The global COVID-19 pandemic continues to expose the political, social, and economic realities in our relationship to the state and its systems of schooling. Guided by powerful themes of bearing witness and forging futures over the past two years, the School of Education’s Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Pittsburgh has focused on the urgency of political education for responding to these realities. CUE researchers and staff are deeply studying education histories and analyzing minoritized community struggles with schools and other institutions to strengthen our collaborations within political organizing and movements for social change. Grounded in Black and Indigenous knowledge traditions, several partnerships and initiatives underscore the entwined work of love, study, and struggle as essential for justice and freedom.

Robin D. G. Kelley’s trailblazing essay, “Black Study, Black Struggle,” defines love as motivation for revolutionary change through a will to liberate the oppressed. CUE’s work has taken up this principle as an education imperative; we are mapping with our partners how the work of schools and schooling might transform with freedom praxis. Our emphasis on study is a commitment to deep understanding about the political conditions of schooling and the power relationships that continue to recompose themselves every generation. Struggle requires developing the courage to confront, disrupt, and resist unjust constraints; it requires remembering we are agents. This leads to several commitments in CUE’s
mission-vision that I hope are clear as you engage with this newsletter.

First, through study, we are refusing the rampant anti-intellectualism around us; examples include institutional pandemic practices that prioritize profit over people and state attacks on critical race theory and critical pedagogies. The work of study is varied and as Rachel Herzing, Center for Political Education Executive Director, reminds: Study is not the enemy of action; study is action. We invite you to attend CUE events as forms of study that can inform organizing efforts concerned with inequitable systems of schooling. Second, the Center has continued to build its collaborative partnerships, seek more resources, and create or adapt tools to deepen and focus our work. Examples include our expansive list of COVID-19 pandemic resources on our website and our work with Black retired teachers around Greater Pittsburgh. We hope these updates inspire our readers to seek resources for learning about education conditions, for sharpening their analyses, and for creating action strategies. Third, we never stop learning in the Pitt Center for Urban Education. For instance, with the support of the Spencer Foundation, CUE researchers are asking new questions about our current COVID-19 moment and the disregarded knowledges of Black families and communities to transform school practices. We invite our readers to join us as we push ourselves to learn more – to re-reading, to re-thinking, to questioning.

Finally, thank you for reading the current issue of the CUE’d In, the Center for Urban Education newsletter. May it map coordinates for love, study, and struggle as essential to forging futures. Please be sure to locate the brief guides in this newsletter for staying connected to CUE projects and contact us with questions or ideas.

Sincerely,
T. Elon Dancy II, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Center for Urban Education
Helen S. Faison Endowed Chair in Urban Education
Co-Primary Investigator, PittEd Justice Collective
Associate Editor, Educational Researcher

About the Center

CUE’s vision is to be a space of learning and sharing with communities to positively transform educational opportunities and experiences.

To work toward this vision, we adhere to six core beliefs:

- **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 and assets 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 actions to improve education and society
Education in many spaces worldwide has been a contested space, marked by student protests against racism and colonialism since formal education was established. In times of social movements and change, protest in the streets also spread to college campuses, sometimes in global waves. The premier institutions in the United States, the Ivy league, were built almost exclusively through enslaved labor. Both private and public colleges in Canada and the United States and other settler colonies occupy Indigenous lands, severing land from relation to first peoples through ongoing genocide and erasure. Since these institutions are contested spaces, there have been long-historied traditions of student mobilizations to agitate higher education’s practices borne of occupation and exclusivity. Changes in admissions policies, faculty hiring and retention, and curriculum have all been impacted by student mobilizations. For example in the early 1970s, Black and Puerto Rican youth blocked the entrance the City College of New York, demanding that the university alter its admissions policies to serve them as the residents of Harlem. June Jordan and Adrienne Rich, who went on to become legendary activist artists, joined with students. City College did, in fact, implement an open admissions policy and graduated record levels of Black and Puerto Rican students receiving higher education degrees. However, City College, and other colleges used excellence as an gatekeeper to tamp down the revolutionary change of this policy.

