2016-17: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

EYE ON PRACTICE

Supporting Children’s Success

In the United States (US), schools have historically held deep connections with the communities where they are located. Early public schools developed as a response to community needs, and were often the centers in their communities. One-room schoolhouses served as places to gather, celebrate, and recreate, and communities maintained control over both what was taught and who taught it. These connections produced strong accountability and fostered relationships between teachers and families. The connections held particular significance for African American communities. Excluded from public learning opportunities, countless examples demonstrate how African American communities established schools that communally supported children to survive and thrive. At this time, community-school relationships were facilitated by the relative homogeneity of the communities served by any one school — there was alignment in values, expectations and ways of being due to the similarity of those in attendance.

The 19th Century brought great change in the fabric of U.S. public education, particularly as the nation moved toward industrialization — and with it, a deliberate breakdown of the links between school and community. Education of the masses moved toward the goals of centralization and standardization, and was pulled by political desires to become modern and efficient; thus, they became more universal. In contrast to connecting with communities, public education deliberately sought to silence the family and community voices — particularly in African American and immigrant communities. The 1960s saw greater push for both re-connection and greater community control of schools as schools became part of the broader struggle for civil rights.

But why do connections between communities and schools matter today?

Research tells us that for schools to meet children’s needs, they must be connected to the communities in which these children live and grow — particularly with children’s families and other spatial and social communities. When schools and communities are connected children benefit from:

- More complete views of child development and greater resources to see and support the whole child
- Connected health and social services
- Reduced barriers for school engagement and performance, particularly for low

Continued on page 2 ▶
Message from the Director

Eye on Practice

income and minoritized students
• Overlapping practices across schools and homes, and other service providers

Students’ academic and social development are at the core of what schools purport to do, and strong connections between communities and schools foster this development. Research points to academic and social outcomes associated with these connections such as:
• Improved student attendance
• Increased student achievement and promotion, and
• Improved school climate
• Demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement, including improved grades and test scores
• Attend school regularly
• Exhibit better adaptability, social skills and behavior in school
• Graduate and engage in post-secondary education

When communities and schools are connected, there are greater opportunities and greater resources for recognizing and meeting children’s needs in ongoing ways that avoid gaps in educational opportunities and support. Such connections allow educators to build community-focused relationships that place children at the center.

In addition to such benefits, the changing racial demographics of students across the U.S. necessitate a community connection, as these changes contrast with the demographics of the country’s teachers. The elementary and secondary teaching force is overwhelmingly White (approximately 82 percent) and works with predominately White educational leaders (approximately 80 percent). These percentages have remained relatively stable in the past decade (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage distribution of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>83.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian/AK Native</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

In contrast, the student body of U.S. public schools continues to shift away from a White majority. In fall 2015, the student population shifted to a majority minority student population, with the number of non-White students comprising over 50 percent of the U.S. elementary and secondary school population (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). By 2025, public elementary and secondary student demographics are predicted to be 46 percent White, 15 percent Black, 29 percent Hispanic/Latinx, 6 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4 percent students of two or more races. Thus, there is a growing demographic divide between teachers and students.

Without strong community-school connections, these demographics are particularly concerning because of the ways that White, middle-class cultural norms and values continue to be foreworded in classrooms as the guides for appropriate behavior, communication, instructional practices, and family engagement. Educators and school leaders adopting colorblind mindsets often fail to acknowledge the relevance of students’ home cultures, but students’ racialized experiences shape their ways of knowing both inside and outside of the classroom. Research demonstrates that many teachers report feeling unprepared to connect with diverse populations and deal with what

At the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic year, we developed and named a set of belief statements as an essential next step in our Center’s development. Recognizing that our beliefs shape our individual and collective practices and actions, we hope these statements might provide additional clarity on who we are and who we are becoming as a Center to cultivate partnerships and links with communities to improve the human condition of those engaged in and impacted by urban education. At CUE, we believe in:

LEARNING: Learning from and with others is essential for building knowledge and understanding.

RELATIONSHIPS: Relationships are at the core of effective educational policies and practices.

ASSETS: People and communities have a wide range of strengths from which we should recognize, cultivate, and build.

SHARING: Sharing what we know and possess to enrich communities and collective interests.

EQUITY: Striving and advocating for equitable and justice-centered policies and practices.

ACTION: Moving our knowledge, understanding, and skills into practices to improve education and society.

