FROM THE DIRECTOR

Happy New Year Cahn Fellows and Alumni,

At our holiday gathering on December 4th, over 90 alumni, faculty, board members and current cohort members came together to share some fun times, good food and holiday cheer. The festivities began with the arrival of our alumni guests at 4pm. The 2014 fellows, allies and professors joined in on the celebration shortly after their study session that day.

As former fellows reconnected and new fellows and allies were introduced, you could tell by the conversations and laughter in the room that there was a genuine feeling of camaraderie being shared all around – a sense of pride in belonging to a very special organization.

The Cahn Fellows Program was established to be exactly that – a very special organization that recognizes outstanding principals for their accomplishments and contributions to education, and to provide them with a network of school leaders and colleagues of similar caliber to serve as a resource for each other. Some of our newest fellows have been especially expressive about how the program has benefitted them. Here are some of their comments:

“The Cahn Fellows Program has reenergized me as a school leader. From the faculty to the fellows to the allies - this program and all that it offers, has reawakened me as a learner and as a professional. Never before have I felt so much excitement and inspiration as a principal, and I owe it all to the Cahn Fellows Program.”  - Jane Hsu, Principal of PS 116, Manhattan

“The experience as a Cahn Fellow this year has been one of the most refreshing professional learning opportunities I have ever had. The experience in Gettysburg...led me to think about what great leaders had to do when pressed with difficult decisions, which is a metaphor for our work as principals on a daily basis. The two-week experience at TC this past summer helped me to re-focus on research about adult learning and its impact on the school community, specifically how we tailor professional development and engage our teachers.”  - Jennifer Ambert, Principal of PS/MS 178 Queens

“...Being able to share in a collective, open dialogue has helped me develop in my own practice and learning as well as having an impact within my school community. It is an honor to be involved with some of the greatest minds who happen to be leading New York City Public Schools...” - Sheila Durant, Principal of PS 69 Bronx

It is our goal for 2015 to bring the Cahn Fellows Program’s network of principals and allies greater recognition by highlighting as much of the excellent work of our alumni and current fellows as possible in both the Cahn Fellows Program newsletter and Teachers College media.

We ask that you let us know of your successes, awards, innovative programs, etc. so that we can share your wonderful achievements and good work with others and give you the recognition you deserve! You can send them to my attention at Lily.Woo@tc.columbia.edu. We’d love to hear from you!

Also, please mark Thursday, February 5th on your calendar. It’s our upcoming informational session on "Crisis Communications: Navigating Education Lawsuits, Grievances & the Media" - topics all too familiar to school leaders today - to be held in Teachers College’s Everett Lounge from 5pm to 7pm. It’s a session you won’t want to miss!

Looking forward to hearing from all of you really soon! Sincerely, Lily
Cahn Alumni Lily Woo & Yvette Beasley Inducted at NYAPE Dinner

At its November dinner meeting at the Princeton Club, the New York Academy of Public Education (NYAPE) inducted 10 new education leaders into the Academy.

NYAPE President Louis Pavone, 2012 Cahn Fellow and principal of P.S./I.S. 78 in Queens, also honored New York City School Chancellor Carmen Farina (pictured center left) with an award for her 40 years of service as an educator in the NYC public school system.

Sixteen Cahn Alumni and NYAPE inductees also attended the ceremony (pictured bottom left) including former NYAPE President Frank DeSario (CF 11), Giovanni Delucchi (CF 11), Adrienne Ubertini (CF 13), Maureen Smith (CF 06), Eloise Messineo (CF 08), Bill Moore (CF 07), Louis Pavone, Lily Woo, Evita Sanabria (CF 14), Brian O’Connell (CF 09), Margaret Russo (CF 08), Randy Asher (CF 10), Christina Tettonis (CF 08), Wanda Soto (CF 05), Dale Kelly (CF 09) and Yvette Beasley.

