Greetings! From New Director
COLETTE CAESAR

Greetings TC Peace Corps Fellows! I am so delighted to be here, again at Teachers College. A little over ten years ago I was standing in your very shoes, as a PCF working in a NYC public school while attending evening classes at TC. I was enthusiastic, idealistic, and ready to take on the third challenge of former President John F. Kennedy’s vision- “to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.” So, the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer programs and the opportunity to teach in underserved schools was a great fit for me. Living and teaching in New York City provided an opportunity to reconnect with my home community in a way that I hoped would be similar to what I experienced abroad.

I was a volunteer from 1993 to 1995 in the war-torn country of Sri-Lanka, also known as the Isle of Serendipity, Pearl of the Indian Ocean, and Taprobane. While there I lived in Anuradhapura and when the war escalated I moved more inland and lived in Kandy as an English teacher in the District English Language Instructional Center (DELIC). My students were young adults who were getting certified to teach English so that they could go into rural areas and teach others English.

While abroad I was in constant communication with Daniel Tamulonis, then the Director of the PCF Program at Columbia. My dream had always been to attend Teachers College. After months of paper work and completing the application process, I was admitted into the program.

I learned from a great education leader in Williamsburgh, Brooklyn, principal Jerry Cloffi, that “people respect what you inspect.” One of the legacies of having served in the Peace Corps is I am always to working with immigrants and diverse populations of students.

At this, our first introduction, I just want you to know how privileged I feel to be here. I am ready to be an advocate and staunch supporter of the Peace Corps Fellows Program and of each of you. I know that what we offer to the NYC Public School system is
Alumni of Teachers College, Peace Corps Fellows Program, Colette returns as director after more than ten years of service teaching with the New York City Department of Education. She taught high school English and ESL/ELL classes to students in 9th through 12th grades. Ms. Caesar believes in the power of partnerships to enrich teaching and learning experiences. After earning her undergraduate degree at the College of Staten Island (CUNY), she took up the challenge of former President John F. Kennedy and joined the Peace Corps. From 1993 to 1995 she served as an English teacher in Sri Lanka, also known as The Isle of Serendipity. Upon returning to the U.S. she completed her graduate degree at Harvard Graduate School of Education in administration, planning, and social policy.

Emily Helfgot
Former Assistant Director for Teacher Training/Support and Public Relations

Emily has worked as a classroom teacher, teacher trainer, and program administrator in schools and not-for-profit organizations for more than ten years. In that time Emily has had the opportunity to work with institutions and organizations such as 826 Valencia, Streetside Stories, Camp Broadway, the 92nd St Y, The American Place Theatre’s Literature to Life program and Free Arts NYC. Emily has a BA in Sociology, Theater, Education and Spanish from Macalester College and a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential-CLAD (Cross Cultural, Language and Academic Development) from San Francisco State University.

Shelly Chin
Assistant Director of Teacher Training and Support

Prior to her role with the Peace Corps Fellows Program, Shelly Chin taught second grade in South Los Angeles with the L.A. Unified School District. She helped lead students to achieve the highest district-wide results in state exams – and her students outperformed similar low-income schools. She also served as the Nutrition Coordinator at her school, and brought about a cross-curricular plan for promoting access and awareness to a healthy lifestyle. Preceding her five years of teaching, Shelly served as Program Coordinator for the Warriors Foundation in Oakland and piloted a performing and visual arts-based after school program for a local elementary school. Shelly earned her B.S. from Boston University in Communications and an Ed.M. from UCLA’s Teacher Education Program where her training focused on social justice and urban education. She is currently pursuing an Ed.M. in Leadership, Policy & Politics at Teachers College.