At the heart of the principles above is the notion that there is rich (and often unrecognized) human capital in our communities and schools. Imagine if we worked collaboratively and collectively to ensure that every student, educator, community member, and policymaker realized and reached his or her full capacity? I believe we get one step closer when we connect community with school.

Dr. Rich Milner, Director of the Center for Urban Education and Helen Faison Endowed Chair of Urban Education
they consider challenging behaviors, even after attending accredited teacher preparation programs. And disparities in negative outcomes for Black and Brown children including suspensions, expulsions, in-school arrests, and academic disengagement point to concrete outcomes of such under-preparedness.

These outcomes point to the importance of establishing community and school connections.

While there is strong evidence supporting the value of connecting communities and schools, there is no one model or way to connect them. There are multiple and overlapping meanings, and what these connections look like depends on the community of practice you support. For instance, teachers’ thinking and practices should be shaped by understanding their students’ interests, experiences, and ways in which they interact with family and community members outside of school. Similarly, families should feel welcomed in schools and experience voice and validation in educational spaces.

**Strategies for Connecting Families, Communities, and Schools**

In order for families, communities, and schools to best connect, educators and school leaders must have a better understanding of their students’ families, home experiences, contexts, and communities. Drawing from this knowledge, they can develop processes and strategies to bridge school- and home-based activities, and increase support for student learning. This includes:

- Recognizing and building on the cultural and community assets of students
- Practicing power sharing, learning to leave status at the door
- Identifying community leaders who can speak to and on behalf of the local community
- Building on and from the voices of community
- Being aware of (and removing) potential barriers to family involvement (such as timing, childcare, and transportation)
- Designing collaborative programming - community connections should be integrated into the fabric of the school

Community involvement cannot be one-size-fits-all because schools, families and communities are different. It must be intentionally designed with a deliberate focus of resources, infrastructure, and educator capacity, and continue in an ongoing, iterative process.

**Resources**


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**Figure 1. Percentage distribution of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2003, 2013, and 2025**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2025</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>Two or more races</td>
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</tbody>
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**Eye on Practice**

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The CUE Brown Bags are a series of monthly lunch discussions designed to stimulate dialogue about pertinent issues in urban education, and develop potential collaborations with an urban education focus. In keeping with this year’s academic theme, Connecting Communities and Schools, CUE invited educators, administrators and activists from across the Pittsburgh area of urban education to share their research, practices, and lessons.

After School Community-Based Spaces: Responding to the Real Needs of Urban Youth
October 11, 2016
Facilitated by Dr. Tom Akiva, Assistant Professor of Applied Developmental Psychology, Department of Psychology in Education

Sorting Secondary Students for Learning: Implications for Urban Schools and Communities
November 15, 2016
Facilitated by Dr. Sean Kelly, Associate Professor and Director of PhD Studies, Department of Administrative and Policy Studies.

I Want To See Real Urban Schools: Preservice Teacher Perceptions of Urban Schooling
January 19, 2017
Facilitated by Katrina Bartow Jacobs, Visiting Assistant Professor of Language, Literacy and Culture, Department of Instruction and Learning

Practitioners Talking About Race With Students: One School’s Journey
February 16, 2017
Facilitated by Megan O’Brien, Christie Herring, Diana Gomez and Katie Pohl, in-service teachers, The Falk School

Closing the Skills and Opportunity Gap for Urban Students: Learning from the “Schools That Can” Experience in Pittsburgh
March 14, 2017
Facilitated by Carol Wooten, Adjunct Faculty, Department of Administrative and Policy Studies; Co-Founder, Propel Schools; Senior Consultant, Schools That Can - Pittsburgh.

Equity and Student Outcomes Data for Pittsburgh Public Schools
April 5, 2017
Facilitated by James Fogarty, Director, A+ Schools

Responding to Reality is designed to invite University faculty and community members to engage with a panel of experts and each other in response to real-world occurrences that can have real implications for education. Our first session, titled, Black, White & Blue: Addressing Race and Police Shootings in Classroom Talk, was designed to amplify the power of challenging, uncomfortable discourse, and devise strategies for bringing these conversations into the classroom. CUE Assistant Professor Ashley Woodson moderated the event, which included panelists Gerald Dickinson, Assistant Professor of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, Waverly Duck, Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, Lisa DeAngelo, Assistant Professor of Higher Education, and Commander Eric Holmes of the Pittsburgh Police.