In my research about the relationship between study and struggle, I have found that social movements have all included both internal political education and external public pedagogies. Through oral histories as well as archival research, I have examined the pedagogies within student mobilizations that have, however temporarily, helped K-12 schools and higher education to bring often racist and extractive practices closer to their mottos of serving the public good. The public pedagogies of student mobilizations include the protest at City College in the early 1970s as well as the seven-hour sit-in at the University of Pittsburgh in 1968, leading to then Chancellor Posvar acknowledging the problem of low enrollment of Black students and setting funds aside for Black student campus spaces. Often, the changes created by student mobilization have been subject to being tampered down by the sheer bureaucratic weight in higher education, but they have also made important changes to the knowledge systems that are taught in college classrooms and the impacts that graduates make beyond their college years. Dating back to the 1600s, student protest and mobilizations have been informed by internal political education that have shaped the design of public pedagogies through the form of protests, explicit material demands, and outright refusals of practices such as life-altering student loan debt. In lyrical fashion, student mobilizations, often formed in opposition to the university, have much to teach about collective struggles for freedom that are consistently intertwined with learning.
"Momma, I’m through," said a handcuffed and face-down George Floyd as a white police officer of the state kneeled on his neck for almost 10 minutes. Although his mother had died two years prior, his words were a sacred invocation. "A call to your mother," writes Lonnae O’Neal, "is a prayer to be seen." The state-sanctioned murder of George Floyd has spawned worldwide uprisings against state violence and in the name of Black lives mattering. One year after his death, we locate opportunities to study the condition of Black life in an anti-Black world.

As co-principal investigators, T. Elon Dancy II (University of Pittsburgh) and Juan Battle (City University of New York) developed and led a multi-pronged initiative to map possibilities for individual and institutional anti-racism in colleges and universities. As part of the PittEd Justice Collective, the H.E.A.R. (Higher Education & Anti-Racism) Initiative goals were to develop research and teaching strategies that held the potential for creating and sustaining a pipeline of justice-minded activists, researchers, educators, and policymakers. The PittEd Justice Collective is a three-year working group at the School of Education that is engaged in anti-racist, justice-directed initiatives with students, staff, faculty, alumni, families, youth, and district and community partners. Dancy and Battle organized Pitt graduate students into research teams that analyzed presidential/institutional statements in response to the killing of George Floyd and subsequent global uprisings. Drawing upon critical discourse, content, and thematic analysis methods, teams explored how presidential narrations of racism and anti-Blackness more specifically interprets the political arrangement between universities and Black lives. Manuscripts report findings across "elite" institutions and Ivy League universities, Research-I universities (more broadly), Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Our data analyses find several discursive strategies that refuse state accountability for George Floyd’s death, that fail to grapple seriously with the carceral characteristics of colleges (like campus police), and that still engage racism as a matter of individual attitudes, rather that structural realities. We argue that U.S. colleges and universities, and all educational institutions, must grapple with their participation in the process by which humanity is constructed within a supremacist, anti-Black world. Education institutions are not ancillary, but central to these efforts. Educational models of colleges and schools are still essentially colonial ones organized through plantation and enslavement logics. What U.S. colleges and universities count as knowledge devalues Black knowledge traditions that center silenced voices, name systems of oppression, and endorse revolutionary practice. While national rhetoric may shift to publicly disavow discrimination and injustice, the lack of shift in foundational values and design exposes the propagandized nature of "liberty and justice for all." The contemporary political environment reveals the ever-present colonial arrangement in which U.S. schools and colleges are essential actors. Let us commit to deep study and organized struggle with freedom-minded communities committed to self-determination.
Anyone who has engaged with children and youth can attest, learning happens everywhere – not just inside of schools, but in homes, libraries, museums and science centers, in the woods, at playgrounds, and in myriad community spaces. In many ways, out of school learning (OSL) has been centered and highlighted over the past year as throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic children have been learning at home and in other spaces, and families and communities have been centered more as collaborators in learning. During COVID-19, learning and educational opportunities have also continued to be inequitable, with Black and Brown youth and youth living in low-income environments experiencing the most pronounced learning disruptions (Allen et al, 2020; James, 2021; Tienken, 2020). However, the research and practice in which I have been engaged with colleagues at Pitt and across the U.S. over the last year has also offered a lot of hope and direction for the future of learning, particularly as it connects to OSL promoting educational equity for Black and Brown youth.

