

Spotlight on: Margaret McPartland, Bridge to College Math Teacher

By Judy Hikes

What is one of the main hurdles for students in their first year of college? It's that required math course, of course. Margaret McPartland is the math teacher for the CLC's Bridge to College class. Her job is to get her students well prepared for that college course and—just as important—to give them a positive feeling about math.

Margaret explained her goals: First, for students not to get placed into a remedial math course, which does not count toward a degree. At Bunker Hill Community College, where many students continue their studies, a test called the Accuplacer determines prospective students' math levels. Margaret works on preparing students for the Accuplacer, and 95% are successful in getting placed into the introductory college course.

Second goal: For students to succeed in the introductory course. Students will study either statistics or algebra, depending upon their major.

Third goal: For students to feel confident about their knowledge and abilities. College teachers are not usually hands-on, so students need to come in feeling they can do the work. Margaret helps learners to work through their fears and build their skills and self-confidence. She tells them, "You're going to make mistakes in every class. It's ok. We're experimenting like scientists. You experiment, and if it doesn't work, you try another way." She's very patient but also pushes people to work hard.

To understand the fears people can have about math, Margaret, who "has a logical mind" and took to math at an early age, takes courses in areas she has no experience with. Not being very coordinated or athletic ("I was always picked last for teams in school"), she began to study martial arts. Twenty years later: "I'm not the worst." Right now she's taking a class in music.

Margaret currently has 13 students from around the world, all with different ways of doing math operations like division and fractions. Margaret has learned the international methods and vocabulary and tells them, "Do it any way you like." She likes working with math that people can use in their everyday lives, such as for shopping, nutrition, budgets, mortgages – and sports! She uses "What's going on in this graph?" from the NY Times, and the class graphs things like Celsius – Fahrenheit conversions. Probability can be studied through gambling: Why is lucky 7 lucky? Why do casinos make so much money? And, among life's painful lessons: Why should winning the lottery not be in the plan for your future?

It's clear why Margaret's students leave the class feeling successful, confident – and happy!

Looking at the Numbers: Teaching Math at the CLC

The math program at the Cambridge Community Learning Center plays an important role in the successful progression of adult learners toward their educational and career goals. Karen Fortoul, Math, Assessment, and Technology Coordinator at the CLC, provides further details about the program. Karen joined the CLC as a volunteer in 2006 from a career background in IT.

The program scope covers four different levels of math and involves a wide range of people in support. Students work through the program after being placed in one of the four levels: Basic, Intermediate, Pre-ASE (Adult Secondary Education), or ASE. The goal for most learners is to reach ASE, the equivalent of 9th grade or above. This level qualifies a student to take the HiSET exam for college and career readiness.

Classes meet twice weekly for 1½ hours. Four lead teachers deliver in-person lessons, while many other staff offer support both inside and outside of the classroom. Volunteers serve as in-classroom aides or as 1:1 tutors. Advisors help students navigate challenges with jobs, housing, and other situations that could impede their progress. The math program also has an outreach team that recruits adult learners to the program and maintains connection with previous students. An inclusion aide works directly with individuals with physical or mental disabilities.

Over the past year, online tools have become a greater part of the overall experience. Khan Academy and Essential Ed for HiSET prep have been great resources in addition to the Tech Goes Home program, which has provided more access to computers and internet.

The work continues with getting the word out to underrepresented groups, such as the American-born Black community. Math teachers at all levels collaborate to ensure that they meet the needs of students wherever they are on their journey. The program will continue to evolve and change with its adult learners, but educational and career success will always be the number one priority.

BIG NEWS!

The Friends of
CLC are delighted



CAMBRIDGE
Community Foundation

to announce an award of \$15,000 from the Cambridge Community Foundation. The grant will support a portion of the salary of a coach for Bridge to College, our highly effective one-year college preparation program. Along with academic classes, Bridge students receive coaching in study skills, time management, and negotiating the college application and financial aid processes, all of which contribute to a successful college experience. Our deepest thanks to the Cambridge Community Foundation for helping to launch a new group of students into their post-secondary education.

