Currently awaiting graduation this May are Laverne Bazan-Thomas, Donna Samms-Reid (a staff member of the IT Center), Jasmin Bourdon and Israel Ramos. Sociology, African & African-American Studies and Puerto Rican Studies are their chosen majors.

Christine Pottinger-Townsend and Elizabeth Phyars are alumni who have come back to Lehman for graduate school; they studied Sociology and Speech Pathology & Audiology as undergraduates.

Aside from Lehman, MATH-UP’s Cohort 3 hails from other institutions. Jose Nunez studied Spanish Literature at Hunter College while Jaffranna Castillo studied Childhood Education and Childhood Special Education at NYU. Linus Kargbo, an international student from Sierra Leone, has a Bachelor’s degree in the Education of Chemistry & Biology as well.

While beginning teacher preparation with Cohort 3, we are entering our last few months with Cohort 2 who began in January 2012. These 17 students are expected to graduate this September and will walk during Commencement in May. Each has the option to continue on to the Special Education Advanced Certificate program here at Lehman after graduation.

Wishing everyone a successful semester,

Erin Twomey, Project Manager
Mentoring: Building Professional Relationships

Teaching depends, fundamentally, on the quality of relationships among individuals.
~ Charlotte Danielson

While this quote from Danielson is primarily about the quality of relationships between teachers and their students, it is also spokes to the value of the professional relationships that educators form throughout their careers. The guidance, advice and feedback provided by a mentor can be invaluable in improving teacher practice.

Although the phrase no man is an island has become cliché, it is still pretty much true in teaching. As a cooperating teacher in MATH UP, you now agree to expose your practices day-in and day-out not only to the novice teacher, but also, to all of the other stakeholders in the program. In my role as a mentor to cooperating teachers, I provide an opportunity for cooperating teachers to learn from having another set of eyes in the classroom. I am entrusted with the job of providing evidence-based feedback that is both meaningful and actionable in such a way that still values and respects the challenging work that teachers do every day. My goal is to help push teachers, and in turn, their interns, to new depths of reflection, understanding and levels of practice while maintaining a professional relationship with all.

The net result of the mentoring relationships that make up MATH UP is a focus on meeting the needs of students in an environment that challenges every adult and child to reach their highest levels of achievement.

Shirley Hall, ETS Consultant

Managing Time and Measuring Success!

This past year as an intern at P.S. 55, I have had many amazing experiences. I have learned so much about students, special education and surprisingly, myself as a learner and educator. My days have consisted of immense amounts of time dedicated to lesson planning, developing activities and collaborating with my mentor teacher and students in my cohort. I have managed to juggle my internship, graduate course work and my three children fairly well.

The greatest challenge is the management of time. There will always be assignments due and activities to collaborate on; in addition to other responsibilities. Although I make lists and schedule tasks, you always have to think in terms of the unexpected.

My most positive moments during this process, have been when my first grade students understand the progress they have achieved. In special education, too often, students are disconnected from the meaning their education presents. I make certain to emphasize how personally invested we must be to achieve goals we have for ourselves.

My internship experience has allowed me the opportunity to teach in a near full-time capacity. The benefit of exposure to this amount of teaching time eases me into the role of a teacher of record.

Renee Ahmad ‘13
Why MATH UP?

On my journey to find the appropriate school to start my MSED I visited Lehman College. I arrived at the Childhood Education Department and told the receptionist about my interest in completing a MSED in Childhood Education with a bilingual extension. The receptionist gave me a brochure for the MATHUP Program and told me that this program had everything I was looking for and more. After talking to the project manager, Erin Twomey, I understood that the Mathematics Achievement with Teachers of High need Urban Population (MATH UP) Program was the right path to follow to obtain the preparation that I was targeting.

I am interested in working in the Bronx with students that are bilingual. I want to be as prepare as possible to make sure that as a teacher I will be able to give my students the education they deserve. I know with a specialization in mathematics, a certification extension in bilingual Education that MATH UP will provide me with along with my undergraduate experience in Special Education, I will be prepare to serve the children in my community. I am glad to know that a team of wonderful professionals have come together to prepare teachers knowing that this is the first step to start reducing the achievement gap.

Jaffranna Castillo ’14

Math and Music: Catching up with MU Alumnus, Damon Branch

As Cohort 2 is approaching the end of their clinical residency, we check in with the graduates of Cohort 1 who are approaching the end of their first year in teaching. We recently spoke with one of our graduates Damon Branch about his experiences as a first year teacher. Damon or Mr. Branch has he is now known to the students and fellow teachers of P.S. 114 teaches 3rd grade math and 3rd – 5th grade music. For Mr. Branch some of the wonderful highlights of his first year of teaching are the successful school trips and assemblies he organized which included a holiday show, Black History play, Respect for All assembly and Anti-Bullying assembly. Most importantly for him is that his students are excelling in math. His class currently holds the highest score record for the mathematics practice computer software used by the school. But like every first year teacher, he does have his challenges. His main challenge is to differentiate for all the various learning levels in his classrooms. According to him, “while most students are excelling in math, my own reflection and [assessment] data revealed to me that the education gap is widening in my classroom. In other words the above-level and on-level students are progressing significantly but the "approaching-level" students are slowly progressing. This exposes my weakness in differentiating. I have to do better to move all the students.”

When asked how the experiences of MATH UP program helped with his first year of teaching, Mr. Branch credits what he refers to as “the Big 5” skills that he gained while being in the program; rigorous lesson planning, Danielson Framework training, cutting edge technology training, assessment techniques and classroom management. Mr. Branch has been a perfect fit for the P.S. 114 family. He is not only successful with his students in the classroom but also with his fellow teachers at the school. One of his fellow teachers feels that he is a great asset to the school, not only does he bring techniques to help improve math and music education but his technology skills which he shares with everyone at the school. The MATH UP Program is extremely proud of Mr. Branch and all of our graduates who have gone on to teach and make a difference in elementary education in the Bronx.

Naliza Sadik, Educational Technology Assistant & Damon Branch, Cohort 1 Alumnus and P.S. 114 Teacher
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