfield, Mass. His time at BU Wheelock, he says, taught him to "seek out and amplify the voices of those I serve. Often, the voices of students with disabilities, especially students with severe disabilities, and their caregivers are ignored under the guise of teachers being perceived as the experts," he says. "It's critical to understand that the best way to serve these populations is to view them as equal collaborators."

And if there is one thing the pandemic has revealed to Rivera, it's that teachers and students alike are resilient. "Overall, the transition to online learning has demonstrated the immense tenacity of teachers and the capability of our students. It has been extremely motivating to see how teachers' innovation, passion, and compassion have coalesced to tackle these complex issues related to educating students remotely."

Boston University Wheelock College of Education
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