In The Promise of Building Equitable Ecosystems for Learning, an article published in the journal Urban Education (Akiva, Delale-O’Connor & Pittman, 2020), Drs. Tom Akiva, Karen Pittman, and I focused on bringing together historical and contemporary understandings of OSL within urban contexts to call for a better understanding of the value of OSL and an elevation of OSL professionals. We forward an ecosystem approach to learning as a way to address racial and economic inequities and note that by separating learning from formal schooling, education may be better positioned to center and promote equity. We noted the ways that OSL is poised to engage young people in their communities, in ways that are culturally sustaining and in ways that center joy in learning.

I have also had the opportunity to see and engage firsthand in the importance and potential of OSL as the Senior Research Personnel and Equity Team Lead in the National Science Foundation INCLUDES Alliance STEM PUSH (Pathways for Underrepresented Students to HigherEd) Network (https://www.stempushnetwork.org). The STEM PUSH Network brings together OSL STEM programs as part of a national collaborative of programs and citywide STEM Ecosystems focused on program improvement and college admissions. Our team sees and works to develop the value of engaging learning as an ecosystem, and in particular centering equity and justice for Black and Brown youth in our research, training, and practice.

In summer 2020, I led training that pushed us to consider what it means and looks like to engage in culturally sustaining STEM programming. In two articles in Connected Science Learning, one published December 2020 and the other forthcoming, our team shared the ways that OSL can be leveraged to be culturally sustaining and responsive to the needs of young people and families—particularly Black and Brown families and those in under-resourced areas—during the ongoing pandemic. In Leveraging Out-of-School STEM Programs During COVID-19 (https://www.nsta.org/connected-science-learning/connected-science-learning-october-december-2020/leveraging-out-school), we shared the ways the STEM PUSH Network and participating programs were working in real time to support young people and their families during the first summer of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this article, we discussed both the ways that OSL programs were able to be nimble and responsive during COVID-19, as well as the ways that participation in the Network facilitated extensions...
of these ideas and cross-program collaboration. The STEM PUSH Network (and in particular Partners for Network Improvement based in the Learning Research and Development Center at Pitt; http://pni.pitt.edu) adjusted our work to support member programs during COVID-19 in disseminating effective changes and new practices—illustrating both the power of OSL for forwarding equity as well as the potential capacity of OSL networks. In addition, in a forthcoming article, Broadening equity through recruitment: Pre-college STEM program recruitment in literature and practice, we share our learning about ways to recruit and support Black and Brown youth into OSL programs in ways that are affirming and sustaining.

OSL offers myriad opportunities for forwarding equity and justice, in particular as we consider ways to engage and support Black and Brown youth and their families. We must continue to understand all the ways and places that allow learning to be lifewide, in particular as these spaces engage Black and Brown youth in culturally sustaining, empowered experiences.

Associated Publications:


Citations:


School-Prison Relations for Native Youth
By Dr. Sabina Vaught, Professor and Chair of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading

People have dedicated considerable thought to understanding the contemporary carceral relationships between North American schools and prisons as well as the historical roots of those relationships (Erica Meiners, Damien Sojoyner, Connie Wun). Sabina Vaught and her co-authors, Bryan Brayboy and Jeremiah Chin, spent the year extending and deepening one part of that large set of relationships: that involving Native peoples. Their forthcoming book examines the legal, institutional, and cultural contexts of conquest relations as they shape contemporary school-prison relations for Native youth. Most centrally, Vaught, Brayboy, and Chin draw from the experiences of a young man incarcerated by a New England state to consider self-determination via refusal (Audra Simpson) of these conquest carceral relations.
RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT
CUE Serves as the New Home to Two Influential Research Education Journals

The Center for Urban Education at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education was selected as the new home institution of two influential research education journals Educational Researcher (ER) and Negro Educational Review (NER). The Center for Urban Education will house both journals through at least 2022.

Educational Researcher

Educational Researcher is a publication of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Ranked No. 9 of 243 in the Education and Educational Research category in 2018, the journal is described as making “major programmatic research and new findings of broad importance widely accessible,” according to its website.

“The presence of Educational Researcher brings important national visibility to the center. I am excited about the journal’s future,” said T. Elon Dancy II, the executive director of the Center for Urban Education and the school’s Helen Faison Chair in Urban Education and Associate Dean for Equity and Justice.

Senior editors are June Ahn from the University of California, Irvine, Thurston Domina from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and Sarah Woulfin from the University of Connecticut, and Andrew McEachin from the RAND Corporation.