Responding to Reality Series
August 31, 2016

CUE’s vision is to be a space of learning and sharing with communities to positively transform educational opportunities and experiences.
CUE Director Rich Milner, PhD was named a Prestigious Visiting Scholar in the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington in Seattle. For the fifth consecutive year, he was named to Education Week’s Edu Scholar Public Presence Rankings. In December 2016, he delivered a plenary address at the Literacy Research Association and published five scholarly journal articles.

Lori Delale-O’Connor, PhD is CUE’s Associate Director of Research and Development, and a Research Assistant Professor of Education. Her teaching, research, and policy interests focus on urban education, sociology of education, positive child and youth development, and parent education. This year, she presented at both the American Sociological Society’s and American Educational Research Association’s Annual Meetings, as well as on local panels around equity in Pittsburgh. Lori recently published “Using what you’ve got: The possession and use of official information in urban school choice” in the journal Equity and Excellence in Education. In the fall of 2017, she will begin a tenure-track role at CUE.

Erika Gold Kestenberg, PhD is CUE’s Associate Director of Educator Development and Practice. She coordinates the Urban Scholars Program in the Department of Instruction and Learning, and serves as a visiting assistant professor of Urban Education and co-leader of the Transformative Intergroup Dialogue Collaborative. She was part of the inaugural group to complete Pitt’s new Diversity and Inclusion Certificate Program.

Ashley N. Woodson, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Urban Education and Instruction and Learning. Her research explores the racial, gendered, sexual and religious dimensions of Black adolescents’ civic experience. In the fall of 2017, she will join the University of Missouri, Columbia, as the Staffer Endowed Assistant Professor of Learning, Teaching and Curriculum.

Heather B. Cunningham, PhD is a Visiting Clinical Assistant Professor and CUE’s online teaching and learning manager. Her primary work at CUE involves creating online professional development for teachers and mentors working in urban 6-12 settings, and serving an instructor for pre-service teachers in the Urban Education Certificate Program. In the fall of 2017, she will join the faculty of Chatham University as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Education.

Abiola Farinde-Wu, PhD is a Visiting Assistant Professor at CUE. Her research interests include the educational experiences and outcomes of Black women and girls, teacher retention, and urban teacher education. In the fall of 2017, she will join the faculty at the University of Massachusetts Boston as a tenure-track Assistant Professor.

Roderick L. Carey, PhD joined CUE in 2015 as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow. His research has been published in the Urban Review, Independent School, and Educational Administration Quarterly. In the fall of 2017, he will join the faculty at the University of Delaware as an Assistant Professor in the department of Human Development and Family Sciences, where his teaching and research will focus on interventions and strategies for best meeting the educational challenges of high-need youth, families, and communities in urban social and learning contexts.

Adam Alvarez is a fourth-year doctoral student and K. Leroy Irvis Fellow in the Social and Comparative Analysis in Education program. He also serves as a representative on the Social Justice and Diversity Committee, and as graduate research and teaching associate at CUE. His research interests include race and trauma in the social context of education, and the sociological factors that influence inequity.

Ira Murray is a K. Leroy Irvis Fellow, fourth-year doctoral student in Social and Comparative Analysis in Education, and a research and teaching associate CUE. His research interests include sociopolitical youth development both inside and outside of school, as well as relationships between schools and communities in urban contexts.

DaVonna Graham is a second-year doctoral student in Language, Literacy and Culture and a K. Leroy Irvis Fellow. As a graduate research and teaching associate at CUE, DaVonna serves on the Community Engagement and Educator Development & Practice affinity groups, as well as an Editorial Assistant for the journal Urban Education.

Derrick Heck is a second-year doctoral student in Administrative and Policy Studies, and a K. Leroy Irvis Fellow. He also serves as a graduate research and teaching associate at CUE, as well as on the Community Engagement affinity group.

Jawanza Kalonji Rand is a second-year doctoral student and Dean’s Scholar in the Urban Education and Social & Comparative Analysis of Education programs in the School of Education. A research and teaching associate with CUE, Jawanza is involved in the Student Academic & Social Development affinity group.

Amy Witherspoon is the center administrator at CUE. Amy worked as an assistant testing coordinator and a mathematics aide at a charter high school school in Detroit, where she also served as a robotics mentor for the FIRST Robotics team and class moderator. She is a graduate of Colby College.

