

Harriett J. Ball

*Juror
Michael Feinberg*

Educational Consultant
Musical Ball Points

Multi-Sensory Teacher Training
Program

KIPP

October 9, 2001

Trent E. Gabert
Chair, Executive Committee
Brock International Prize in Education
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Studies
1700 Asp Avenue, Room 226
Norman, OK 73072-6400

Dear Trent,

Enclosed are the materials for my nominee, Harriett Ball.

For nearly 25 years, Harriett Ball was a master teacher in the classroom. She began teaching in 1969, and taught all the various elementary and middle school grade levels in public schools in Austin, TX and Houston, TX. Early in her career, she realized there was a catch-22 to effective teaching: her students, who were far behind academically, needed to learn a great deal of academic skills to catch up to grade level, but learning these skills was not a source of interest to her students. This was and is partly the case due to kids "turning off" to things they find difficult, and partly due to the fact that teaching and learning rudimentary skills is not very exciting. Harriett began developing her whole-body, multi-sensory teaching techniques to help children learn the academic skills with mastery, build confidence and self esteem, and have a good time in this process as well. Harriett retired from Houston ISD seven years ago in order to have the time to further develop her techniques, called "Musical Ball Points", and to be available to help teachers and schools across the nation improve their instructional practices. Harriett has won numerous awards and has done workshops in schools across the country all in the name of teaching teachers how to teach, and teach well.

When Dave Levin and I started teaching in Houston in 1992, we were lucky to have Harriett as a mentor teacher. She took us under her wing and helped us become great classroom teachers. With these abilities, Dave and I had a strong foundation to build schools that ensured educationally underserved students could and would succeed in school.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again (and write it ☺): Harriett is God's gift to the classroom, and if our nation is going to significantly improve public education, we must invest in the most important resource of all: the human resource. With more great teachers, more kids will be set up for success in life, and Harriett is making sure the numbers of great teachers out there in our schools continues to increase.

I look forward to seeing you and the other jurors next month.

Sincerely,



Mike Feinberg
Co-Founder

Educational Consultant
Musical Ball Points

HARRIETT J. BALL

452 - 74 - 8305

Multi-Sensory Teacher Training Program6223 CREEKBEND, HOUSTON, TX 77096
(713) 981-5249 F: (713) 981-1758

EDUCATION: Huston-Tillotson College, BA Education - 1969
Prairie View A&M University, MA Guidance & Counseling, 1973
University of Texas at Austin - Adm. Cert. 1985
Southwest Texas State University, Adm. Cert./ Bilingual Ed.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: Elementary teacher/ Counselor: Austin & Houston ISD, 20+ yr.
Title I Reading Teacher, Austin ISD, 5 yr.
Title I Reading Coordinator, Austin ISD, 2 yr.
Campus Math-a-Thon Coordinator
'Beating The Odds' Summer Program for HS- Houston ISD
Austin and Houston ISD Teacher-Trainer Presenter
Assistant to the Principal, 2 yr.
Teacher Mentor
SITES Coordinator 2yrs, Houston
SPARK PARK Campus Coordinator
Site-Based Management Officer
Educational Consultant (Elementary - High School) '04-present

PRESENTATIONS: National School Conference Institute, Phoenix, AZ
Houston Council of Teachers of Mathematics
Schools of Excellence Conventions & Winter Energizers-Houston
Keynote Speaker/ Presenter- Teach For America Corps
National Alliance of Black School Educators
Texas Alliance of Black School Educators
Beaumont Area Alliance of Black School Educators
Houston Alliance of Black School Educators
Cleveland Principals' Initiative (Ohio)
Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) of New York/ Houston
TSU- Center for the Pedagogy of African-American Learners
Keynote Speaker- Ohio, South Carolina, Delaware, Alabama +
Some School Districts in Texas include: Houston, Lubbock, Aline
Galveston, LaMarque, Dickinson, Texas City, Killeen, Alief, & Tyler
Outside of Texas include: Florida, Ohio, New York, Georgia, Nevada
California, Arizona, Indiana, S. Carolina, Illinois, Kansas, Mississippi,
New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Oregon, Wisconsin, Michigan...