Nicolas Stahelin
Service Learning Coordinator

Nicolas has worked in the field of experiential learning, international and cross-cultural exchange, community partnerships, and program design for over five years. Originally of Swiss-Brazilian nationality, Nicolas lived for over twenty years in Brazil and Venezuela, and is fluent in Spanish, Portuguese, and French. He obtained a BA in Environmental Studies from Oberlin College in 2002, and subsequently worked for two years as a program coordinator with the School for International Training in the Amazonian region of northern Brazil. More recently, he has taught high school bioethics and coordinated service-learning initiatives at a Quaker school in Charlottesville, VA. Nicolas is currently pursuing an Ed.D. in International Educational Development at Teachers College.
Each May the new cohort of Peace Corps Fellows arrives and we begin our Summer Intensive Training (SIT) program. In addition to the daily workshops with the Peace Corps Fellows Program staff and a host of outside speakers in the field of education, Fellows are also taking classes at TC, doing fieldwork in a variety of schools across the city and looking for full-time teaching jobs for September. In an effort to shape and guide the SIT, we offer a different ‘lens’ each week to provide a framework for the readings, seminars and discussions that we cover. Examples of some of these ‘lenses’ are: Movement and Discourse, Classroom Design, Curriculum and Lesson Planning, School and Community, Evaluation and Assessment, Race and Privilege in the Classroom, Negotiating Classroom Challenges, and Preparing for the First Three Weeks. By the end of their summer experience, the Fellows have spent a great deal of time and energy critically examining the challenges confronting their students and their schools and what the role of teacher signifies within these challenges. And they can’t wait to get started!

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unique and immeasurable—we provide our students and school a global outlook about life, learning, and teaching.

We provide a lens, a global perspective, that we essentially embody, that moves us away from our ethnocentrism that sometimes hinders many Americans from seeing how much of the rest of the world lives. We expose students on a daily basis to other ways of seeing, being, and living. We help to affirm and celebrate the differences we find in our classrooms.

Albert Einstein said, "Not everything that counts can be measured. Not everything that can be measured counts." I share this quote with you being aware of the pressures of assessments and the test-driven climate that you are experiencing in your respective schools. While assessments are essential, because a good educator must know where their students are so that they can move them further along in their learning, we can be innovative in how we get our students there. Historically returned Peace Corps Volunteers who teach in NYC public schools bring a tenacity and innovativeness to teaching and learning that allows our students to connect to the respective content areas. We bring respect for diversity and diverse ways of thinking. As RPCV Fellows we are simultaneously teachers and students. We understand and model the importance of life-long learning.

"We provide our students and school a global outlook about life, learning, and teaching.

As a Peace Corps Fellow I was often accused of being too naïve and too idealistic. However, I would argue that it is just the right combination of naïveté and idealism that has kept me optimistic and committed to making a difference in the lives of young people.

2006 Cohort Cont’d

Joaquim Ramsey
School: MS/HS 141 Riverbridge Kingsbridge Academy
Grades/Subject(s): 10th & 11th /Chemistry and 12th/Physics, Health
COS: Malawi, SE Africa
Little Known Fact: I am a licensed Nuclear Reactor Operator

One of the projects that went really well this year was a health project. Teaching health this year, I had the students in my class research the demographics of drug abuse and use as part of our unit on substance abuse. They also had to interview friends about their stereotypes and preconceptions of drug users and drug dealers. The students had to compare and contrast their peer interview with the actual demographics that they found. This was a good exercise. Many students have strong racial stereotypes, despite the great diversity at Kingsbridge. Having my students do this project really helped them to confront their stereotypes directly. Because the interviewers were written down and the demographic data on drug users and drug abusers was from a reliable source, the students had no choice but to look at certain stereotypes as simply wrong. It was a really nice experience for everyone.

"Truly, I view family, to whatever extent the term ‘family’ can be defined, as one of the greatest assets schools and teachers have to fully engage and affect their students."

Aminatu Feinberg
School: H5 for International Business and Finance
Grades/Subject(s): 9th & 10th/ESL
COS: Bolivia
Little Known Fact: I am a Peace Corps baby. My mom was in Peace Corps in Nigeria ’64-’66.

The students in my beginning level ESL classes did an identity project where they had to write about different aspects of their home country and then give an oral presentation with a poster. In my first year, I had students work on their posters in class. In my second year, I incorporated Internet research and a trip to the library, and also let them take the posters home to work on them. What a difference! The posters that the second year students produced as compared to the first year students was the difference between night and day. The second year posters were inspiring, incorporating drawings, Internet pictures, and original works. I learned that it is okay to let go of some control and let the students do what they feel is right, in their own time.

Derek Dubossi
School: Bronx Academy of Letters
Grades/Subject(s): 12th/Earth Science
Country of Service: South Africa
Little Known Fact: I learned how to play rugby on a gay league in NYC.

One of the best teaching moments came after going over the relationship of air temperature, air density, and air pressure over a two period time span a student came to me and said, “I really like your class. It is so relevant. I didn’t like science before your class.” The most important thing a teacher can do is try, and try again.

Charlotte Wolff
School: MS 45- Junior High
Grades/Subject(s): 6th-8th/ESL
Country of Service: Cameroon
Little Known Fact: I still think being a ski bum in Montana was one of the best life decisions I ever made.

