

Early College Folio

The House of Education Needs Overhaul

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Early College Pedagogy

An Introduction to the
Bard Early College Fellowship

Ligaya Franklin
Bard Early College

Bard College at Simon's Rock is a space of educational innovation and has been since its inception in 1966. A place of educational reform geared toward highlighting youth achievement and student voice, the institution works to ensure there is a place for students to feel empowered as they grow. The renowned teaching practices enabled the preparation of youth for a broader civic-minded world and set the groundwork for the creation of Bard Early College in 2001 whose mission extends the early college model and uniquely dynamic pedagogy to historically disenfranchised populations. Today, Bard Early College serves over three thousand students in diverse communities across the nation. Though the question stands, what makes the institution's pedagogy so successful?

Bardian pedagogy believes that every young person should and can succeed in higher education. Rooted in our values is the explicit belief in critical thinking and engagement in and out of the classroom. Strong pedagogy presents complex questions and ideas while considering diverse perspectives to push the development of individual beliefs, voices, and understandings of the world. Every discipline embraces our intrinsic value of an interdisciplinary approach, thus ensuring any student leaves with a holistic view of the world.

Early College Folio is a space to highlight the remarkable work that speaks to the Bardian values, and this first issue presents these foundations for the public to understand our successful pedagogical theory. As a means to introduce the Bardian ethos, we present five projects from the Early College Fellowship. The Fellowship comprises faculty from the Bard Early College network including seven schools across the nation. Its purpose is to highlight the boundless possibilities of innovation that the Early College has to offer students. Each year, fellows craft a lesson series ranging from class units to a full semester-length curriculum in their disciplines, underscoring Bardian methods' uniqueness in their disciplines to ensure student success is at the forefront of their students' efforts. As the Early College Fellowship manager, I hoped to ensure the centering of diverse best practices that successfully fostered environments in which historically marginalized youth found their voice. Social justice and educational

reform run throughout each project, either building marginalized youth's voices or directly offering guidance to engage with systemic inequality in and out of the classroom. The following projects from Bard Early College Fellows show the ethos of such a framework introduced to all grades of the Academy, from 9th grade into the college courses, reminding both the reader and the practitioner that integrating best practices from the beginning of a student's educational career and throughout is the only way to be successful. Premiere pedagogy is only successful if the most vulnerable feel a sense of liberation.

EARLY COLLEGE FELLOW: NESRIN MCMEEKIN

In a semester-long lesson series, Nesrin McMeekin's [*Critical Writing: Challenging but Not Impossible!*](#) offers a guide to scaffolding academic writing. McMeekin is a professor of Literature at Bard Early College Hudson and Dutchess County. Her intended audience is students who lacked the appropriate preparedness for secondary educational pursuits. An exemplary showcasing the student-centered approach, students are incrementally guided through a process of academic writing incrementally in a five-week cycle. The objective of the lesson is to confront the overwhelming anxiety that stems from being unaccustomed to creating lengthy academic papers, which may lead to a lack of conceptual understanding and shoddy quality work. Therefore, breaking the conventional approach of share and repeat, McMeekin guides students in their confrontation of fear about the arduous paper-writing task and builds confidence over weeks, rather than through trial and error. McMeekin asserts:

It is important to know that students are in charge. Our classrooms are their platforms to ask, search, engage, and share. It is also important to understand that we do not need to come to the same conclusions. To the contrary, it is to our benefit if we share our different perspectives and continue our learning through these differences.

What better way to engage a learner than by allowing a natural progression of thought and dialogue to emerge, ensuring that well-crafted arguments become the result?

EARLY COLLEGE FELLOW: JEHAN SENAI WORTHY

If students are to be successful in higher education, preparation must occur during their formative years. Former Bard High School Early College Newark professor, Jehan Senai Worthy, presents a lesson showcasing ninth and tenth graders are ready for collegiate level work if the foundations are done well. [*What is History and How Do We Study History?*](#) is a scaffolding approach to writing a historical research paper by asking students to answer the following questions: Why does history matter? How do we study history? Using these questions as frameworks to delve into Lynn Hunt's *History: Why it Matters* and excerpts from W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America*, Worthy asserts that by scaffolding tenets of writing, students can produce a brilliant collegiate report, even at an early stage in their academic careers.

Fueled by Bard's Writing and Thinking techniques such as response journals, loop writing, text explosions, and group discussions, students can engage deeply with materials resulting in more robust learning. Signature pedagogies range from project-based learning; journal prompts, focused free writes, free writes, loop writing, text rendering, believing & doubting, process writing, and small group critique. During these six lessons, students and educators alike are set to experience a step-by-step structure for uncovering the skills to form thought-provoking arguments that unearth truths of historical events and the arduous nature of research projects. Worthy writes:

I want students to leave these lessons in search of historical truths, being able to determine the difference between evidence and how the author interprets the evidence, as well as how their own backgrounds and experiences shape their understanding of historical truths. I also want students to leave these lessons as defenders and advocates of historical truths tasked with the moral responsibility to ensure people, places, and events are represented for all that they truly are regardless of politics and/or how other people may perceive those truths.