Additional associate editors at the Pitt School of Education include Dancy and faculty members Jennifer Russell and Lindsay Page.

Dancy anticipates that the journal’s presence at the Center for Urban Education will provide graduate students at the Pitt School of Education with additional opportunities to engage in scholarly work.

Negro Educational Review

With subscribers in every state and in foreign countries, including England, Ireland, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Japan, Korea, Nigeria, and Burundi, the NER journal is an international, peer-reviewed, scholarly journal in publication since 1950.

The NER journal publishes original research and scholarship concerning Black people throughout the African diaspora. The African diaspora refers to the mass dispersion of African peoples across the world.

“While many American educational research journals are general in focus, only two have been intentional in their focus on people of African descent: The Journal of Negro Education and the Negro Educational Review,” says Dancy. “Founded during the Jim Crow Era to respond to evidence of systemic discrimination against Black scholars, the journal has generated seminal ideas on Black education, centered Black knowledge traditions (in a time of exclusion), and published preeminent scholars. In other words, it is for us, by us, and about us, and CUE is honored to be a part of this legacy.”
Executive editors from the University of Pittsburgh include School of Education emeritus faculty members Shirley A. Biggs and Alice M. Scales, and Jerome A. Taylor, faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences. Dana Thompson Dorsey, a CUE scholar-in-residence from the University of South Florida College of Education, will also serve as one of the 11 advisory editors to oversee the journal’s vision and strategy. University of Pittsburgh faculty member Sharon Nelson-Le Gall will also serve on the board of advisory editors.

“Pitt’s School of Education has a respected national and global presence which attracts emerging and experienced scholars who both benefit from and contribute to knowledge about education issues. The placement of the journal in CUE, where the focus is on Black life, facilitates opportunities for comprehensive exploration of diasporic research,” says Biggs.

Dancy and Biggs believe the journal’s presence at the center will invite faculty and students to learn about every aspect of the publication process. This includes manuscript submission, peer-review, manuscript revision, editing, and publication.

“The School of Education is providing a graduate assistantship for the journal, which will afford a focused opportunity for graduate students to work as a part of an editorial team that is responsible for shepherding manuscripts through the process,” says Dancy. “This is particularly invaluable for students aspiring to the professoriate or who are interested in publishing in peer-reviewed academic journals as independent scholars.”

Dancy says the mission of the NER journal aligns with every principle of the School of Education’s mission-vision, particularly “the school’s explicit commitment to equity and justice as essential to teaching and learning.”

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**Notable Grants Received by CUE**

**(Un)Doing the Consequences of Brown v. Board of Education: Restoring Black Educators through a Tutor Network of Retired Teachers**

**Principal Investigator:** T. Elon Dancy  
**Agency Name:** Grable Foundation  
**Award Dates:** 8/1/20 – 7/31/21  
**Amount:** $87,500

**Pittsburgh Regional Innovation Addressing Opportunity Gaps in Education: A Scalable Data-Driven Infrastructure for Personalized Learning**

**Principal Investigator:** T. Elon Dancy  
**Agency Name:** Silicon Valley Community Foundation  
**Award Dates:** 1/1/19 - 6/30/20  
**Amount:** $406,174

**Heinz Fellows**

**Principal Investigator:** T. Elon Dancy  
**Agency Name:** Heinz Endowments  
**Award Dates:** 7/1/20 – 6/30/21  
**Amount:** $850,000

**NSF INCLUDES Alliance: Strengthening Precollege Programs as a Mechanism to Promote Equitable Access to University Admissions and Persistence in STEM**

**Principal Investigator:** Lori DeLale-O’Connor  
**Agency Name:** National Science Foundation  
**Award Dates:** 9/1/19 – 8/31/24  
**Amount:** $264,909

**Freedom Dreaming: Black Communal and Familial Educational Practices in Pittsburgh’s Hill District before, during and after COVID-19**

**Principal Investigator:** Lori DeLale O’Connor  
**Agency Name:** Spencer Foundation  
**Award Dates:** 3/1/21 – 8/31/22  
**Amount:** $48,805

**Improving Educational Opportunities for Black Youth in Pittsburgh: A Justice-Centered Intervention**

**Principal Investigator:** Esohe Osai & Shanyce Campbell  
**Agency Name:** Pitt Momentum Funds Scaling, University of Pittsburgh Office of the Provost  
**Award Dates:** 07/01/2021 – 06/30/2023  
**Amount:** $266,038
Perseverance During the Pandemic

In this unprecedented time of crisis, the Center for Urban Education is concerned about the safety, health, and well-being of our entire community. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges that it brought to the forefront, we persevered and continued to provide support and resources for our students, faculty, staff, and community members. In the "Perseverance During the Pandemic" section of the report, you will find the various ways that we forged ahead during crisis, keeping true to our mission to learn, share, and transform.

