PALS Is an Ideal Experience for This Natural Born Teacher

Profile of Katlyn Riley, PALS Teaching Intern ’06, ’07; Pingree School ’03; Colby College ’07

This year Katlyn Riley completed her second summer as a teaching intern with PALS. She’s a prime illustration that the benefits of the program flow in more than one direction: not just from teacher to student, but back again.

A 2007 graduate of Colby College, this fall Riley began teaching algebra at the Landmark School in Prides Crossing, Mass. PALS provided ideal experience for her chosen career. “It got me really excited to teach,” says Riley. “I’ll always remember the kids in that first year. They helped me become a better teacher.”

At PALS this summer she taught math to seventh-graders, helped with tennis and music, and headed the afternoon science program. Among the interns, mostly students from Phillips Academy or Andover High School, she was the oldest. “I was an oddball,” she confesses with a laugh.

Riley first became interested in teaching when working as a teacher’s aide at Colby. She came to the attention of PALS through Steve Filosa, director of Prep@Pingree at Pingree School in South Hamilton, Mass., a program inspired by and modeled on PALS. Filosa recommended Riley, a 2003 Pingree graduate, as a PALS intern. “She’s a great person,” says Filosa. “She was a good student, with good work habits. Whatever she does, she’s committed to it. Things matter to her.”

Filosa’s recommendation paid off. PALS master teacher Julie Morse found Riley to be a gifted teacher, thanks in part to her warm personality and plenty of common sense. “She’s a leader,” says Morse. “She sees something to be done and sets out to do it. She’s very organized and she’s very good at making sure that everyone’s paying attention.

“She’s also student-friendly,” says Morse. “She listens to the children, she understands them and relates well to them.”

Getting the interns to focus on the students is a key goal at PALS. At the beginning of each summer session, the interns hear about the importance of avoiding the temptation to talk only amongst themselves during in-between times, like when walking to sports with the students or sitting on a bus. Instead they learn how connecting with the youngsters throughout the day will make their teaching immeasurably stronger.

Riley understood this from the start. “She always had a group of children swarming her,” Morse recalls. “She encouraged them in their hopes and dreams. They liked her and wanted to talk with her.” She also set an example. “Her enthusiasm for sports was contagious,” says Morse. “Even if it was a really hot day, the students didn’t care so long as Katlyn was out there doing it.”

But Riley points to another key aspect of PALS as essential to her own development as a teacher: individualized instruction. Teaching math to seventh-graders, she had two students during the first part of each morning and two others in the latter part, the same four students every day. “Giving kids such individualized attention lets you get down on their level and helps you get to know them,” she says. “It helped prepare me specifically for Landmark,” which addresses language-based learning disabilities through one-on-one tutorials. Morse says, at PALS, Riley learned to tailor instruction to each student. “She learned to juggle, teaching one child while making sure the other one didn’t waste time.”

Riley, who is earning her master’s degree while at Landmark, was struck by the disparity between the experience of the Lawrence youngsters and her own childhood growing up on the North Shore. One example she observed was the “huge family barbecues” that PALS students participated in on the Fourth of July, a contrast to her much smaller family gathering.

Katlyn Riley, continued on page 6
In the early 1970s, the noted microbiologist René Dubos coined the phrase: “Think globally and act locally.” His maxim quickly became a bumper sticker for the environmental movement. Then, like many slogans, its luster began to fade. Through broad use over the years, it lost its power and became trite for many people. For others, especially those who today are concerned with critical “big picture” issues, it is criticized for its tendency to narrow the scope of our vision and action.

Not for me, however. Like a moral compass point, Dubos’s “credo” invariably steers me first to the local level: a reminder that larger concerns about education, environmental sustainability, and social and economic justice must be addressed “at home,” wherever I am. At the same time, it challenges me to see how interconnected everything is in life, from the smallest to the largest in scale. In fact, in today’s interdependent world, global and local are inseparable. Understanding the universal (what it means to be human and humane) comes through particular action in a specific place (what I intentionally give and take each day). This is a core perspective I seek to teach at Andover and beyond, especially through my work in PALS.