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Created Musical Ball Points Educational Training Program,
Board Member, Fellows Trainer - KIPP Academy (Houston/Calf.)
Talented Youth Coalition Inc. (Houston), Board Member
Elected Campus "Teacher of the Year" 6 times (Austin, Houston, TX)
Prof. Best Leadership Award / Oldsmobile & Learning Magazine
Received Proclamation from City Council & Mayor of Galveston, '99
Author, 'Fearless Math' (Multi-Sensory Teaching Strategies)
Spotlighted on TV, in magazines, books, and newspapers: '21 No
Excuse Schools', Teacher Magazine '01, Education Weekly Jan '01
Created and instituted 'Knowledge Bowl Competition' at 2 schools
Educational contributions spotlighted at '00 Republican Convention
Helped many schools across the nation move from 'Alert' status
began After-School tutoring program- HC F EDU. Bldg. Houston, TX

'Musical Ball Points' by Harriett J. Ball

INTRODUCTION -- What 'Musical Ball Points' Is All About

As teachers we must teach all of our students. Finding the learning style that best suits and captivates the interest of each student challenges even the most experienced teachers. Just as deaf and blind students can and do learn through their best learning modalities, all students need to be taught through their strongest sense, then reinforced through their next strongest. Since no group of students learn the same way, teachers need to develop **'multi-sensory teaching'** techniques that address every style of learning. The Musical Ball Points program provides training in multi-sensory teaching techniques that allow equal access to learning for our At-Risk population.

Musical Ball Points, MBP, weaves the state objectives/ proficiency skills into multi-sensory (whole-body) teaching techniques. Multi-sensory teaching, often referred to as **mnemonics**, is an effective venue to reach and teach students who do not perform well with traditional teaching techniques. **Mnemonics** is an array of memory enhancements that include rhythm, rhyme, codes, verbal and visual cues, patterns, and story webs that evolve around experiences that are relevant and concrete in the life of students. Mnemonics stimulates and enhances the learning of concepts, strengthens the attention span, and bolsters self-esteem.

Most children, ages 7-12 need to **'move'** and **'respond'** to learn optimally: Our usual teaching tools—textbooks, paper, and blackboard—emphasize the visual and auditory, and minimize verbal feedback, student demonstrations, and movement. Students in general, especially the **'At-Risk'** of any age or race, learn most naturally and best through play, songs, patterns, movement, imitation, imagination and rhythm. For example, pick any student and ask them to sing a **'rap'** song. They know every word and are able to execute the complex moves seen in the videos. Another example of how a presentation (with multiple sensory entry points) can enhance productivity can be seen while observing a student on a Sega-Genesis or Play Station. They are combining visual acuity, manual dexterity, decoding skills, competition, pattern finding, and musical stimuli for extended periods, totally blocking out any interruptions.

ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT PRODUCES MASTERY, HOLDS ATTENTION, INCREASES STAMINA, AND BUILDS SELF-ESTEEM.

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Gone are the days when we can expect students to learn simply by sitting still, listening, and flipping pages. Students of today require teachers who are **willing and capable** of captivating their attention, motivating and engaging them in active learning, and expanding their ability to communicate. This must occur in a **'fail-safe'** environment wherein **'put-downs'** are not tolerated, and an undeniable team spirit to help one another excel is demonstrated by the class and teachers.

Such an approach is particularly advantageous when working with 'At-Risk' students who typically *DISPLAY* short-attention spans and have limited prior educational success, for whatever reason. Developing vocabulary and teaching through mnemonics across the curriculum are the basis for the formation of stronger academic skills for 'At-Risk' students. Mnemonics, which I affectionately call **'DISPOSABLE CRUTCHES'**, will be thrown away when students see fit, which typically **follows mastery**. These **'crutches'** are created to allow each student **equal access to learning**, with **minimal mistakes**.

With **fear and anxiety** drastically reduced, there is no great need to get negative attention. Now, you see students—who have experienced so much failure for years – craving to **'show-off'** what they know. They have **learned and feel important**. **We have done our job**.

The **Musical Ball Points** Training Program was developed to serve as a springboard to unleash creative talents, bring many to the realization that all of us can learn, and remind us that asking for help is not a sign of failure. **Success can be learned**. Teaching, like learning, needs to be cooperative and an on-going experience. **Musical Ball Points** will make a difference in any school that is committed to being a beacon in the lives of ALL students. Make MBP an integral part of your campus team and live your dream in 3-D, **Dream, Dare, and Do**.