The New York Academy of Public Education was established in 1912 for the advancement and progress of urban education. Membership in the Academy is by invitation by the Board of Directors and is limited to those who have achieved distinction or recognition in the field of education.
THE CAHN ALUMNI NETWORK
Cordially Invites School Leaders to a Special Panel Discussion

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS: Navigating Education Lawsuits, Grievances & the Media

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5th, 5 - 7pm

Teachers College, Columbia University, Everett Lounge
525 West 120th Street, NYC

RSVP to Cahnfellows@tc.edu

Panelists:

Jaclyn Vargo, NYC Department of Education Office of Special Investigations, Director

Liz Willen, Hechinger Institute for Education and the Media at Teachers College, Director

Ron Woo, Bank Street College of Education Professor of Education Policy & Law

Henry Rubio, Council of Supervisors & Administrators Treasurer & SSP Intervenor

MEET Leading Communications Specialists

LEARN Effective Strategies and Tactics

ENGAGE in Mock Interactive Sessions

MODEL Best Practices and Education Interventions
After spending 13 years as a marketing executive in the film industry, Martha Polin realized she wasn’t happy. She has been successful, she said, rising through the ranks to become vice president of marketing at MGM United Artists. But after a while, the job “ceased to be enjoyable.”

“I was working in the entertainment business for a major motion picture studio and I was the only woman and I hit the glass ceiling, as they say,” Polin said. “So one day, I left and I never went back. I decided I was going to be a teacher.”

The choice she made more than 20 years ago was the right one, she said. Today, Polin is in her 14th year as principal of the Lower East Side (LES) Preparatory High School, a transfer school that helps students who have dropped out of high school or fallen behind in credits.

She loves her second career, which began at Wagner Middle School in the late 1980s, she said. After that, she served as assistant principal at Simon Baruch Middle School and the New York City Museum School.

After that, she served as assistant principal at Simon Baruch Middle School and the New York City Museum School. Polin was also the director for Ballet Tech, The New York City Public School for Dance before she became principal at LES in 2002, Polin said.

“Lower East Side Prep is a wonderful school,” she said, calling its student body “interesting” and “diverse.”

Unlike more traditional high schools, students tend to be older, between 16 and 21 years old, and most of them have already attended at least one other high school, she said. The setup presents many unique challenges both to the students and the teachers.

The school also has a large number of non-native English language speakers and Polin estimates that about 27 different languages are spoken inside the school. While a large percentage of the school’s 550 students speak Chinese or Spanish, others come from far away as Yemen, Nepal and Africa, she said.
Why did you decide to become a teacher?

I kind of had reached the pinnacle, I was the youngest and only female vice-president in my company and it was not satisfying. I don’t know how else to put it. It was financially lucrative. At first it was fun and then it wasn’t fun. And it was, in my mind, rather meaningless. So I thought a lot about it and decided I would become a teacher.

What would you say to people looking to work in education?

For me, it’s been an incredibly rewarding experience. I love the students and I love to come to work every day. It’s an incredibly diverse job, where you’re never bored because kids are never boring.

There are always new challenges and new problems to solve, plus I get to work on a team with two fantastic assistant principals and a great literacy coach that works with the teachers and professional staff developers. This team is my cabinet.

You don’t have to do things by yourself. You don’t have to have all the answers. You can put the question out there to five or six people who can help you solve the problem.

And it’s fun. I know that sounds crazy in a way but I actually love my job. I love the kids. I love my school and I wouldn’t trade it for anything.

How do you help new students transition into the school, particularly those from other countries?

At first, we have an advisory for all new students to familiarize them with the building and the teachers and where to go to for help. And then all of these students, if they don’t speak English, they’re put in an ESL 1 or 2 class where immediately they’re given kind of survival skills — “How do you negotiate the subway, how do you read a map? What English words do you need to know immediately?” and so on. Then the process of building their language skills begins.

In addition to the language barrier and possibly cultural differences, what are some challenges you face?