And as I think back on some of my life experiences, I realize I have always believed that getting involved in projects in one’s community can serve as a stepping stone to further engagement in the broader world. My devotion to helping others began in high school when I taught swimming to youngsters and then started working with crippled children. Upon graduation from college, I became one of the early Peace Corps volunteers in West Africa, teaching my major subject, biology, and assisting in the development of agricultural projects. More recently, Julie and I, for the past 10 years, have worked to strengthen and maintain the town library in our Central American home community in Belize, where at a preschool last August, we conducted a 10-day service project with four PA students. I also have reestablished my Africa connection, this time in Kenya, now trying to assist a Kenyan colleague on a teacher-education AIDS project, after leading a conference workshop on HIV/AIDS and Education in Nairobi in 2002.

This kind of perspective, at once local and global, commands a prominent place in the principal goal of the Strategic Plan of Phillips Academy: challenging all students “to develop their potential and depart as thoughtful, versatile, responsible participants in the global community.” The role of PALS in this work, especially through the experience we provide for our high school student interns, is just as important today as it was when the program started in 1988, if not more so. Year in and year out, PALS brings out the very best in our older students, deepens their interest in various forms of public and social service, and in fact inspires a generation of new teachers. (See “Learning: A Two-Way Street,” an article in the Winter 2007 edition of the Andover Bulletin, online at www.andover.edu/publications.)

I sincerely believe that whatever direction a student’s life may take, PALS becomes for many both a training ground and a touchstone with lasting impact. It promotes respect and understanding among people from different ethnic backgrounds and it clarifies and strengthens our commitments to think and to act for the common good—at home and in the wider world. Indeed, the middle school students in PALS catch the message from their slightly older peers: each year, they say they want to give back to Lawrence. Someone far wiser than I once said, “Everyone is responsible for everything to everyone else.” PALS teaches this perspective through direct experience here in Greater Lawrence. And so, it advances Phillips Academy’s Strategic Plan while teaching young people to develop a sense of personal and social responsibility. All of our friends and supporters who annually give in different ways to PALS are investing in hope for the future, hope embodied in the potential of young people to grow into constructive citizens in their communities, both local and global. For all of this critical support, I am sincerely grateful.

—Tom Cone

“PALS was a huge part of my Andover career...[giving me] direction in knowing that helping children is something I want to continue to do for the rest of my life, even if it isn’t the focus of my career.”

—Sherene Davidson, PA ’07, Amherst ’11

Director’s Report: The Outward Reach and Impact of PALS

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—Tom Cone
The Class of 2007 and Their Student-Teachers

Jeannette Arias has enrolled at Central Catholic High School as a recipient of Adelante/Olivia Howell and Montagne scholarships. Her student-teacher was Alyssa Yamamoto, currently a senior at Phillips Academy hailing from Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

Isayra Coca is an Adelante Scholar in the ninth-grade at Notre Dame High School. Her mentor was Nkem Oghedo, PA ’08, a resident of St. Alban's, N.Y., who serves as one of three PALS coordinators at PA this year.

Jennie Davila, now a freshman at Central Catholic, is another winner of a Montagne Scholarship. She was tutored in PALS by two members of Andover High School’s Class of 2007, Tom Ladeau and Grace Micelli, now attending Middlebury College and Smith College, respectively.

Jenitza DeJesus is one of four recent PALS graduates enrolled in the honors program at the new Lawrence High School. She was taught by Akosua Oforiwaa-Ayim, PA ’07, a resident of West Orange, N.J., now in her first year at Columbia University.

Andres Figueroa is an ABC (A Better Chance) Scholar at Masconomet Regional High School in Topsfield, Mass. His PALS tutor was Meghana Kamineni, AHS ’07, who matriculated at Simmons College this fall.