Edutainmently yours,

Harlett J. Ball

It's Time to STOP the 'Waiting to Excel'

**FEARLESS MATH • FEARLESS LANGUAGE ARTS • PARENT WORKSHOPS •
MOTIVATIONAL WORKSHOPS • TEST-ANXIETY BUSTER RALLIES • CLASS DEMOS**

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Rap, Rhythm, and Rhyme

BY
DAVID
HILL

Columbus, Ohio

It's early morning, and inside the Northgate Center here—a former elementary school now used as a staff-training facility by the city school system—about 30 teachers are munching bagels and sipping coffee, waiting for a professional-development workshop to begin. They don't know it yet, but Harriett Ball, today's presenter, is about to rock their world.

Ako Kambon, the president of the Visionary Leaders Institute, a Columbus-based education foundation that is sponsoring Ball's visit to several of the city's schools, offers the teachers a hint of things to come when he warns, "This is not your typical workshop." By way of introducing Ball, Kambon explains that, thanks to television, students today have much shorter attention spans than they used to. Consequently, old methods of teaching simply won't work anymore.

"But television entertains," he says, "and it maintains the interest of children. So we've got to learn how to use that strategy and bring it into the classroom to reach today's young people. And with that, I want to bring on the master in using this skill. ... I give you Miss Harriett Ball, of Houston, Texas."

Ball, a tall African-American woman dressed in a black-and-white pinstriped suit and outrageously accessorized with five large gold rings, several gold bracelets, gold-colored high heels, and rhinestone-encrusted designer glasses, stands up and starts clapping her hands to a four-beat rhythm: Clap! Clap! Clap! Clap!

"Clap your hands," she says, her voice booming as she moves

about the room. "Then repeat what I say." The teachers, somewhat startled, put down their coffee cups and join in.

Sounding like a cross between Mahalia Jackson and an Army drill sergeant, Ball shouts out, in call-and-response style, "I don't know what you can do!" The teachers answer back, "I don't know what you can do!"

"I came to do my best!"

"My best!"

"I came to pass the test!"

"The test!"

"I can read charts and graphs!"

"And graphs!"

"I came to do my best!"

"My best!"

Kambon was right: This is no ordinary workshop. It's a full-blown revival meeting, and Ball is preaching up a storm. She's sassy, brassy, and utterly captivating.

Within minutes, the teachers are transfixed by this retired 54-year-old elementary school teacher, who crisscrosses the country training educators to teach math and language arts using her instructional system. She describes it as a "multisensory, mnemonic, whole-body teaching technique" designed to "propel at-risk students toward excellence," though she insists her method works for all children. In simpler terms, she calls it Rap, Rhythm, and Rhyme.

Ball and her unorthodox methods have helped inspire two nationally acclaimed charter schools—one in Houston, the other in New York. Called the KIPP Academies, the schools have been featured on the CBS news program "60 Minutes," and during his presidential campaign, George W. Bush often cited KIPP as a model for what public schools are capable of doing. Ball, however, is rarely mentioned in all this hype. The KIPP founders sing her praises and credit her with transforming their teaching, but the media have almost completely overlooked her.

"Now, you've got to get out of your adult mode," Ball commands the teachers. "Go to the child mode! You're my children today!"

With that, she says, "Now, let me hear you say your nine-times table."

At first, the voices are confident and in unison: "Nine! Eighteen! Twenty-seven! Thirty-six." But things quickly fall apart, and the teachers break out laughing.

Harriett Ball's unorthodox methods helped inspire the KIPP Academies, two nationally acclaimed charter schools. So why has no one ever heard of her?

"All right, watch this," Ball says. "Lay down your pencil, and don't write anything." She wants the material imprinted in their brains, not scribbled on a piece of paper.