Education, as Worthy asserts, is more than success in the confines of academia. The actual value of the Academy is relaying empowerment of the mind and liberating the self to ensure students can walk in the world with their heads held high, knowing they are real members of society. What is the point in arbitrary classroom engagement if reality is not rooted in lesson plan goals?

EARLY COLLEGE FELLOW: GRACIELA BÁEZ

Formulating similar truth-seeking positions, Bard High School Early College Queens professor Graciela Báez's [*Social Justice in the Language Classroom Series*](#) exemplifies the value in connecting student academic and social experience with critical thinking that is further paired with social engagement. A three-week unit (a total of 12 fifty-minute sessions), the series focuses on translating Writing and Thinking techniques to Spanish language courses. Utilizing Argentinian language and history, this model challenges students to hone their vocabulary, written, and oral comprehension skills while engaging in conversations about human rights and politics in a global context. According to Báez, the project exists as:

A small introductory snippet of U.S. intervention and fascist history, one that is not relegated to South American borders' confines. Rather, it presents students to a moment in history (not that far ago) in a place distant from NYC, yet whose patterns of state-sanctioned violence against its own people has a transnational reach. As I reassessed the Spanish language program (four years for some and three years for most students) and its purpose, I placed great emphasis on reconceptualizing activism as an indelible component of that education. Activism is, as Paulo Freire states, "problem-posing education," which is fundamental to the emancipation of those subjected to all forms of domination.¹

Studying other nations and societies allows for critical awareness and study of our own. In doing so, social justice education foments transnational and intersectional resistance to continued forms of colonization, racialization, and capitalist oppression, particularly on diasporic bodies. Báez astutely points out that the classroom is a microcosm of our world; we cannot separate the history and current systemic inequities from our understanding or engagement with the texts we read with our students. Embodying such a practice is the heart of Bardian pedagogy, so we must honor our educators who actively fight for consciousness to arise in our schools.

EARLY COLLEGE FELLOW: DAVID PRICE

The social sciences and languages are not the only disciplines to embed notions of civic mindfulness in their curriculum. Bard High School Early College Queens professor David Price's [Math and Politics](#) promotes the idea that any discipline can be intersectional. Price empowers students to understand that even math is rooted in a tangibly constructed context. The unit encourages students to develop voting systems and compare them to real voting methods to ensure there is explicit understanding of the connection between mathematical principles and societal action. The goal is for students to become prepared to engage with justifications used in political discourse, an important dynamic that is connecting real world application to methods that are usually intangible to a common audience. What Price promotes is a form of civic engagement in a conscious fashion. Who says mathematics cannot be intersectional?

EARLY COLLEGE FELLOW: ELISABETH GAMBINO

Bard High School Early College Baltimore professor of visual arts, Elisabeth Gambino, presents another example of interdisciplinary stewardship. Gambino's project, [Local to Global: A Model for Engaged Activism and Student-Led Inquiry](#), uses artistic expression and ecology as lenses to engage students in activism and critical engagement. The lesson guide (one that applies to any discipline) follows the tempo of six principles: orient to the local environment; orient to the impact of human actions; investigate how artists participate in environmental activism; develop, discuss and refine conceptual approaches to art-making; collaborate as a community; and take action to advocate for environmental change. As Gambino notes, "This work will build year after year to create meaningful connections and partnerships for students and the school community." This emphasis reminds us that building the framework of civic pedagogy early in students' careers enables a community to grow into one rooted in an ethos of pedagogical success. An engaged and informed student is one who excels inside and outside the classroom.

The Bardian Early College model asserts that successful pedagogy centers on students' growth and well-being at every level. Be it in the social sciences, arts, or mathematics, students are empowered to become wholly rounded individ-

uals prepared for civic life. Unfiltered success starts in the classroom. As you navigate these pieces, I hope you note that each of these projects embodies intersectional and cross-disciplinary thought that can invoke a thriving learning environment.

LIGAYA FRANKLIN, Academic Program Associate for Bard Early College, is responsible for fostering cohesion of intercampus student and faculty programs at the behest of the Dean of the Early Colleges. Their work primarily focuses on the following: meet-ups, retreats, equity related initiatives, affinity-based groups, faculty development programs and student centered programs. Ligaya has a background in school-based program and community management, community engagement, and DEI (diversity, equity, & Inclusion) work. They have a BA in Policy, Society, and Education from Bard College at Simon's Rock.

NOTES

- 1 Paolo Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra B. Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1970).