The third member of her family to graduate from PALS (joining Carlos, PALS ’02, and Fernando, PALS ’04), Karolina Hernandez is another Adelante Scholar who entered the ninth grade at Central Catholic. She was taught by Laura Wang, AHS ’07, a freshman at Boston University this fall, and Kelly Roberge, AHS ’07, now attending Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Luis Hernandez, another honors student at Lawrence High, benefited from the teaching of two mentors: Marco Cusumano-Towner, AHS ’07, a new freshman at the University of California–Berkeley, and Zach Zemlin, AHS ’07, now in his first year at Boston University.

Angela Lynch is our third honors student at Lawrence High. Her student-teachers were Alyssa Sloan, AHS ’07, another Boston University matriculant this fall, and Carolyn Chica, a PA senior from East Elmhurst, N.Y.

Kate Morris, who graduated last June from South Lawrence East School, enrolled as a ninth-grader at Phillips Academy. Her tutor was 2007 PA graduate Sherene Davidson, a resident of Bronx, N.Y., now a freshman at Amherst College.

Shailene Nunez has begun her first year at Central Catholic. She was another member of the class taught by Grace Micelli.

Iliana Rivera rounds out the group of four PALS graduates who entered Lawrence High as honors students. She was taught by Dacone Elliott, PA ’08, from Bronx, N.Y., another PALS coordinator at Phillips Academy this year.

Yashana Rivera is one of two recent graduates who attend Notre Dame High School. Her mentor, Meaghan McGinity, AHS ’07, enrolled at St. Michael’s College.

Luis Spraus entered St. John’s Prep in September, having been taught by three student tutors: Dougal Sutherland, PA ’07, from Centerport, N.Y., a freshman at Swarthmore College; John Cheng, AHS ’07, now enrolled at Yale; and John Koo, AHS ’08, in his third year of teaching in PALS.

Carlos Tanuz is our second matriculant at St. John’s Prep this fall. He too was closely taught by John Cheng and John Koo.

Sharrie Volpe is another Montagne Scholar at Central Catholic. Her mentors were three Andover High students: Rob Abisi and Harry Koffman, 2007 graduates attending James Madison University and Curry College, respectively; and Rachael Wise, AHS ’08, in her second year of teaching in PALS.

“Girl Talk was an awesome experience. I learned how to deal with rough situations and express myself without having to feel like I didn’t fit in.”

—Jeannette Arias, PALS ’07
She Has Been the “Sparkplug” from the Beginning

Profile of Alix Driscoll,
Eighth-Grade Master Teacher

If PALS has a sparkplug, it’s Alix Driscoll. She was there when the program started 20 years ago, and ever since she’s provided boundless enthusiasm, a head full of fresh ideas, and determination to see the students get into the best schools possible and have the greatest chance to reach their potential.

“What a privilege to teach these kids,” says Driscoll, “and to work with high school students [PALS student interns] who, when they’re only 16 or 17, learn the satisfaction of making a difference in a child’s life.”

One of three adults involved in the program, Driscoll teaches language arts and reading to PALS eighth-graders. She reckons that she has taught about 500 PALS students in her two decades. PALS started around the time her son Mark was in his last year at PA (Class of ’88), about five years after the school’s Catholic chaplain, Richard Gross, S.J., had helped to launch PA’s community service program.

At the time, Lawrence’s troubled middle schools were being adopted by local businesses and colleges for educational improvement, but Leonard School didn’t have a sponsor. Along came PALS. (Parthum Middle School joined PALS five years ago.)

Driscoll was in the midst of a 15-year career teaching in the public schools herself, but when she was asked to join PALS, she jumped. “I had summers free,” she explains. “This was an opportunity to use some of my skills.”

She’s never looked back. “I need to keep learning,” she says. “In teaching you’re always learning.” For someone who embraces a liberal philosophy—“in the sense of people being free to reach their potential”—she finds that the challenge of working with youngsters from a disadvantaged background makes success all the sweeter. “I get a chance to work with children of enormous gifts and watch them bloom. These students have as much right to a first-class education as anyone. They come to PALS very ambitious and wanting to learn. Their families have come here for economic advancement, so they’re imbued with a sense of developing their talents. They all know their careers. All of them will go to college.”