High-Impact Retired Black Teachers Initiative

The COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately ravaging Black and Brown communities with devastating effects in education. The pandemic exacerbates several pre-existing realities including the elimination of Black teachers from the lives of Black students (and all students) following Brown v. Board of Education (1954), the overrepresentation of white teachers in Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh, and the suffering of Black youth within urban schools -- a finding well-documented in research literature.

The Center for Urban Education offered six after-school enrichment experiences for students across the Pittsburgh region led by High Impact Black Retired Teachers. These enrichment experiences were designed around the principles of the Freedom Schools and support the development of academic skills and knowledge, while supporting social emotional learning and critical consciousness development.

The retired teachers promoted the conditions identified for the successful teaching of all -- particularly minoritized -- youth including:

- demonstrating experience in building students' critical thinking,
- creating a community of learners (instead of exclusive relationships),
- conceptualizing knowledge as fluid and diverse (not fixed and static),
- fostering students' self-awareness/actualization and sense of responsibility to their communities of origin.

These dispositions follow the guiding principles of Freedom Schools, which emphasize culturally relevant curricula as fundamental to building students' critical thinking and inquiry skills, strong foundational academics, extensive knowledge of their own history, and a commitment to social justice. Freedom Schools were temporary, alternative, and free schools for Black people mostly in the South. The Heinz Fellows supported the retired teachers academically and socially.
Engagement is a pivotal part of CUE and our mission and vision. Our engagement is facilitated through events, the work of our Heinz Fellows, and our community work and partnerships. During the pandemic, our Heinz Fellows continued their work and developed relationships with students in Pittsburgh Public Schools.

The Heinz Fellows Program is a joint collaboration between the University of Pittsburgh Center for Urban Education and The Heinz Endowments. The program, which kicked off in the summer of 2019, advances CUE’s commitment to improving the landscape of urban education, increasing the teacher-of-color pipeline, and improving the quality of the instruction of educators in the Pittsburgh region. Shallegra Moye, Associate Director of Strategic Programming, led the program during the 2019 - 2020 academic year.

During the school year, the Fellows provided tutoring, mentoring, and support for Pittsburgh Public Schools students, teachers, and staff in neighborhood schools in Pittsburgh’s Hill District. Despite the pandemic, they were still able to provide this support to students and schools in the area virtually.
In-Person and Virtual Events: 2019-2020 Academic Year

CUE hosts many events that are open to the university and public. The goal of each event is to stimulate dialogue about pertinent issues in urban education and for colleagues to develop possible research collaborations with an urban education focus. CUE invited some of the top scholars in urban education from across the country to lead the research-grounded sessions in person (pre-COVID) and virtually.

"PUSHOUT: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools" Film Screening and Panel Discussion
September 26, 2019
Facilitated by Dr. Monique W. Morris

"Free To... Be Black as Hell": Black Feminist Pedagogies and Writing Lives in the Makings of 21st Century Freedoms
October 3, 2019
Facilitated by Dr. Carmen Kynard

Town Hall: What is White Supremacy? Perspectives on Education, Nation-State, and the Public Good
October 17, 2019
Panelists included: Dr. T. Elon Dancy II, Dr. Dana Thompson Dorsey, Dr. Waverly Duck, Jasiri X, and Tereneh Idia.