I always say many students who are here, come with a backpack full of trouble. It’s a Title I school, which means it’s below the poverty line, so kids are often dealing with problems at home. Perhaps they have never quite learned how to study so we offer study skills, SAT prep. There's lunchtime tutoring. There's also homework help everyday except Wednesday, after school. Wednesday is when we have our professional development but they can get help from a math teacher, an English teacher, a social studies teacher and so on and so forth.
FELLOWS SPOTLIGHT: ORLANDO SARMIENTO, PRINCIPAL, NEWCOMERS HIGH SCHOOL

2014 CAHN FELLOW ORLANDO SARMIENTO AMONG TOP SCHOOL LEADERS TO RECEIVE THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS 2014 PRINCIPAL PARTNER AWARD

United Federation of Teachers (UFT) members packed the Grand Ballroom at the New York Hilton on November 2 to commemorate the 54th anniversary of the first UFT strike and celebrate the work of the union’s current educators.

During its annual Teacher Union Day, UFT honored 30 outstanding educators with its Principal Partnership Award, including 2014 Cahn Fellow and Newcomers High School Principal Orlando Sarmiento.

The Partnership Award was presented to Sarmiento, a chapter leader and principal from a school where a successful UFT partnership has been forged, allowing all educators to bring their expertise to bear on crucial decision-making.

The UFT honored past leaders who inspired the organization during the ceremony and celebrated present leaders who continue in their footsteps.

The first Sunday in November commemorates the strike that put the then newly formed UFT on the path to being the activist organization that it is today.

March 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of the union’s formation, the beginning of its remarkable growth, power and influence. Those 50 years of triumphs and advocacy have strengthened the education profession and New York City public schools.

“From the beginning, UFT members have been making positive contributions to this city,” said UFT President Michael Mulgrew. “We’ve moved the system forward during good times and bad. The profession has come so far in 50 years, and it’s important for people to know about that journey.”
CAHN FELLOW SPOTLIGHT: 2014 FELLOW SHEILA DURANT
PRINCIPAL, P.S. 69, JOURNEY PREP, BRONX

MY LEADERSHIP WORK WITH THE HARVARD PRINCIPALS’ COMMITTEE

The Principal’s Center (TPC) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education is founded on the belief that school leaders who are connected to education research and theory, are reflective about their practices, and are engaged in a sustained exchange of ideas with colleagues, have greater potential to create schools in which students have positive learning and development experiences. This endeavor is planned with the following purposes:

Ø To encourage principals and other school leaders to engage actively in their own personal and professional development

Ø Encourage professional development of principals and other school leaders, including establishing their own models for professional growth

Ø To support activities designed to enhance professional practice of school leaders by working at the nexus of policy, practice and research

Ø To engage interested students and faculty at Harvard Graduate School of Education in an exchange of ideas with school practitioners so that each may learn from the other

Ø Help bring national and international attention to the importance of school leadership in facilitating effective school practice.

The role of the TPC Advisory Board is to advise TPC’s program activities by giving guidance and suggestions, serving as a focus group for TPC on important issues in the field and future directions for institutes and other programs, and acting ambassadors for TPC and Harvard Graduate School of Education. Board members are also encouraged to serve as a Group Leader/Facilitator for a TPC institute at least once during their term on the Board.

The membership on the TPC Advisory Board consists of 18 school leaders. Harvard Graduate School of Education will make efforts to include a demographically diverse group of Board members who represent a variety of school types, including public, private, parochial, charter and independent. Efforts will also be made to balance membership among elementary, middle, and high school principals and among representation of urban and suburban communities. Harvard Graduate School of Education also sees Board representation from three major regional areas across the United States, such as the mid-west, north-east, north-west, south-west and southern regions. The Harvard Graduate School of Education community will be represented on the TPC Advisory Board as determined by the Associate Director of TPC, in consultation with the TPC Faculty Advisor and senior Harvard Graduate School of Education staff.
THREE 2014 CAHN FELLOWS JOIN THE COLLEGE BOARD’S BRIDGE DELEGATION TO CHINA

By Kelly McGuire, Principal, Lower Manhattan Community School

Last November, 2014 Cahn Fellows Regina Tottenham, Orlando Sarmiento and I had the privilege of traveling to Beijing, China as a group member of the Hanban Institute Principal’s Delegation. Partnering with the U.S. based College Board, this wing of the Chinese Ministry of Education, seeks to expand Chinese language and culture programs in the United States and around the world.