Matt Wein has served as CUE’s media arts and communications manager since 2015. He has more than 12 years’ experience as a writer, reporter, photographer, editor, and media consultant. He holds a bachelor’s in History from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master’s in Library Science from Clarion University.
Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete

Dr. Jeff Duncan-Andrade
Associate Professor of Raza Studies and Education,
San Francisco State University

October 20, 2016
4 to 6 p.m.
The University Club

What are the material conditions that affect urban youth before they step foot in our classrooms? What does it mean to develop educational environments that are relevant and responsive to these conditions? How should these educational spaces define success for students and teachers? This talk offered strategies for developing educators who are better equipped to create environments for understanding and responding to them.

CUE Director Rich Milner presents Jeff Duncan-Andrade with the event poster following Dr. Duncan Andrade's CUEtalk.

Duncan-Andrade talks school discipline during his lunchtime book study. CUE purchased and donated 60 copies of Duncan-Andrade’s book to local students, educators, and community members to help facilitate this discussion.

Duncan-Andrade discussed different concepts of hope in urban education before a crowd of more than 300 attendees.
The Essential Role of Local Communities in Teacher Education
Dr. Ken Zeichner
Boeing Professor of Teacher Education, University of Washington, Seattle
February 23, 2017
4 to 6 p.m.
121 Lawrence Hall

Why should teacher education programs engage local community members in preparing new teachers who will go on to work in those communities? How can learning about a community’s assets and expertise help further teacher preparedness? In this talk, Ken Zeichner explored a variety of family and community-centered teacher education efforts that collaboratively engage local community members as teacher educators and foster community engagement, involvement, and solidarity to maximize teacher preparedness.
CUE’s success is dependent on its ability to engage meaningfully and effectively with partners in the community, among others. Our Community Partnership and Engagement affinity group works with parents, school districts, students, educators, administrators, and government officials to inform and advance our work.

Reflection into Action

Moving the Conversation Forward

Reflection into Action sessions occur at community locations outside the University, and are designed to create collective strategies for advancing the ideas presented during our lecture series into actionable plans for improving our schools and communities.

Reflection into Action discussion bridges the gaps between theory and practice by connecting CUE with local schools, districts, student groups, parents, and communities.

During the 2016-17 academic year, the CUE Lecture Series hosted talks from Drs. Jeff Duncan-Andrade and Ken Zeichner on restoring critical hope in underserved urban schools and communities, and bridging gaps between communities and teacher education programs, respectively. Both speakers outlined how to improve educational opportunities for all students by changing the ways we think of the systems that make it difficult for so many to find success, and challenged listeners to reflect on ways that teacher education programs should tap urban communities and families as resources for supporting schools and teacher learning.

To move reflection into action, we hosted two successful community forums to advance recommendations brought up in the lectures. Educators in attendance shared their classroom practices, and collaborated with students, parents, and community members to devise new strategies.

Fall Reflection into Action: Connecting Communities and Schools

Jeron X. Grayson Center
October 26, 2016

The Fall Reflection into Action took place at the Jeron X. Grayson Center. Panelists included Dr. Raymond Logan (psychologist), Chester Stoney (teacher at Propel Andrew Street), Kaylen Moore (Pitt doctoral candidate), and Anthony Brown (junior at UPrep School at Milliones).

They shared reflections on the difference between schooling and education, the importance of rejecting hopelessness, and ways to build solidarity between challenged communities and schools.

Spring Reflection into Action: Bridging Communities and Schools

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
March 2, 2017

The Spring Reflection into Action took place at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Panelists included Kiva A. Fisher-Green, MSW (social worker at Primary Care Health Services) Janine Frazier Macklin (external engagement & grants manager for Urban Pathways K-5 College Charter School), and Charles Morris (school counselor at Westinghouse High School).

They shared reflections on the benefits and challenges on community centered teaching approaches, building better mechanisms for family involvement in schools, and the peril and promises for building optimal communication and partnerships between schools and community organizations.
The Educator Development & Practice affinity group works to devise, document, and deliver the tools and processes teachers and administrators need for improving urban school systems.

**Urban Scholars Program**
Designed to complement the School of Education’s Master of Arts in Teaching and Professional Year programs, CUE’s Urban Scholars program provides students with additional time, resources, experiences, and support to develop knowledge, skills, mindsets, beliefs and dispositions needed to be an effective teacher of all students in diverse urban schools.