CUETalks - Finding Reason for Hope: Race, Inequality, and Educational Change
October 23, 2019
Facilitated by Dr. Na'ilah Suad Nasir

Reflection into Action with Dr. Jack Daniel
October 24, 2019
Facilitated by Dr. Jack Daniel

Black Women, Black Feminism: Learning from the Intersections
November 7, 2019

Black Education and the Philadelphia Teacher Strikes
December 5, 2019
Facilitated by Dr. Camika Royal

Director & Friends Book Study: Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye
December 6, 2019
Facilitated by Dr. T. Elon Dancy II, Dr. Camika Royal, and Dr. Khirsten Scott

Honoring the Life of Toni Morrison: Her Work, Words, and Legacy
February 27, 2020
Moderated by Ariana Brazier (a doctoral candidate in the department of English). Panelists included Dr. Michelle King, Dr. T. Elon Dancy II, Dr. Marques Redd, Dr. Kendra Ross, and Damon Young.
Perseverance During the Pandemic

CUESEF 2020 Examines Pandemics Through New Perspectives

The virtual conference, “Crisis Pedagogies: Communities, Education and the Public Good,” explored how various communities – youth, parents/families, community members, teachers, and administrators – have been impacted by the COVID-19 and racial pandemics.

“We are living in hard times,” said T. Elon Dancy II, the director of CUE. “This year has seen unprecedented levels of turmoil due to rising alarm over the COVID-19 pandemic, with the most vulnerable populations experiencing the hardest impact. With this year’s theme, we fostered deep thinking about (in)justice and (un)learning in the U.S. and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, more specifically.”

Co-sponsored by the Heinz Endowments and moderated by Marc Lamont Hill, an award-winning journalist and activist, the conference connected nearly 1,700 registrants each Thursday afternoon in July 2020 over five separate Zoom webinars.

Sessions covered how crises impact youth perspectives, care-giver and family experiences, health and faith, teachers and teaching, and planning for the future through leadership and policy.

All of the panels discussed the varying levels of responsiveness and support that their schools were able to provide for their students and families when the pandemic hit.

“We can’t talk about COVID-19 without talking about pre-existing conditions,” said Hill during one of the sessions. “As a nation, the pre-existing conditions of white supremacy, huge gaps in technology, and health access shape how people engage the crisis of COVID-19.”

Other dialogues throughout the conference centered around what was lost in the absence of direct instruction, arrangement of resources, relationships with law enforcement, and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Cue Perry, the CUE Artist-in-Residence, designed the CUESEF 2020 featured artwork, “The Talk” that depicted children having fun and being carefree.

"Whenever I decide to have children, I dread the day my child looks up at me and we have ‘the talk;’ not ‘the birds and the bees,’ but when I have to explain to them the dangers of having Black skin,” said Perry of the inspiration for his design.

The “Teach the Teachers” youth panel centered the voices of six students at different points in their academic careers. According to Dancy, since most conversations about schooling are about youth, but rarely include them in the actual conversation, highlighting these perspectives was an important moment in the conference.

“What we think is happening and how students are experiencing what is happening are sometimes two very different things,” said Hill.

The youth panelists also discussed what it was like learning from home, their relationships with law enforcement, and how they believe the country is going through a “revolution” in this current moment.

“I was talking to a social scientist the other day and she was actually making a lot of sense in saying that because of everything going on in the world and in America not only with virus, but with the upcoming election, we were due for a revolution,” said McDonald. “If you look historically, we kind of had all of the ingredients for a revolution.”

Panelists in the other sessions also looked to the future with the positivity that can come out of these trying times.

Terri N. Watson, an associate professor in the Department of Leadership and Human Development at The City College of New York, served as a panelist on the final session “Planning for Black Futures: Leadership and Policy Perspectives.” She was excited for what this moment in time may bring for the future.

“This time that we are home with our families during social distancing, in many ways, has brought us together,” said Watson. “I can’t tell you how often I’m checking on neighbors, relatives, and elders in my community and how it has brought us together. We need to be in community with one another and this moment has pushed us to that. Hopefully, it will be more than a moment; it will be a movement and this new beginning can be for all of us.”
CUE hosted a full schedule of virtual events in the 2020-2021 academic year. Renowned experts in the field of education joined us from across the nation. From discussing the U.S. presidential election, political education, and activism the day after the election, to femicidal violence against Asian womxn in the U.S., our events were timely and relevant to major events that were happening around education and social justice this past year.