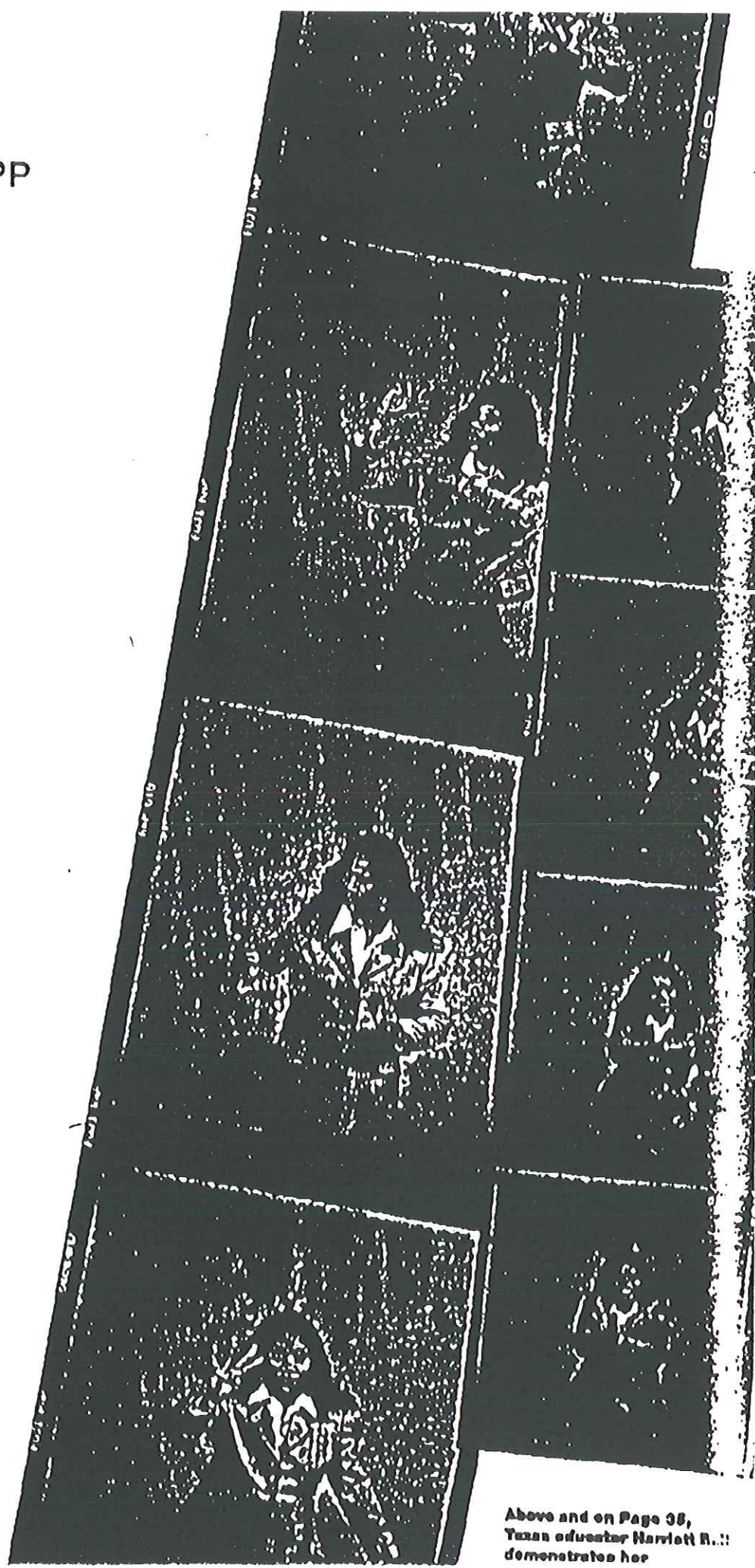
At the blackboard, Ball draws an upside-down T. On the right side of the vertical line, at the bottom, she writes a zero and says, "Remember, zero is your hero!" (If you forget to start with zero, the chart won't work.) Then, moving up the vertical line, she writes the numbers one through nine. On the other side of the vertical line, she writes a nine at the bottom, an eight on top of that, and so on, until she gets to zero. As she writes, she's careful to keep the numbers on the left side lined up with the ones on the right. In fact, she offers a little saying to remind the students to do just that: "Now, I want you to keep it lined up," she says, writing "kill U" on the board, "or it will kill you."

The result is a nine-times table, with the number nine (written as 09) on top, 90 on the bottom, and all the other two-digit multiples of nine in between. Ball has similar lessons to help kids learn all the multiplication tables.

"That's awesome!" says one of the teachers as Ball quickly erases the chart. She draws it again, but this time, she has the teachers tell her how to do it. After that, she allows them to take out their pencils and do it on paper.