Program benefits include:
- Participants well-positioned for hiring in urban districts, which have the most job opportunities
- A full school year observing and teaching in an urban school
- An Urban Scholars Seminar in fall and spring semesters, supporting students’ needs
- Participation in relationship-building activities with students and school community
- Access to urban education experts and other valuable resources through CUE
- Pipeline into early consideration for positions in partner districts
- Personalized support for each student

**Certificate in Urban Education**
This year, CUE piloted a 15-credit Certificate in Urban Education program. Beginning with a foundation of summer courses: “Introduction to Urban Education,” “Teaching Through a Social Worker’s Lens” (in collaboration with the School of Social Work), and an Urban Identity seminar. Fall semester courses included “Building Relationships with Students, Families, and Communities,” and “Relational Classroom Management.” All courses built the foundation for spring’s coursework, “Culturally Responsive Teaching” and “Becoming a Change Agent.”

**Department of Education Endorsement**
CUE is leading a statewide committee of educators and faculty from the University of Pittsburgh, Temple University, Drexel University, and K-12 leadership to develop an official Pennsylvania Department of Education Endorsement in Urban Education. The work will be grounded in our Certificate in Urban Education program competencies, created by CUE Director Rich Milner, and cited in his 2015 book, *Rac(e)ing to Class*. This effort will produce a clear declaration that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania acknowledges and values the importance of achieving greater equity for our students in urban spaces, especially students of color and those living below the poverty line, whose voices and needs will be central in the training of educators across the state.

**Intergroup Dialogue Collaborative**
The Transformative Intergroup Dialogues (TIGD) initiative is a series of workshops and classes for students, faculty and staff consisting of interactive experiences provided in a variety of formats relevant and responsive to the participants’ needs and interests, especially as they relate to social group identities.

Intergroup Dialogues, according to Pat Gurin (2013) Dialogue Across Difference aim to increase participants’ knowledge of intergroup issues, especially group-based social identities and inequalities, improve and deepen intergroup communication and relationships, and develop skills in and commitment to intergroup collaboration and action.

If you would like to be a part of the Transformative Intergroup Dialogues Collaborative, please contact Erika Gold Kestenberg at erikagk@pitt.edu or CUE Faculty Fellow Mario C. Browne at mcb77@pitt.edu.
The Center for Urban Education hosted its second annual Summer Educator Forum (CUESEF) on June 20-21, 2017. CUESEF is a professional learning experience for teachers in Pittsburgh and surrounding area that focuses on developing culturally responsive teaching.

CUESEF 2017 offered two tracks of programming over the two-day period. CUESEF PreK-5 was an introductory-level program for elementary teachers geared towards introducing them to foundations of culturally responsive teaching, and introduced strategies to help them put these ideas into practice. CUESEF 6-12 built upon last year’s inaugural edition of the forum. In addition to inviting back last year’s participants, CUESEF 6-12 included a new group of educators and experts in the fields of English Language Arts and math for more intensive opportunities in lesson planning and collaboration. Participants in both programs had the opportunity to earn 15 Act 48 professional development credits.

During this immersive, two-day forum, participants engaged with students, community leaders, and national experts to learn about practices developed from cutting-edge research. They also worked with visiting scholars and one another in workshops, lectures, panels, and conversations which enabled them to form deep and lasting links between the concepts of culturally responsive teaching and their daily instructional practices. Dr. Rich Milner delivered the forum’s opening keynote address.
Several times a year, CUE offers its faculty and graduate fellows the opportunity to review and revise their current writing during day-long writing retreats. Writing retreats involve both large group activity and small breakout sessions, and are designed to give researchers constructive peer feedback in an informal setting.
Members of the CUE leadership team, including Dr. Rich Milner, Dr. Lori Delale-O’Connor, Dr. Erika Gold Kestenberg, Dr. Roderick Carey, Dr. Abiola Farinde-Wu, and Dr. Heather Cunningham collaborated to provide a six-session professional development series for all teachers at University Preparatory School at Margret Milliones 6-12 on topics including race, class, diversity, and opportunity gaps. Between November 2016 and January 2017, in the professional development period before school started, teachers met at UPrep with a CUE facilitator to discuss these concepts as presented in CUE Director Rich Milner’s 2010 book, “Start Where You Are But Don’t Stay There” to make connections to their own experiences in the classroom. During the final session, teachers formed action plans for improving their instructional practices to better support students. CUE worked in collaboration with the school’s principal, Mr. Christopher Horne, to provide this Act 48 professional development series for UPrep teachers.
The Student Academic and Social Development affinity group focuses on experiences and support of students at all levels. Through research, practice, and school and community partnerships, SASD works to study and enhance student-learned, academic, and social development.