**Building Abolition in Our Communities, Now**  
*October 8, 2020*  
Facilitated by Erica R. Meiners

**Hairstories of Violence: Examining How Hair Mediates Schooling and Social Practices**  
*October 22, 2020*  
Facilitated by Dr. Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy (Lumbee)

**Lunch & Learn featuring Kali Akuno**  
*November 5, 2020*  
Facilitated by Kali Akuno

**Responding to Reality with Kali Akuno**  
*November 6, 2020*  
Facilitated by Kali Akuno

**Lunch & Learn Book Study with Marc Lamont Hill**  
*December 10, 2020*  
Facilitated by Dr. Marc Lamont Hill

**Surrendered: Why Progressives are Losing the Biggest Battles in Education**  
*February 25, 2021*  
Facilitated by Dr. Kevin Kumashiro

**Scholarly Work and Organizing at the Intersections**  
*March 25, 2021*  
Facilitated by Dr. Connie Wun

**Liberated Territories: Pedagogy as Social Transformation**  
*April 1, 2021*  
Facilitated by Dr. Russell Rickford

**Black, Brown, Bruised: How Racialized STEM Education Stifles Innovation**  
*April 13, 2021*  
Facilitated by Dr. Ebony McGee
More than 600 students, alumni, faculty, staff, and community members registered for the University of Pittsburgh School of Education’s annual Center for Urban Education Summer Educators Forum (CUESEF). Co-sponsored by The Heinz Endowments, CUESEF 2021 explored the theme of “Forging Futures Through Black Educational Histories” over the course of June 16 - 19, 2021.

The virtual conference consisted of nine mainstage plenary sessions with accomplished historians; 22 breakout sessions with book studies, discussions, and webinars; music breaks with DJ PVO; and a keynote address from Vanessa Siddle Walker, the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of African American Educational Studies at Emory University.

“Our theme invites historians to join us in exploring Black educational imaginations over time as essential to forging futures of self-determination, collective responsibility, and freedom,” said T. Elon Dancy II, executive director of the Center for Urban Education (CUE) and associate dean for equity and research and Helen S. Faison Chair for Urban Education at Pitt Education. “This year’s focus on Black education traditions assumes Blackness as expansive and not a category exclusive of ethnic and cultural realities.”

Historians who participated in plenary and breakout sessions included Dr. James Anderson (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Dr. Heather Williams (University of Pennsylvania), Dr. Donna Murch (Rutgers University), Dr. Jarvis Givens (Harvard University), Dr. Linda Perkins (Claremont Graduate University), Dr. Stephanie Evans (Georgia State University), Dr. Elizabeth Todd-Breland (University of Illinois at Chicago), Dr. V.P. Franklin (University of California, Riverside), Dr. Derrick Alridge (University of Virginia), Michelle Purdy...
Valerie Kinloch, the Renée and Richard Goldman Dean of Pitt Education welcomed participants by reading a passage from writer James Baldwin.

"History, as nearly no one seems to know," read Kinloch “is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do."

The conference closed with a keynote address from Siddle Walker, titled “Re-Thinking, Re-Mapping, Renewed Commitments… Because the Children Matter,” which summarized the conference’s charge for transformative education.

“When we think of the history we’ve been taught, I want to use it to, perhaps, remap the chart for the present and then, if possible, challenge a renewed commitment to pick up these old possibilities and apply them in a new space,” said Siddle Walker. “Because I actually really do believe that children matter and that we have to make a difference for them and their generation as people did for us and our generations.”

CUE is one of the many centers and institutes at Pitt Education. CUE focuses its research and service around three areas: community partnership and engagement, educator development and practice, and student academic and social development.

In his closing remarks, Dancy addressed the significance of exploring history given that the conference concluded on June 19, which is observed as the holiday of Juneteenth, “a day that asks us to devote ourselves to radical imagination and organizing in our work.”

He demonstrated the value of re-examining history by explaining a common myth about the origins of Juneteenth. As the myth goes, on that day 156 years ago, the last enslaved Americans first learned of their liberation when a white military general read them the proclamation in the coastal city of Galveston, Texas. However, this narrative erases an important truth. Many Black people were already aware of their freedom and already had spread the news among each other.

“We now know this reality differently than the story that the myth tells because of the work of historians,” said Dancy. “This is the kind of intervention that Black educational histories make to forge futures. They summon the power of memory which is important in U.S. schooling contexts that require forgetting knowledges in order to learn.”
Lucia Mogilyansky aims to make math fun for her students in the Ready to Learn (RTL) program of the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education.

“I love working with middle schoolers, and I have a secret love of algebra that I usually don’t express, so the program seemed like a good fit,” says Mogilyansky (BA’ 21, History and Creative Writing).