Driscoll enjoys the “enormous thrill” of boosting her students into better schools. She gets personally involved in helping her eighth-graders with the admissions process to high schools, traveling to Lawrence throughout the year to meet with their teachers, talking with high school admissions directors, and keeping PALS parents apprised.

PALS student interns also fall under her wing. This year they numbered 16, mostly high school students and some at college. For them, Driscoll focuses on what she calls “the training of the heart.”

“We teach them to have enormous commitment to other people and the community,” she says. “I say to them, ‘You’re going to be a policy-maker. You’re going to have enormous authority to make things happen.’ They have a chance to make a great difference.”

Driscoll observes the progress of PALS from a vantage point rooted in the Andover community, where she and her husband, Jack, have lived for 40 years. A retired senior executive with Polaroid, Jack works as a certified financial planner. Besides son Mark, the couple has a daughter, Hilary, PA ’91. Alix is a trustee of AVIS, the local conservation organization, and is a board member of the Andover chapter of the League of Women Voters (and a former state board member). She is “self-taught” in geology and meteorology, and has a special interest in international relations.

Driscoll has watched PALS evolve from its early years. At first it was aimed at helping potential dropouts make it through eighth grade and on to high school. But the students’ emotional problems were beyond the expertise of the adult teachers and interns. When current director Tom Cone arrived, he had a different idea.

“He believed that the brightest students are the most at
“Although I have learned in-school skills, I have also developed social skills. I have been able to present myself in a more sophisticated manner and have become more confident in my academic studies.”

—Iliana Rivera, PALS ’07

risk,” Driscoll says. In schools like Leonard and Parthum, “The teachers are so busy with the needs of others. The brightest realize what they’re not able to learn.” So PALS asked the teachers to recommend students with great potential. More recently came a further refinement. Instead of teaching subjects for enrichment, the focus now is on results—getting the students into the best high schools, and into honors programs.

Meanwhile, Driscoll points to the winter tutoring program as a plus for both PA and Andover High School, which together provide between 30 and 40 tutors annually, working three days a week on behalf of PALS youngsters. “It’s an extraordinary and seamless partnership,” she says. “Its probably the only close collaboration that PA and Andover High School have.”

Driscoll sees a bright future for PALS—and a fitting home for her talents. “I like to think I bring a certain energy and enthusiasm to the program,” she says. “PALS is the best thing I do.”

—Deborah Fitts

PALS Class of 2003
(partial listing, as of September 2007)

Nicole Blanchard, Central Catholic High School ’07, Adelante Scholar; Fisher College

Everton Brito, Lawrence High School ’07, honors; University of Massachusetts–Lowell

Santos Candelario, Central Catholic ’07, Adelante Scholar; University of Massachusetts–Amherst

Julissa Cepeda, Lawrence High ’07, honors; University of Massachusetts–Lowell

Joanna Depena, attended Lawrence High; unknown

Kemi Fadarey, Central Catholic ’07, Adelante Scholar; Providence College

Tony Ferraro, attended Methuen High School; unknown

Jonathan Machado, Central Catholic ’07; Bryant College

Samuel Ortega, Central Catholic ’07, Adelante Scholar; Northeastern University

Gilberto Perez, Lawrence High ’07, honors; Florida Institute of Technology

Johana Ramirez, Lawrence High ’07, honors; University of Massachusetts–Lowell

Kayla Rosario, Central Catholic ’07; Suffolk University

Meekerley Sanon, Lawrence High ’07; Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Diana Valazquez, Lawrence High ’07; U.S. Army
“You showed us that there was a whole different world outside of Lawrence, and you helped us realize that we had all the necessary tools to become anything we desired as long as we were driven. I would not have gotten as far as I have without this program.”