**Early Childhood Collaborative**

The University of Pittsburgh’s Early Childhood Collaborative (UPECC), was organized last year to bring together faculty from across the School of Education whose research and practice focus on young children. Joining the Center for Urban Education team for UPEEC are faculty members in the Departments of Psychology in Education, Health and Physical Activity and Instruction and Learning, the Office of Child Development and The Falk School. UPECC’s mission is to strengthen and combine efforts to raise awareness, study, and impact early childhood learning and development. UPECC facilitates scholarly community building, networking, sharing diverse perspectives, and outreach. To learn more about UPECC, please contact Dr. Anna Arlotta-Guerrero at ana28@pitt.edu.

**Ready To Learn**

The main project associated with SASD is Ready to Learn, a tutoring-and-mentoring initiative and research study that connects Pitt undergraduate students with Pittsburgh Public School students. The goal is to provide grade school students with experiences to support their academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and social skill development. Since the program’s inception in 2014, RTL has served 60 elementary, middle, and high school students, and supported 30 Pitt mentors. Both Pitt undergraduate mentors and RTL PPS scholars engage in learning opportunities and social events in and around the University of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh area. Pitt undergraduate mentors are prepared to cultivate the learning and development of culturally diverse middle and high school students.

In the fall 2016, CUE expanded the Ready to Learn program into Miller PreK-5 African-Centered Academy, a feeder school into UPrep. This expansion has allowed for an increased number of participants in the program, influenced a cadre of students who will matriculate into the middle and high schools in the Hill District, and allowed for sustained tutoring and mentoring of students over a longer period. The expansion began with 4th and 5th grade students.

To effectively mentor and tutor PPS students, Pitt mentors complete seminar training sessions each semester to build five competencies: 1) understanding urban context, 2) pedagogy, 3) mentoring and tutoring (mathematics, English, financial literacy, life skills, and study skills), 4) participatory action research, and 5) arts and technology.

Since the beginning of the program, scholars have engaged in critical work. Scholars have forged positive, culturally responsive, mentor-mentee relationships, and tutoring and mentoring sessions have been academically driven. Data show strong academic improvement among all students who actively participated in RTL. Further, the RTL leadership team has systematically studied the program’s development to improve the program’s effectiveness and better meet the needs of our students, and presented its findings at the 2016 and 2017 annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association, and at the annual meeting of the National Association for Multicultural Education.
We recognize the importance of learning more about students’ realities through listening to their voices. This year, we spoke with two of our most senior Ready to Learn program participants. Taylor, a senior at Pitt, and Nason, an 11th grade student at Margaret Milliones, joined Ready to Learn in the fall of 2014, and today they remain committed to the program, which is in its 8th semester. In their interviews, Taylor and Nason provided glimpses into their experiences in the Ready to Learn program. We are excited to highlight the voices of two scholars who have been with the program since its inception.

TAYLOR

Where are you from?
I’m from a small diverse neighborhood in Washington, D.C., called Forest Hills. It is about five minutes away from the National Zoo. I have lived around there since I was about three years old. Most of my family currently lives in New York, where my mom and her siblings grew up.

What do you study here at Pitt?
I study Psychology and Pre-Med, with minors in Theatre Arts and Africana Studies. I am also pursuing a certificate in Conceptual Foundations of Medicine. I recently changed my major from Neuroscience to Psychology because I found that I was more interested in the study of behavior. I participated in a couple of summer internships in high school with Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and that fueled my internship in the study of the brain and behavior.

What drew you to RTL?
I was intrigued by the Ready to Learn program because it allows me to mentor and tutor students who, because of economic disadvantages, may not have the same opportunities as others. The program also helps us develop our research skills, which is important to me. Also, prior to attending Pitt, I had never been to Pittsburgh, and Ready to Learn allowed me to familiarize myself with communities here. Like our scholar mission states, “we are advocates and change agents,” and I feel like I can really make an impact supporting students in strengthening their academic skills.

How long have you been in the program?
I have been with the Ready to Learn program since fall 2014, and I have completed both the culminating participatory action research and the technological resources projects. I now try to provide feedback to newer peer tutors when and where I can. I’ve been able to assist the new mentors with their action research and provide assistance when they are struggling.