This year I started working with intermediate and advanced foreign language learners, which has been a far cry from the basic skills of beginner level learners. The focus of our first unit was to write personal narratives about small but significant moments in our lives. It was a long process of learning writing techniques, the learning process in general, and learning how to revise and give feedback to peers. Still, each week the students got more motivated in their writing. More time was going into drafting and less into mini-lessons. I started using songs as sample narratives for us to analyze for details and descriptions. One song that we analyzed was “Two of Us” by the Beatles. My 8th grade class instantly connected to the narrative within the song. Although I was only trying to expose them to the Beatles for learning purposes, the students really got into the songs. By the end of the unit, we were celebrating our work and sharing our stories, I asked the students how they felt about the process and all they had accomplished. One student said, “Miss, this makes me feel like that song “Two of Us.” Another student said, “Yeah, me too.” Suddenly, there was a collective request to listen to the song again. Not only had they done amazing work with writing, they had yielded to the Beatles! That moment equaled success on so many levels.
Name: Andrew Averill  
School: HS for International Business and Finance  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 11th & 12th/English  
Country of Service: Georgia  
Little Known Fact: I am a middle child.

A great teaching and learning moment from my class so far this year was helping my students to be engaged in *Hamlet*. Through small group enactments and film analysis, my students were able to break down their fear of Shakespeare and actually enjoy the story.

Name: Suzannah Taylor  
School: International High School at Prospect Heights  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 9th & 10th/Global Studies  
Country of Service: Mali  
Little Known Fact: I worked as a dancer on a cruise ship.

This year I taught a unit on imperialism in my global class. The class was broken into groups and each studied the relationship between a colonizer/colony (Mexico/Spain, England/India, etc.) Because each group only studied one colony in depth, I was nervous about their greater conceptual understanding of imperialism. During an end-of-unit review, we looked at the definition again (“A stronger country takes over a weaker country and controls the political, cultural, and economic life.”) I asked, “Can you give me an example other than the country you studied?” I expected that the students would name countries that had been researched by other students in the class. Instead, one student asked, “Miss, isn’t that what the United States is doing to Iraq?” Touché!

Name: April Stark  
School: PS 189, Manhattan  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 3rd/Bilingual  
Country of Service: Madagascar  
Little Known Fact: I love to dance freestyle.

The most important thing a teacher does is model how to be a patient and loving person.

Name: Tasha Hacker  
School: Kingsbridge International High School  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 11th English/ESL  
Country of Service: Russia  
Little Known Fact: I once snuck into a party hosted by Oasis in London and met Noel Gallagher, but didn’t know it was him at the time.

Name: Sean Denmark  
School: Bronx Guild High School  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 9th-12th literacy  
Country of Service: Cameroon  
Little Known Fact: I am learning the tango.

Name: Justin Strauss  
School: Landmark High School  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 9th and 10th grade/Living Environment/Advisory/Sex Education  
Little Known Fact: Work and travel moonlighting as a model

A great HUMAN moment from the year: I helped to organize a surprise baby shower for a young student who did not have much familial or financial support. It was so great to see the surprise, joy, and happiness brought to her from simple yet necessary baby items given to her as gifts from her fellow advisees/classmates. These helpful and very necessary presents were actually bought and donated by my family members, a fellow teacher and myself. Issues may still be present but it was a true learning opportunity for the whole advisory and others involved.

Name: Kim Swanson  
School: Kingsbridge International Magnet High School  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 9th/ESL and ELA  
Country of Service: Ecuador  
Little Known Fact: I have been from the western most point in Africa to Timbuktu.

My students recently completed a service-learning project that had a photography and writing component. I found that because the students were so engaged by the photography component, they all completed the writing component as well. This was the first time that I ever had every student in my class turn in a project.

Name: Chandler Wells  
School: Henry Street School for Int’l Studies  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 10th & 12th ELA  
Country of Service: Madagascar

This November, I joined nine students as part of a delegation from my school to volunteer in Morocco. We worked at an orphanage in Rabat, connected with Peace Corps founded Youth program in Benguirir. We worked with a women’s co-op near Essouria with a Peace Corps volunteer serving there. The students loved the experience, working side by side with people while learning about their culture. We are now in the process of preparing presentations on Moroccan culture to our school community. The other day, I caught some of the students looking at the Peace Corps website, determining what they need to do to join. It was a great experience for everyone involved.