"By teaching this way," Ball tells them, "you're grabbing all the kids, the visual learners and the auditory learners and the tactile-kinesthetic learners. What I do is supply them with crutches that are disposable." In her self-published *Fearless Math* manual, which she sells for \$35 a copy, Ball asserts that most students, particularly those at risk, "learn most naturally and best through play, songs, patterns, movement, imitation, imagination, and rhythm." Her method incorporates all those elements. rote memorization of facts and details has been out of fashion for some time, but Ball insists there's nothing wrong with drills—as long as they're presented in a fun and engaging manner. "Drill won't kill," she likes to say. "Boredom is the killer."

NOT YEARS AGO, Ball was teaching 4th grade in relative obscurity at Houston's Baetian Elementary School. Over the years, Ball, a natural-born performer, had mastered her multisensory teaching technique, which she used not only to teach math but also grammar, spelling, geography, science, and other subjects. She had done a few workshops here and



Above and on Page 38,
Texas educator Harriett Ball
demonstrates her

there, but, for the most part, she kept to her classroom, "minding my own business," as she puts it. Ward about Ball got out, though, and every now and then, visitors would come knocking on her classroom door. Inevitably, they were amazed by what they saw, and particularly by the test results Ball got with her students, nearly all of whom were from low-income minority families. Some, however, dismissed her style as a "black thing."

David Levin disapproved that theory. Fresh out of Yale University, he signed on with Teach For America and ended up teaching 6th grade at Bastian. "I was struggling immensely," Levin says. "The other teachers were betting on how long I was going to last.

own classroom at Garcia Elementary School. "You're talking to a white Jewish boy who never had much rhythm," he says. "But I'm able to employ her strategies."

Levin and Feinberg went on to start their own schools: KIPP Academy, first in Houston and then in the Bronx in New York City. The academies are charter schools, and both are located in tough urban areas and serve predominantly poor, minority students. Yet their success rates, as measured by test scores, have been phenomenal. Liberals and conservatives alike have praised the KIPP Academies for demonstrating that all children, no matter what their socioeconomic backgrounds and previous educational experi-

her *First/Last* manual, still refers to KIPP as her "brainchild."

But her contribution has often been neglected. Of the many articles about KIPP, few have mentioned the teacher by name, even when they quote Ball's chants verbatim. A 1999 *Time* *Monthly* article was typical. Titled "No Shortcuts," which is one of KIPP's slogans, the piece implies that Levin and Feinberg conceived of KIPP on their own, seemingly from scratch, after deciding that "the typical school program didn't do enough to help the kind of students they were teaching." Even "60 Minutes" neglected to cite Ball's inspiration.

Levin—who remains close friends with Ball—says he mentions Harriett whenever he's interviewed, but the message doesn't always get through. "Harriett definitely hasn't gotten the credit she deserves," he says. Last summer, when Levin and Feinberg were asked to speak at the Republican National Convention, Levin insisted on citing the influence of Ball and several other teachers—even though GOP officials said there wasn't enough time. After Feinberg led a group of KIPP students through some Harriett Ball-style math drills and the "Knowledge Is Power" chant, one "KIPper" told the delegates, "These lively lessons were inspired by the life work of master teacher Harriett Ball."

"I was so proud when I saw David at the Republican Convention," Ball says. "I said: That's my baby, right there! And they said he couldn't teach!"