“I was intrigued by the Ready to Learn program because it allows me to mentor and tutor students who, because of economic disadvantages, may not have the same opportunities as others.”

What are some of your favorite things about being in the program?
Our group of students is one of my favorite things. They all add something different to the program. Another part I’ve enjoyed was when we took part in Kids Cook, which is a Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank project that teaches about nutrition and facilitates cooking demonstrations. I also liked attending theatre productions at Pitt, like Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

How does what you study at Pitt connect with what you have learned in the program?
I am really interested in research, as I was all throughout high school, and Ready to Learn allowed me the opportunity to lead my own research. I learned that research is not easy; for example, making sure you have people to participate in your research can be difficult. I have also learned how to effectively collect data, which is a pretty crucial part of the whole thing.
Tell me about your mentee, Nason.

When I first met Nason, he was a quiet 9th grade student at Milliones. I remember he wanted to be a famous wrestler and a video game designer. Over the past year or so, he has matured tremendously and talks more about staying in Pennsylvania so that he can attend college close to home. I definitely have seen him progress as his motivation to graduate high school has increased and he sees the importance of education. He used to struggle in his math courses, but now he seems to be enjoying it more. He has gravitated more towards physics and is often vocal in class. He is the most talkative one of his group of friends, and always has interesting stories to tell us during after school tutoring.

I have to admit, my first encounter with Nason was awkward. He was in his history class and I pulled his teacher aside to ask her who he was. The class pretty much froze and looked at him. He was very quiet and reluctant to get up out of his seat. It was like this for about the first month, but as we got to know each other, he opened up and we learned so much about each other.

Where are you from?
I was born and raised in Pittsburgh.

How would you describe yourself?
I am outgoing, calm, determined, respectful, and passionate. I say that because that's what other people have told me, but I also think I know my own characteristics.

What drew you to RTL?
I think the big thing was just getting the help for school, like tutoring. I wanted to boost up my grades and also learn more about college. I also wanted to have a tutor to bond with.

Tell me about your mentor.
Taylor is respectful. Nice. She knows when to get serious about stuff, you know? She's like that. Overall, she is a good person and fun to be around. Our relationship just got better as time went on and we shared different experiences we had. I remember the first time I met Taylor. She came into my class, and my teacher just called me up. Everyone looked at me, and I actually thought I was in trouble. I thought, “I don’t remember doing anything wrong!” We went outside and she said, “I’m Taylor, and I’ll be your tutor.”

What has influenced you to stay involved in Ready to Learn?

Just the love for the program, I guess. I started in the 9th grade and I know I was a little shy because you have to make a good impression for people in higher learning. I started liking the people...trusting them, and I guess not feeling so shy.

“My experience in the program has been good. Meeting and hanging with college students is great, learning about their majors and what that means, and having things in common. They’re really just like us, you know? Just students in school.”

My experience in the program has been good. Meeting and hanging with college students is great, learning about their majors and what that means, and having things in common. They’re really just like us, you know - students in school. My favorite part of the program changed from the money - which, I won’t lie, was helpful - but it’s really the tutors. I liked going down to the college and hanging out. I could see myself working with students, like after I graduate and go to college. I mean, I would feel good about helping students in the way I’ve been able to get help.

How do you think Ready to Learn has impacted you?

It helped me get my grades up, and it helped me want to go to college more. I also feel like its easier to get to know people, over time, and I guess I see things differently. I see things going on around us, like how people are separated. Our school system is unfair. Our board of education doesn’t care about [our school]; they only care about [certain schools]. These are things I didn’t know about in 9th grade, but I realized these things over time.
Teacher Education and Black Communities (Contemporary Perspectives on Access, Equity, and Achievement)
Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, Chance Lewis and Ivory Toldson

In this volume, the editors highlight the field of education as it pertains to the Black community by exploring both trends in student academic achievement, and the disappearance of Black teachers.

But I Don't See Color: The Perils, Practices, and Possibilities of Antiracist Education
Terry Husband

Advocating for a more color-conscious approach to education, this text provides a multi-voiced understanding of theory and practice for combating racism in educational spaces.

But I Don't See Color: The Perils, Practices, and Possibilities of Antiracist Education
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Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education
Marvin Lynn and Adrienne D. Dixson

Illustrating how education scholars employ critical race theory to analyze race and racism in education, this pioneering and authoritative work provides a comprehensive look at the issues in 28 new articles by leading scholars in the field.