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Colette Caesar Cont’d

As the new director, ideally I want to know how I can help you fulfill the third goal of the Peace Corps mission: bringing the world home. I welcome you to share your concerns, suggestions, and comments about the Peace Corps Fellows Program. I welcome opportunities to meet and talk with you. Send me an email at Caesar@tc.edu or I can be reached at 212-678-3354.

Finally, I leave you with some “Food for Thought:” American anthropologist, Margaret Mead, said, “And we are now where we must educate our children in what no one knew yesterday, and prepare our schools for what no one knows yet.”

2006 Cohort Cont’d

Name: Katie DeLaVaughn  
School: Bronx Green Middle School  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 6th & 7th/field studies, Bilingual, Literacy through Photography  
Country of Service: Nicaragua  
Little Known Fact: I used to dream of being an ice skater!  
My favorite part of the teaching day is after school. I instruct thirty girls in a poetry and photography course where they express their feelings about identity, culture, and their native language. The links are shown below.

www.girlzrolldeep.blogspot.com  
www.youngladylindas.blogspot.com

Name: Patricia Chang  
School: Bronx International HS  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 11th/English  
Country of Service: China  
The most important thing a teacher does is listen!

Name: Sean Denmark  
School: Bronx Guild High School  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 9th-12th/Literacy  
Country of Service: Cameroon  
Little Known Fact: I am learning the tango.

Name: Ritchie Garcia  
School: PS 165  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 2nd/Dual Language  
Country of Service: Uganda  
Little Known Fact: Thai police chased me onto an airplane in Thailand.

Name: Timothy Riley  
School: PS28 in Hamilton Heights  
Grade(s)/Subject(s): 3rd/Transitional Bilingual  
Country of Service: Nicaragua  
Little Known Fact: I was an environmental education volunteer.

Reed Dickson is now the director of the Conservation Corps of Greater New Orleans. In May, CCGNO launched six new AmeriCorps programs that together will enable 800 young adults to design and implement service-learning projects in their communities. Reed sends his thanks to all of you for sharing your insights around service learning and teaching in general, and as always, he can be reached through the myPCFP e-community.

“Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”  
James Baldwin

“A teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn is hammering on a cold iron”  
Horace Mann

“The fatal pedagogical error is to throw answers like stones at the heads of those who have not yet asked the questions.”  
Paul Tillich

“A teachers day is half bureaucracy, half crisis, half monotony, and one-eighteenth epiphany. Never mind the arithmetic.”  
Susan Oanian

“And we are now where we must educate our children in what no one knew yesterday, and prepare our schools for what no one knows yet.”  
Margaret Mead
When the Fellows start the program in May, they arrive with a draft of their Teaching Philosophy that speaks to their fundamental beliefs about learning and teaching. Over the course of that first summer, they are listening to experts in the field speaking about all aspects of education, they are involved in discussions on urban teaching with their peers and they are doing a tremendous amount of self-reflection with regard to themselves as educators. At the end of the summer, they are asked to revisit that Teaching Philosophy to see if their ideas have shifted at all, and to revise it accordingly—with the knowledge that this document will constantly be a ‘work in progress’.
I do have a life outside of teaching. Little Known Fact:
Country of Service: Malawi
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 10th Living Environment
School: Bronx Leadership Academy 2
Name: William Lee
I do have a life outside of teaching.

Little Known Fact:
Country of Service: Lesotho
Grade(s)/ Subjects: 9th & 12th/English
School: Bronx Leadership Academy 2
Name: Ajith Satyanarayana

Late in my poetry unit, I was teaching “My Papa’s Waltz” to my Creative Writing class. I had planned to use it as an example of iambic tetrameter, highlighting the musicality of the poem and how the verse naturally fell into ¾ Waltz time, and ohh isn’t that clever of the poet to do that. After we read through the poem once, I could immediately tell that my students did not care about rhyme and meter today- they wanted to talk about the meaning of the poem!

For a few minutes I had them write what they were thinking about, and what followed was the most spirited discussion I have ever tried to facilitate. It was like a rider-less bicycle launched down a hill. It lurched and turned and gathered momentum with each student’s input, and it was impossible to tell exactly where it would end up. Everyone wanted to be heard, wanted to weigh in on what they thought was going on in these twelve brief lines. Ditching the lesson plan was the smartest thing I did that day, and even if we didn’t answer the “Aim”, enjoying that poem was the goal all along.