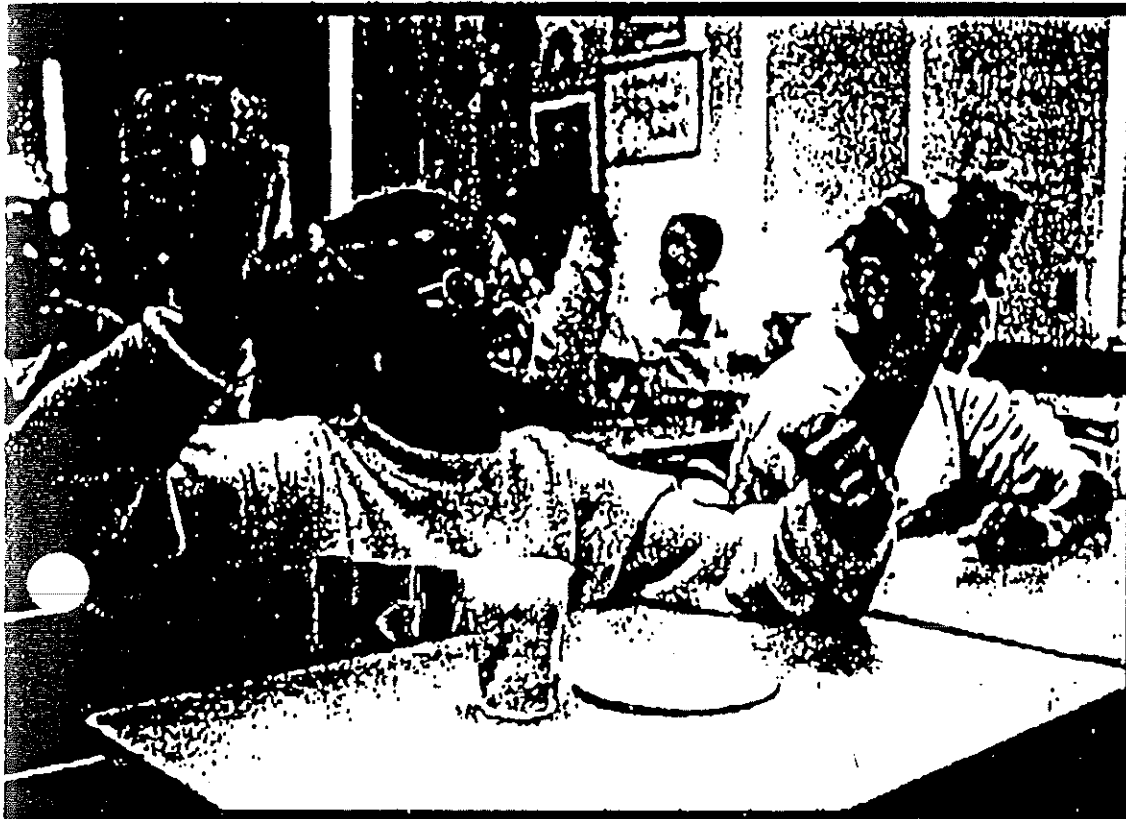
Ball insists she has no ill will toward Levin or Feinberg, and she defends them when friends try to convince her that they stole her ideas. She, too, blames the media for overlooking her role in the KIPP success story. Besides, she had the chance to get involved with KIPP, but chose not to. "They begged me to go with them," she says, "but I didn't want to go that route. It wasn't my dream." Divorced from her first husband and widowed after the death of her second, Ball had four children to feed and a mortgage to pay. She

needed job security, not the uncertainties that come with starting a new school.

And Ball did give Levin and Feinberg permission to use her methods. "I said: 'Go ahead. Make it work, baby, make it work.' And that's what they did. They have validated that what I do is usable, for the long term, that it's not just a fluke, and that it works for any group of kids: Puerto Rican, Mexican, Jewish, polka-dot, stripes, whatever."

BORN IN ROSENBERG, TEXAS, Ball grew up in poverty in Houston's 3rd Ward, where she lived with her mother, brother, and three sisters. "We were poor," she says, "but I didn't know it because there was love at home." Her parents were divorced, and Ball's mother had to make ends meet by herself. During the day, she worked as a seamstress in the laundry room at Houston's Methodist Hospital, and when she came home, she would do her friends' and neighbors' hair in the makeshift beauty shop she had set up on the porch.

From an early age, Ball wanted to be a teacher. Her role model was her mother's sib-



ney Williams, 8th grader at KIPP Academy in New York City's Bronx borough, participates in lesson using Ball's program, which stresses movement, singing, and chanting.

Some of them didn't think I'd make it until Christmas." He happened to notice what was going on inside Ball's classroom and one day asked for help. "I sort of begged her to be my mentor," he says. "And she agreed. I spent every single free moment hounding her, trying to learn her techniques. Once, she came into my classroom and taught my students in 45 minutes what I had been trying to teach them for three weeks."

"He was hungry," says Ball, adding, "He couldn't hold a tune in a house, let alone in a bucket." But that didn't stop Levin from successfully adopting Ball's unorthodox style, and the next year, he was named Bastian's "teacher of the year."

Levin's roommate, Michael Feinberg, also fell under Ball's influence. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Feinberg had also gone through Teach For America's training program but had been assigned to a different school. "I was a crappy, struggling teacher," he says. "David kept telling me about Harriett. He said: 'You've got to come and see my mentor teacher. She's unbelievable.'" Feinberg did just that, and soon he was using Rap, Rhythm, and Rhyme in his

ences, can succeed at the highest levels. "That's my vision for public education all around America," Bush said in October, touting Houston's KIPP during the first of the fall presidential debates.