Expanding College Access for Urban Youth: What Schools and Colleges Can Do
Tyrone C. Howard, Jonli Tunstall, and Terry Flennaugh

Featuring first-hand accounts from urban youth who participated in a successful school-university partnership that provided support, mentoring, and resources, the authors document how the model transformed lives, providing students with access to some of the nation’s most prestigious universities.

Born Out of Struggle: Critical Race Theory, School Creation, and the Politics of Interruption
David Omotoso Stovall

Using examples from his work in helping design a school’s social justice agenda, Stovall offers lessons about accountability to communities while navigating centralized bureaucracies in real-world situations. Stovall explains how to use Critical Race Theory to encourage and engage communities to change their conditions.

Why Are They Angry With Us?: Essays on Race
Larry E. Davis

Offering powerful insights from his personal journey and scholarship, Davis’s collection of eight essays address the core of deeply held attitudes which contribute to racism in America and have plagued our country since the days of Jim Crow.
The Latinization of U.S. Schools
Jason Irizarry
Using the voices of Latinx youth participants of a multyear action research project, Irizarry examines how they make meaning of U.S. school policies, practices and inequitable opportunity structures, and offers empirically based recommendations for working with Latinx students in each chapter.

Cultural Diversity and Education (6th Edition)
James A. Banks
Multicultural education expert James Banks offers new insights on increasing academic achievement, researching race, culture, teaching and learning in a multicultural society, as well as gender equity, disability, giftedness, language diversity and preparing students to be effective citizens.

For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y’all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education
Christopher Emdin
Emdin rolls out his theory of “reality pedagogy” and explains how teachers can use it in their classrooms. Strategies include building communities within classrooms, using hip-hop and call-and-respose techniques, and connecting experiences of urban youth to global indigenous populations.

Beyond Acting White: Reframing the Debate on Black Student Achievement
Erin McNamara Horvat and Carla O’Connor
The authors explore how Black culture and identity are implicated in our understanding the gap between Black and White students, while contending with the notion that Blacks are culturally opposed to school success.

Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry With Youth and Communities
Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn
With vignettes, narratives, and photos, the editors present essays from leading education scholars on conducting qualitative and ethnographic research with youth and communities who are marginalized by systems of inequality based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, citizenship status, gender, and other categories of difference.

College-Ready: Preparing Black and Latina/o Youth for Higher Education - A Culturally Relevant Approach
Michelle G. Knight and Joanne E. Marciano
Illuminates the experiences, perspectives, and complexities in the daily lives of 25 Black and Latinx students with the aim of supporting educators in creating a culturally relevant, school-wide college-going culture to improve experiences and outcomes for urban youth.

Racialized Identities: Race and Achievement Among African American Youth
Na’ilah Suad Nasir
Nasir investigates how various constructions of identity and local surroundings can influence educational achievement and the range of choices for African American students as they navigate learning and establish a sense of self.

Re-Designing Teacher Education for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: A Critical-Ecological Approach
Ana Christina daSilva Iddings
Challenging cultural and linguistic norms, Iddings explores redesigning a teacher education program to make pre-service teachers resourceful and responsive in addressing the intellectual needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Faculty and Graduate Fellows

To foster a community of interdisciplinary scholars engaged in urban education research, theory, policy, and practice, the Center for Urban Education offers faculty and graduate students in the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh the opportunity to apply to become CUE Fellows. Those outside the School of Education are invited to apply. CUE affiliation provides fellows with the opportunity to build collaborative research projects, share and discuss issues and solutions in urban education, and showcase research and development projects. CUE is proud to recognize its Faculty and Graduate Student Fellows. To learn more about becoming a CUE fellow, contact cue@pitt.edu.

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CUE presents the Lesgold Award for Excellence in Urban Education in recognition of an individual, organization, or initiative emphasizing, advancing, or supporting the work of urban education. CUE applauds trailblazers — locally, regionally, and nationally — who are committed to improving educational experiences and opportunities for those in urban schools, districts, and communities. The award is named for Alan Lesgold, former dean of the School of Education and founder of CUE.

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- Tamanika Howze
  Community Activist

- Michelle King
  Practicing Teacher

**SPRING 2017**

- Jason Rivers
  AR3 Founder, Activist

- Lynne Hayes-Freeland
  Broadcaster, Activist

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