Name: Grace Stevenson
School: PS 165
Grade(s)/ Subjects: 5th/Dual Language
Country of Service: Fiji Islands
Little Known Fact:
I completed the baby Olympics.

The most important thing a teacher does is stay consistent. It’s funny how hard it is to do. Teachers must be consistent in everything if they want results. We must be consistent in the way we speak to students, check homework, implement classroom procedures, assess student abilities... and the list goes on. As teachers, we must find a balance between staying consistent and trying out new ideas and ways of doing things. Students are so sensitive to change!

Name: Aijth Satyanarayana
School: Bronx Leadership Academy 2
Grade(s)/ Subjects: 9th & 12th/English
Country of Service: Lesotho
Little Known Fact:
I was on Romper Room
Be there - in and out of the classroom.

Name: William Lee
School: Bronx Leadership Academy 2
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 10th Living Environment
Country of Service: Malawi
Little Known Fact:
I do have a life outside of teaching.

Most importantly, my essential goal is that the skills and applications that my students learn in the classroom extend beyond the school walls into their lives now and in the future.

Name: Sigrid Holmgren
School: Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 9th & 10th/Math & Science.
Country of Service: Namibia
Little Known Fact:
I just bought a beautiful bridesmaid dress because my best friend is getting married.

Name: Rita Michelle Roberts
School: Manhattan Middle School for Scientific Inquiry (MS328)
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 6th & 7th /ESL & Dual Language
Country of Service: Guatemala
Little Known Fact:
I used to hunt, capture, and spend hours watching Dichromophia virids [grasshoppers] mate. Then, I dissected the females to research the sperm storage organ called the spermathecae. My research supported Darwin’s Theory about natural selection within the grasshopper species.

Name: David Forney
School: Harbor Heights Middle School MS 349
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 8th Sheltered Science & ESL
Country of Service: Cameroon
Little Known Fact:
I follow La Linga in Spain. Barcelona is my favorite soccer club.

Name: Jessica Bruck
School: Validue Preparatory Academy
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 10th&11th Math
Country of Service: Tanzania
Little Known Fact:
I thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail- 2,175 miles in 5 months!

Name: Marissa Torres
School: M368 Hamilton Heights School
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 9th& 10th Biology
Country of Service: Nicaragua
Little Known Fact: I dance.
The most important thing a teacher does is make their students think twice.

Name: Emily Giles
School: Bronx International High School
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 9th& 10th Biology
Country of Service: Malawi
Little Known Fact:
I have a plant named Henrietta and some days Henry.

Name: Seung Yu
School: High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 9th Global Literature
Country of Service: Dominican Republic
Little Known Fact:
I love golf.

Name: Erin Katie Bartels
School: Kingsbridge International High School
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 10th ESL/ELA
Country of Service: Mozambique
Little Known Fact:
I am a performing salsa dancer!

Name: Heather Irene Bush
School: Bread and Roses High School, Harlem
Grade(s)/ Subject(s): 9th & 10th Honors English
Country of Service: Nepal, Molgova
Little Known Fact:
The tattoo on my neck means peace in Nepal, and I got it the day after the civil war ended.

A project that went really well in my 10th grade Honors class was the creative, final project my students did after reading A Raisin in the Sun. One of the project options was to create at least five diary entries written from the perspective of Beneatha Younger after she marries and moves to Africa. The students had to do research on Africa and include pictures and references to what they learned about Africa in their diary entries. I was blown away by the work that my students turned in. Many of them created mini-diaries or scrapbooks, and their interpretation of Beneatha as a character was profound. Some of them imagined her working as a doctor in the African bush, while others described the elaborate welcoming dance that the women performed for her when she arrived in her husband’s village. It was great to see where my student’s minds took them beyond the text.
“As an advocate for my students, I believe that the endeavor to seek both peace and social justice must be seamlessly woven into everything that I do in my classroom.”

“The period of second language acquisition can be as messy and insecure as that of adolescence, and language learners at this age are often both enormously fun and enormously anxious. Not being able to express oneself fluently makes a learner feel vulnerable to so much; to misinterpretation in the most basic sense, but also to misinterpretation in a more personal way—the worry that a listener will confuse simple speech with simplicity of thought or personality. My job is to be the opposite of that listener, and to lead my students to play the same role.”