She is one of 19 tutoring mentors from CUE who are providing the after-school experience to Pittsburgh Public Schools students in grades 6 - 8 from University Prep, Westinghouse Academy, PittsburghSciTech, and Manchester Academic Charter School.

Students participating in RTL use ALEKS, an adaptive math software powered by artificial intelligence, and work on social justice math projects to apply the math concepts they are learning to analyze real world problems. RTL Math Mentors use the PL^2 app, designed by Carnegie Mellon University through the Personalized Learning Squared initiative to build their skills as tutors.

Funded by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and the Heinz Endowments, RTL is an after-school mentoring program focused on building students’ mathematical competence, confidence as a math learner and critical consciousness.

According to CUE, proficiency in mathematics is a gateway to high-paying jobs in the 21st century that can help to bridge the gap of generational inequalities in income and opportunity.

Through the RTL program, approximately 40 middle school students participated in fall 2020 and spring 2021 — shifting their work to virtual settings amid the pandemic.

In April, the students presented their projects over Zoom to fellow students, mentors, school leaders, parents, community members, and Pitt and Carnegie Mellon faculty and staff members.

“The social justice math presentations are important to the overall RTL program because they help our students to build critical thinking skills and social consciousness by applying math to real-world situations and using data to understand what is happening in the world,” says CUE Director of Special Projects Cassandra Brentley.

One of Mogilyansky’s mentees worked on a presentation about sweatshop conditions for Nike and Adidas workers. Other presentation topics included coronavirus and access to care, cost of war, labor exploitation, school suspensions, and wage inequality.

“The presentation that stood out to me the most was a presentation from one of our 8th grade students at University Prep,” says Brentley. “She is very passionate about the Black Lives Matter movement and researched systemic racism as it relates to policing.”

While the presentations showed off how much the middle schoolers learned, the students weren’t the only ones who gained a lot from this experience.

“I learned many general teaching things like how vital structure and routine are to a classroom, how students can get motivated, and the importance of engaging in student’s' hobbies and interests,” says Mogilyansky.

These are lessons Mogilyansky will take with her when she starts the MOSAIC program for teacher certification at Pitt Education in fall 2021.
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.

**Angel Gober**
has been a dedicated activist and organizer for the past 15 years. She has fought for Sustainable Community Schools, Early Education and Raising the Minimum Wage in Pittsburgh. Her background in housing justice led her to become a political strategist, developing Black leadership in local systems of power. Currently Angel is the Western PA Director with ONE Pennsylvania, a social justice membership organization that confronts the power and create the change.

**Dr. Jack Daniel**
is a former student, Vice Provost and current Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus and Pitt Education alumnus. For more than a decade, he chaired Equipoise, the Black Faculty, Staff and Administrator organization at Pitt. He worked with graduate students to create and receive approval for the African American Alumni Council. He also played a key role in recruiting Black Deans, other senior administrators, and faculty members to Pitt.

**Wanda Henderson**
fights against the miseducation and maltreatment of students of color in our schools. She has served in leadership roles in various organizations such as The Advocates for African-American Students in PPS, PPS Headstart and Title One Parent Councils, The National Coalition of Title 1 Parents, and Pittsburgh NAACP Education Committee.

**Previous Honorees**

- Michelle King
- Jason Rivers
- Dr. Jerome Taylor
- Malcom Thomas
- Dr. Shirley Biggs
- A+ Schools
- Rev. Lee Walls
- Dr. Patricia Beeson
- Dr. Alan Lesgold
- Dr. Larry Davis
- Saleem Ghubril
- Lynne Hayes-Freeland
- Dr. Linda Lane
- 1Nation Mentoring
- Dr. Rich Milner
- The PRIDE Program
- 1Hood Media
- Dr. John Wallace, Jr.
- Dr. Gretchen Givens Generett
- Rev. Glenn Grayson
- Terri Baltimore
CUE 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. To learn more about becoming a CUE fellow, contact cue@pitt.edu.

CUE Faculty Fellows


CUE Graduate Student Fellows

Shan Cawley, Meghan Dale, Bianca DeJesus, Yue Gao, Tom Hill, Jinx McClean, Meghan Orman, and Katie Todd.
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Ready to Learn Program Coordinator
Cassandra Brentley

Heinz Fellow Project Director
Shallegira Moye

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