At the two KIPP schools, children and their parents sign contracts pledging to live up to high expectations. Classes begin early in the morning and last until late in the afternoon. (Students must go to school on Saturday as well.) Two hours of homework each night is the norm. Discipline is no-nonsense: In Houston, students who misbehave are allowed to speak only to teachers and must wear their KIPP T-shirts inside out.

At the heart of the schools' rigorous curriculum is Harriett Ball's teaching method. Indeed, "KIPP" stands for Knowledge Is Power Program, which comes from one of Ball's patented chants: "The more I read, the more I know/ The more I know, the more I grow/ The more I talk, the less I know/ Because knowledge is power/ Power is money/ And I want it/ You've got to read, baby, read!"

Levin calls Ball's technique the foundation of KIPP. "There would be no KIPP Academy if it hadn't been for Harriett," he admits. And in

fashion for some time, but Ball insists there's nothing wrong with drills—as long as they're fun for kids. "Drill won't kill," she says. "Boredom is the killer."

ter, Frances Harris, known as Aunt Frank. "She always drove a Cadillac," Ball says, "and she had wall-to-wall carpet in her house and central heating. She wore nice clothes, and her hair was real pretty. To me, she was the epitome of a teacher. I wanted to be like Aunt Frank."

When Ball got her first teaching job, she figured she'd be driving a Cadillac, too—until she got her first paycheck. She called her aunt and asked how she managed to pay for all those nice things on a teacher's salary. "She told me that the big money came from her husband, who worked at the ship channel," recalls Ball, laughing. (Now that Ball is doing pretty well herself as a consultant, she drives around Houston in either a Lincoln Town Car or a Plymouth Prowler, depending on her mood.)

In 1985, Ball was teaching 3rd grade at Houston's Fairchild Elementary School when she had an epiphany. "My students were struggling to read numbers," she says, "and I was determined to help them. I was standing at the board one day, and all of a sudden it was like a Ouija board. God spoke to me, and I started writing down a rhyme that explained how to change a written number to a numeral."

Ball had used some chants before to engage her students, but this was the first time a lesson had come to her in the form of a song. "It blew my mind," she says. "The kids got it right away, and from then on, I started teaching like that." Other rhymes started popping into her head, sometimes in the middle of the night.

"They were revelations from God," says Ball, who was raised a Baptist but now attends a Methodist church. "A lot of people don't hear me when I say that, but it's true." Later, someone told Ball that there was a hard-to-pronounce word—mnemonics—for what she was doing. But to her, all that really mattered was that it was working.

"When I teach," she says, "I employ the eyes, the ears, and the touching need, the movement need. There's rhythm, and there's singing. I also use wholesome competition. But I don't allow any putdowns; I don't allow the students to laugh at one another." It helps, she admits, to be "a natural luan" to teach her way, but you don't have to

be. "Not everyone can teach like I do," she says, "but I can be a springboard for doing something different."

AFTER LEVIN AND FEINBERG got KIPP off the ground, Ball figured she'd work at Bastian Elementary School for another five or six years and then retire. Even though she was increasingly in demand as a workshop presenter, she couldn't give up her steady teaching gig. "I had to pay my bills," she says. Then, one day at school, she heard a voice. "It wasn't a loud, audible voice," she says, "but I knew it was God. The voice said: 'Trust me. Here's your mission: I want you to go out and show more people your work. The world needs you.'" Ball submitted her resignation, and she's never looked back.

She put the word out that she was available to conduct workshops during the week, not just on weekends as she had been doing, and—slowly at first—the phono calls started coming in. "It was always somebody who knew somebody who knew somebody who saw me," says Ball, who charges in the neighborhood of \$1,500 a day for her services. (She has been known to work for less than that, and even for free.) Seventy percent of Ball's workshops are in mathematics; 30 percent are in language arts.

After several schools credited Ball with boosting students' scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, Ball became known as the "TAAS Bunter." Indeed, the Lone Star State's obsession with test scores has proved to be a boon for Ball. Some schools and districts hire her for the sole purpose of increasing scores. In 1989, the city of Galveston proclaimed Sept. 14 "Harriett Ball Day" and recognized the teacher "for generously volunteering her time and efforts to help the children of Galveston to succeed on the TAAS test."