“Part of my job as a teacher is to inspire my students to speak out for change and help them to create action plans for how those changes can and should happen. If one or two students come up with an idea, I am willing and wanting to help them to inspire their peers to join them in their cause.”
The best thing I’d ever done for either group. The kids were beside themselves. It was, I believe, done in New York (even better than the UN!) and Corsicans said it was the best thing they had everyone was fascinated by everyone else. The sang nationalist songs in 5-part harmony, and each other French and Spanish, the Corsicans teacher that can find the students who are on the fence and push them over to the place where they can academically and emotionally succeed.

While I was in the Peace Corps, I missed 7 weddings, and I got proposed to 27 times! I wrote away for classroom materials from Teaching Tolerance, and taught a unit focusing on different groups who have experienced discrimination throughout US history. Topics included why it is not OK to use the “N” word, and why the word “gay” isn’t an insult. Students responded well, and they made beautiful final projects—brochures spotlighting on a particular group of people. It was quite a timely unit, too, coinciding with the spotlighting on a particular group of people. It was quite a timely unit, too, coinciding with the appalling noose incident at Teachers College. We was quite a timely unit, too, coinciding with the appalling noose incident at Teachers College. We were able to have frank discussions about race and how discrimination has changed (or not) over time.

I ran a SK in a hat made of tortilla chips (with salsa). Yeah, it was a sombrero.

I have two different colored eyes.

As an advocate for my students, I believe that the endeavor to seek both peace and social justice must be seamlessly woven into everything that I do in my classroom.

I hate onions.

I live in a small Christian community.
We want to welcome the 2008 cohort! We look forward to getting to know them throughout the summer training and to hearing about all the wonderful things that will be happening in their classrooms next year!
Carol Smith on her Journey

Peace Corps Fellow and TC Alumni, Assistant Principal of Humanities at International High School for Business and Finance

My journey from Peace Corps Fellow to Alumnae and Administrator has been a challenging and exciting one. I wouldn’t change a moment of it!

Many of my Fellows cohort and I began our work at George Washington High School, a large high school with a long record on New York State’s SURR (school under registration review) list. When the campus underwent redesign to become four smaller schools, the opportunity for my move toward leadership and administration began. Of the four new, smaller schools, I am at the High School for International Business and Finance.

After serving as a TESOL Fellow and developing a literacy specialization, my work in remediation led to the position of an Instructional Specialist. In this role, I supported the faculty members in all content areas as their teacher trainer, while maintaining four periods of classroom instruction myself. In this well-supported redesign, the students in our school made tremendous progress. In spite of our student body’s challenging socioeconomic status, their below level English/Math proficiency scores upon entering high school, a large number of ELL’s and a significant SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education) population, within a short period of time, as a small school we were cited as one of the Chancellor's Top 200 Performing Schools in New York City acknowledged by New York State Department of Education as a 'School Closing the Achievement Gap’, and earned the highest ratings on the annual Quality Review for New York City.

With our school's success, our Principal Francesca Peña became a Superintendent and Juan Alvarez became a Principal. The motivation for transitioning to administration came from the desire to participate in and maintain the continuity of the school's leadership team. I was very committed to the educational philosophy and instructional approach of both the former Principal and the new Principal.

Currently, as Assistant Principal of Humanities, I supervise twenty-three faculty members in English Language Arts, English as a Second Language, Native Language Arts/Foreign Languages, Social Studies/History grades 9-12, and Music. Originally, I followed my predecessor and supervised Language Arts only. This particular position formed as our school evolved. I was proud to have a voice as our administration decided to move toward merging of all humanities content into more cohesive unit.

“I have always continued teaching a class every semester. The particular content area, grade level, and skill set I teach is always determined after the administrative team’s summer programming sessions. The specific students and the class are based on identifying the most academically or behaviorally at-risk students. The rationale for an Assistant Principal teaching is to establish my credibility as a model for instruction even in the most challenging circumstances. The opportunity to continue teaching, especially working with the most challenging students, has helped me maintain my skills as a teacher, establish my credibility as an Assistant Principal of Supervision, and be sure in my choice of professional roles.

A large part of the success of the redesign of George Washington High School into productive, positive smaller schools comes from the connection that is possible between students and faculty. The school’s philosophy is cemented in compassion, respect and love for our children, all of which must be present before academic instruction can take place. Knowing our children as individuals and really seeing them is the hidden curriculum of the school. Being able to continue my work in the classroom has helped me model this connection to incoming teachers.