Educators and organizations within the United States are interested in such programs not only because they may want to start or expand a Chinese language program in their school, but also because they may be interested in building the kinds of cultural ties and personal connections with schools in China that may benefit their students back in the U.S.

We took the opportunity to travel to China and learned a great deal from our Chinese host schools (principals and teachers) and perhaps even more from members of the U.S. delegation. It is always refreshing, incredible, and thought-provoking to talk with other educators about their schools, but it was particularly interesting to learn about how and why, for example, schools in rural West Virginia, would be motivated to teach Chinese immersion starting in Kindergarten. The world is truly becoming smaller as the Internet is connecting people and cultures from around the globe.

I thought a lot about my participation in the Cahn Fellows Program while visiting Beijing and Nanjing (a city of 8 million to the south). Honestly, I breathed a sigh of relief when I reflected on the freedom and choice I have as an American school leader. While much of what the Chinese do for their highest performing students is impressive, I gained an appreciation for the creativity and flexibility with which I can approach my work in schools.

In some ways it would be easier to be a principal in China where many more rules, operating procedures, values, etc. are decided centrally, however, I am not sure that I would have that "seize the day" attitude that excites me every time I walk into our school. The trip was amazing and I recommend that everyone take the opportunity to participate in this delegation in the future.
2010 Cahn Fellow and M.S. 322 Principal Erica Zigelman hosted a group of visitors from Keiko University in Tokyo, Japan, as part of the Global Partners Junior program. Global Partners Junior is a global awareness program whose mission is to connect New York City youth to their peers around the world on the internet.

The group of visitors came to present information about their Japanese culture. They started off by giving a wonderful presentation about where they came from and what their goals were in visiting the school and learning more about our program.

After they gave their presentation, the presenters, along with M.S. 322 students, (pictured below) worked on creating origami. M.S. 322 students also had the opportunity to taste Japanese chocolate treats. The Japanese students then helped our students create flyers to spread the word about environmental awareness.

After viewing a video produced from Japan by our visitors, our students were asked to speak on video about their schooling in the United States which will be shown to students in Japan. M.S. 322 students communicated online using an original curriculum that guides their conversations and activities throughout the school year.
2014 Fall Summit at the Tarrytown House
Townsend Harris Named #8 High School in the Northeast

Anthony Barbetta

2010 Cahn Fellow
Principal
Townsend Harris High School
Queens

Newsweek’s 2014 Rankings highlights schools that do the absolute best job of preparing students for college. A next to a school’s name means that low-income students are scoring at or above average on state assessments.

#261
Baruch College Campus High
Alicia Perez Katz, Principal
2008 Cahn Fellow

#357
Manhattan Village Academy
Hector Geager, Principal
2004 Cahn Fellow

#397
Brooklyn Technical High School
Randy Asher, Principal
2010 Cahn Fellow

#486
New York City Museum School
Darlene Miller, Principal
2009 Cahn Fellow
CAHN-GRATULATIONS ON YOUR RETIREMENT!

PAULA HOLMES
2011 CAHN FELLOW

FORMER
PRINCIPAL
SUSAN MCKINNEY HIGH SCHOOL
BROOKLYN

NANCY MANN
2007 Cahn Fellow

FORMER
PRINCIPAL
FANNIE LOU HAMER FREEDOM HIGH SCHOOL