—Andres Figueroa, PALS ’07

Luz Lopez, PALS ’08, Is Named a Jack Kent Cooke Young Scholar

First student from Lawrence to receive national award

Director Tom Cone and the extended PALS family congratulate PALS student Luz Lopez, an eighth-grader at the Parthum Middle School who has been selected Lawrence's first-ever Jack Kent Cooke Young Scholar. She is one of only two award winners from Massachusetts among the 70 youngsters selected nationwide by the Virginia-based Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, which initiated this program in 2002.

The Young Scholars Program recognizes middle school students with outstanding promise from families with limited family income. Award winners receive substantial scholarship help—approximately $15,000 for each of their high school years. They benefit as well from individualized educational mentoring to enrich their development throughout high school and beyond. Lopez also is eligible to apply eventually for undergraduate and graduate school support.

At Parthum, Lopez participates in Academic Bowl, Student Council, National Junior Honor Society, and Drama Club. She also has studied the violin for five years, and she plays volleyball, basketball, and field hockey. During her seventh-grade year she tutored third-graders and helped lead the Peace Project, a program dedicated to preventing fights and disagreements in school. She is also a voracious reader.

Karen Schoenherr, PA ’07, currently at Harvard, taught Lopez math during Summer PALS in 2006 and 2007 and throughout her seventh-grade academic year. Meghana Kamineni, AHS ’07, now studying at Simmons College, taught Lopez language arts during Summer PALS 2007. Alexa Rahman, PA ’08, is her tutor this academic year.

All of her PALS teachers single Lopez out for her incredible determination to achieve. According to Schoenherr, Lopez “is an amazing young lady who inspires everyone with her desire to learn and better herself.” Kamineni concurs, citing “Luz’s motivation and willingness to work hard to achieve her goals at such a young age.”

Above all, according to Cone, “She has a tenacious drive to succeed and not become influenced by others who might not have the same work ethic.” He adds that she just may be the best student he has seen in his 17 years with PALS.

According to Vance Lancaster, director of marketing and communications at the Foundation, Jack Kent Cooke came “from humble beginnings” and “always regretted that his personal circumstances did not afford him the opportunity to attend college as a young man.” Upon his death in 1997, “he left most of his fortune to establish the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, and with this gift he began to create a legacy of providing worthy individuals of limited means with the opportunity to fulfill their full potential through education.”

Lopez epitomizes the very kind of individual Cooke had in mind.

—Alix Driscoll

Katlyn Riley, continued from page 1

But the disparity in opportunity was more evident. “Growing up with an affluent background, you don’t realize how lucky you are,” she says. “It was great that these kids were giving up their summer to come. They understood it would be beneficial to them—a lot of their older siblings went through PALS and are successful. All of the PALS kids are aspiring to go to a good high school, and they all get tons of scholarships. It’s rewarding to see. At the end of the summer I was really sad to say goodbye to them. I really believe in this program.”

—Deborah Fitts
Left and top: A seventh-grade field trip to DeCordova Museum

Right: Chess, a popular and powerful learning tool

Bottom right: Activities Calendar, Summer 2007

Bottom left: PALS’ Staff, Summer 2007
“The best part about PALS is the tutors…. You know that they understand you and they treat you like you are high school kids. The fact that they are so close to your age [means] they do understand you and you can trust them with anything.”

—Josephina Garcia, PALS ’08

Our Generous Donors

We gratefully acknowledge our 2006–2007 donors, whose generous contributions once again supported 100 percent of the PALS operating budget. Your investment in deserving youngsters in Lawrence nourishes vital hope for the future. The opportunities you provide and the doors they open for so many will have a lasting impact beyond anything we might imagine.

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Gifts-in-Kind

Andover Tennis Club: 12 tennis racquets, tennis balls
Angela and Christopher Dolan, James and Mary Lyman Family, Students of Shawsheen School: stuffed animals
Sarah Ferguson: a baby red-eared slider turtle
Lawrence Public Schools: transportation support

“Thanks for all of the motivation and for believing in me.”

—A recent PALS graduate