I am grateful for every stage in my professional journey. I owe thanks to the Peace Corps Fellows Program at TC, former Director Daniel Tamulonis, and my PCF cohort members for the support that has enabled my development and longevity in the New York City Department of Education.

Being a PCF alumnae and administrator means coming full circle professionally. Three years ago, former Director Reed reintroduced me as a recruiter for PCF placement. The ability to bring Fellows into my school and my department may be my greatest contribution to the HSIBF educational community. There is a sense of symmetry in empowering and supporting these new PCF’s. It is clear that the current and former Fellows at our school area good fit with students and have contributed to the success of our educational community. As some of these individuals are choosing to move toward leadership roles and continuing education, I support their growth wholeheartedly.

For potential or new Fellows, I encourage using the tenacity, patience, and enthusiasm that guided us all through the overseas service when beginning teaching experience in New York City.”
Pedro Santana is a Peace Corps Fellows alumnus (1992) and the current Principal of the Angelo Patri Middle School (MS 391) in the Bronx. We had the opportunity to visit his school this semester, take an extensive tour, sit in on some classes and speak to staff, teachers and students.

Catching Up with Pedro Santana

Everywhere we went we heard about the positive differences that the principal has made and it was abundantly clear just how inspired they were by the vision that Pedro has put in place. Staff spoke of how they felt differently under this administration and how they want to come to work because of the environment that Principal Santana has envisioned and created for his school. Pedro’s passionate caring for his school community, as well as for the larger neighborhood, comes through in everything he says and does. This is his second year as principal and he speaks with authority about what his students need, deserve, and can achieve because he values them and sees their fate directly linked to his. We had the chance to sit down with Pedro and talk to him about his history as an educator, his role as principal, and his thoughts on what he would like to see for the future. Here is some of what he had to say:
ON THE IMPORTANCE OF A NICE OFFICE AND BEING UNPREDICTABLE:

“When I came in, this place was a mess. It looked messy. It felt messy. It didn’t feel right. The kids didn’t feel right. And I said... I like it. My first commitment was to change the principal’s office and get rid of all the furniture. And I got [gestures to waterfall] from Ikea, [end tables] from Target, and [easy chair] from Costco. In the summer, summer school was happening. And what a normal principal does is introduces themselves to the kids. But I didn’t. I didn’t introduce myself to them at all. I just knew that was too predictable. You go in front of a class and they go “Oh, great. You’re the principal here. How long you gonna last?” So I didn’t introduce myself at all, but I left my door open. And I was decorating this place. They would just stop by here and peek their head in and come in and introduce themselves to me. They would ask if I was the new principal and I’d say yes and being a male Latino it was already, “Really? Wow.” They would walk around and go, “This is your office?” I would say, “What do you think?” “This is real nice!” I would go, “I know, I am an uppity man of color.”

ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PRINCIPAL:

“I think that foremost you better be an educator. I’m not into business management. I could tap into that first because I have my background in that, but I’m not into somebody that wasn’t a teacher first being an administrator. They don’t belong here. I completely understand how it is to be in front of a classroom and get 30% of homework completed. I am a principal/teacher. I teach literacy here. 30% of my kids will not do their homework. During independent reading time, four of my boys will say, “Santana, I don’t have my book here.” I know that means. I know what that feels like as the teacher. If I wasn’t a teacher I’d walk past that room and ask, “Why are four of these boys not reading?” with that arrogance and that ‘How dare you?’ kind of thing. That doesn’t work at all. There are no bells here. I unplugged them. People wanted them badly; it was like taking away a drug from a drug addict. If you know what you are doing then the bells don’t make any sense. Time goes quicker and smoother without them. Kids will think the time flies by. We don’t do intercom stuff. When you teach, and you have that magical moment where you just got them ready and an announcement comes on, they’re lost. Nothing interrupts instructional time. I think it is disrespectful to teachers. Right now the teachers can walk into my classroom and do an informal observation. When I do my professional development here I can say, “Guys, that lesson for me wasn’t good. It didn’t work.” I love it when a first-year teacher can say to me, “It worked for me because I did it this other way.” I say, damn! That’s excellent.

ON HIS STUDENTS:

“If I create a population of uppity kids of color then this nation is in trouble. What happens is they start questioning stuff. They start questioning why is it that they can’t find a bookstore in their neighborhood. Granted, if I open one I’d lose money because there’s not enough love for it yet. But someplace they should put one in because they’re beautiful. Uppity kids of color means that when a teacher doesn’t do their job then the kids come to me and say ‘so-and-so doesn’t do their job’. Because they know what good looks like. They tasted it and they felt it and they want it. When something is not clean they say, “See this Santana? Can you do something about this?” If they see graffiti they want to change it. Before me they’d say it is what it is. “We live in the ghetto, it is what it is.”