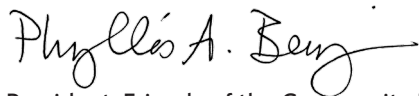
Message from the President: Everyone Counts!

This issue of the Friends of CLC newsletter is devoted to the ways in which everyone at the Community Learning Center counts—how our students learn math skills, and how our teachers design and deliver the math curriculum. In a wider sense, the Community Learning Center reinforces the message that everyone counts by making sure that all of its students receive the tools they need to make a positive impact on the world. Almost all of the CLC's students belong to one or more groups that are often marginalized: women, minorities, immigrants, and/or low-income. By furthering their education, providing critical job training, and facilitating a path to U.S. citizenship, the Community Learning Center helps each student reach their potential as a productive member of the community.

The CLC staff is doing a marvelous job of building the math competency of our students. But supporters like you also have a significant role to play. Your donations of time, money, and expertise help keep our numbers strong by enabling us to reach more students, serve them better, and help them with college scholarships. It all adds up—and you are an important part of the equation. Everyone counts!

Thank you for your ongoing support.

With best wishes,



President, Friends of the Community Learning Center



Website Under Construction

The Friends' website (friendsofclc.org) is getting a makeover! Please bear with us while we renovate our platform and update our website content. In the interim, we are happy to assure you that you can still make an online donation easily and securely. Just look for the blue Donate button on our homepage at www.friendsofclc.org



CLC Graduation Ceremony Thursday, June 23

This spring marks 50 years since the Community Learning Center graduated its first class! On June 23, ninety-five students will celebrate the successful completion of their programs in ESOL, high school diploma equivalency, citizenship preparation, Bridge to College, Certified Nursing Assistant and Information Technology training. There will be student and community speakers, and this year's scholarship winners will be announced.

The graduation ceremony will take place at the Cambridge Public Library, Main Branch, from 6:30 to 8:00 PM.

Please join us via livestream [HERE](#)

www.YouTube.com/channel/UC4t2e9DV09Z-5nUT-urC6Uw

Introducing Our Student Success Fund

As the Friends look towards the future, we are always seeking new ways to support the CLC's deserving student population. Our Board has been working on an exciting new project, the Student Success Fund, aimed at scaling up several of our most successful initiatives.

The Student Success Fund has three key objectives:

1. **Raise scholarships for students from \$1,000 to \$3,000, to account for the rising cost of education**
2. **Provide all CLC students with the school supplies they need to be successful**
3. **Cover expensive testing and application fees for students' licensure exams and citizenship applications**

We are eager to bring this new vision to our existing base of supporters. If you are interested in learning more about the Student Success Fund and how you can support it, please contact Friends Board member **Louis NeJame** at lnjame@tytonpartners.com



• Get Involved! •

To become a CLC Volunteer or join the Friends Board, contact: **Maria Kefallinou**

mkefallinou@cambridgema.gov 617.349.6363

• Call To Action! •

Please continue to support the Friends of the Community Learning Center during this critical time. If you believe that educated citizens make strong, healthy communities and local economies, please donate:

By check to: Friends of the
Community Learning Center
5 Western Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139

Online at: www.friendsofclc.org

Through Amazon Smile: Direct .5% of your online purchases to Friends of the Community Learning Center [EIN: 04-3148659]

• Go Paperless! •

In order to stretch your donation dollars and save our natural resources, please go to www.friendsofclc.org/contact and sign up for online communication. We will not sell or share your email address or use it more than a handful of times a year: for the spring and fall newsletters, the annual appeal, and updates about important events such as graduation and the annual Benefit for Bridge. Online communication saves trees and helps us keep channeling more than 90% of our funds to direct services.

Thank you for your continued support!