“You’re not going to make them marketable if I just yell about them being late because although I know culturally where they are, I am not going to make them marketable if I just leave them alone.”

WHEN I DO MY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HERE I CAN SAY, “GUYS, THAT LESSON FOR ME WASN’T GOOD. IT DIDN’T WORK.” I LOVE IT WHEN A FIRST-YEAR TEACHER CAN SAY TO ME, “IT WORKED FOR ME BECAUSE I DID IT THIS OTHER WAY.” I SAY, DAMN! THAT’S EXCELLENT.

That’s a slogan that I use a lot in this building for a reason. So they leave and come back with a friend. By September, the neighborhood already heard about me and about my office. They would come back with their friends and show off the office. They would go around and say, “Look at this! See this!” That was it. I never did a welcome speech in the auditorium, I never did, “My name is Pedro...”—none of that stuff. But I would just walk around the building and in the cafeteria the kids would call me over and say, “I want to introduce you to my friends.” That was how I was introduced. That was how the year went. Unpredictable is always the best for middle schoolers. Be unpredictable. Predictable is what they see on the TV. They sort of know that the principal is going to introduce himself in the auditorium. They know they are supposed to heckle him. They’re supposed to be like, “Oh, great.” That’s the way it’s supposed to be. The energy is not for them to fall in love with the principal. I knew I wanted to be unpredictable because I knew I could be better than that.”

To read more of what Pedro has to say, and to hear the interview as an audio file, visit our webpage at www.tc.edu/pcfellows and click on the Media Center page.
Service-learning initiatives are in full gear at the Peace Corps Fellows Program, and some of our fellows’ pioneering projects are gaining visibility at Teachers College and beyond. Recently, PCFP alumni from Brooklyn International High School showcased a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, grade-wide service-learning project, brining over 70 seniors to exhibit their work in the main hall of Zankel. These students had a chance to advocate for the social issues they investigated, while showing how they researched and integrated all the subject areas around their chosen themes. They also displayed the bilingual newspaper they produced to strengthen their native languages as they learned English.

The Service-Learning Extravaganza was a wonderful inversion of traditional roles, in which high school students were teaching social issues and innovative pedagogies to the future teachers, administrators, and policy-makers attending a graduate school of education. The event was very successful, involving about 130 participants throughout morning and afternoon.

We were even covered by the Columbia Spectator! You can read the article below or visit: [www.columbiaspectator.com/node/29150](http://www.columbiaspectator.com/node/29150)

Congratulations to folks at Brooklyn International, and a big thanks to all who helped make this happen.

**PCFP Service Learning Projects**

- **Laura Berson (2003) and Shahzia Pirani (2003)**
  Brooklyn International High School
  “Social Activists of BIHS”

- **Suzannah Taylor (2006)**
  International High School at Prospect Heights
  “The Voice of African Immigrant Youth”

- **Derek Dubosi (2006)**
  Bronx Academy of Letters
  “Bilingual Science Education Book Project”

- **Dara Ross (2003)**
  Brooklyn International High School
  “Whats Going On? Protest and the Environment”

- **Charles Voltz (2005)**
  Bushwick Community High School
  “Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies in Brazil”

- **Andrew Averill (2006)**
  High School for International Business and Finance
  “Katrina Corps: New Orleans Volunteer Fieldtrip”

- **Nate Wight (2003)**
  Alfred E. Smith CTE High School
  “Reflecting on Tupac Shakur’s Poetry”

- **Amanda Rives (2002)**
  The Computer School – M5 245
  “Endangered Species Book”

- **Caren Demdam (2005)**
  High School for International Business and Finance
  “Peer Education Project”

- **Tasha Hacker (2006)**
  Kingsbridge International High School
  “Piecing Together the Mosaic: A Community Oral Histories Project”

- **Tim Ross (2003)**
  Kingsbridge International High School
  “Enriching the Mosaic: A Neighborhood Oral Histories Project”

- **Heather Ryan (2005)**
  The Evergreen School – CS 152
  “What’s Beyond the South Bronx?”

- **Katie DelaVaughn (2006)**
  Bronx Green Middle School
  “Literacy through Photography”