Ball is proud that her methods have helped students do better on standardized tests, but she insists that her methods go beyond test scores. "Mnemonics," she asserts, "stimulate and enhance the learning of concepts, strengthen the attention span, and bolster self-esteem."

That may be true, but Ball's theories haven't been evaluated or tested. And they're certainly not universally accepted. In math, for example, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics has long argued that "computational proficiency alone" is not enough for students in the early grades. Learning the basics is important, the organization contends, but students must also develop a conceptual understanding of math so they can use what they know to solve problems they've never seen before.

Ball, however, shrugs off such highfalutin theory. "Math is abstract," she says, "so what I do is make it concrete so they can relate to it." And many school districts—particularly those with a large number of students struggling on tests—take Ball at her word. Last year, she led workshops in Cleveland, Detroit, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, among other cities.

ABOUT AN HOUR INTO her workshop at the Northgate Center in Columbus, Ball, her face dripping with sweat, calls for a break. She asks for a glass of water and then takes a load off her feet at a table near the



front of the room, where Patricia Price has been taking notes.

Price is the principal of Hayl Elementary School, and most of the teachers attending today's session teach there. Last summer, when Price began working at the school, she was stunned by the students' abysmal performance on the math portion of the Ohio Proficiency Test. "Only 8 percent of the 4th graders were at the proficient level," she says, "and it was consistent, for three years in a row. I thought, we can do what we've always done, and we'll get what we've always got. But that's like malpractice. That's unacceptable."

At a leadership-training institute for new principals, Price met Ako Kambon, who happened to mention Harriett Ball. And the more Price heard, the more she wanted Ball to come work with Hayl Elementary's staff. Still, she was concerned about how teachers would react. "I worried that they might see this as just one more dog-and-pony show," Price says, "someone else telling them

God," Ball says of her teaching techniques. "A lot of people don't hear me when I say that, but it's true."

like. At 3 o'clock, she's wiped out, like a singer at the end of a concert. Still, she takes some time to sell a few *Fearless Math* books; some teachers even ask her to sign their copies.

Kambon drives Ball back to her down-

town hotel, and on the way she nods off.

"She always does this," he says.

AT 8 O'CLOCK THE NEXT MORNING, when Kambon arrives at the hotel to pick her up, Ball is full of energy and ready to do it all over again. This time, though, she'll spend the day working her magic with students, not teachers, at three Columbus public schools.

At Franklin Middle School, in the heart of Columbus' black community, 6th grade teacher Debbie Williams is finishing up with a group of top-track students when Kambon and Ball walk into her classroom. Williams, who is white, is standing at the board working through a math equation while the students, who are mostly African-American and wearing blue-and-white uniforms, sit at their desks doing worksheets. As Ball takes a seat in the back of the room, she notices the students have calculators. "What is

this?" she whispers to herself.

The students file out of the window, and several minutes later, a group of 6th graders trickles in. The dents are struggling to learn basic math, and Williams is turning them Ball today to learn some new ways through to them. "Good morning, My Harriett Ball, and I'm from Houston. I'm going to do some fun things with today. All eyes on me. Say, 'Try Tonight!'"

The kids have no idea who this st

looking lady with the fancy clothes, long hair and the costume jewelry is, but quickly get into the groove, repeating chant: "Try Big Mac tonight."

"C'mon, now!"

"Try Big Mac tonight!"

"Say it again now!"

"Try Big Mac tonight!"

"All right," Ball says, "guess what?"

learned how to read a 15-digit number.

The students, baffled, look at each other. Ball steps up to the blackboard and writes on the board "1BM".

Ball steps up to the blackboard and writes on the board a 15-digit number: 426,804,392,774,9

"OK, what's that number?" she asks everybody raise your hand up at one.

One boy makes a half-hearted attempt then stops.

Ball says, once again, "Try Tonight," and the kids repeat the chant.

Then Ball writes on the board "1BM".

"See those letters?" she asks. "Th lion, billion, million, thousand. Try tonight. Trillion, billion, million, thousand."

Something seems to click inside dents' heads.

"OK," Ball continues, "when you number, don't be afraid of it. All you do is this: Count your commas and is what?"

"Count your commas and label," dents reply.

"How many commas do you see, asks.

"Four!"

"So who is this?" she asks, pointing first comma.

"Try!"

"Who is this?"

"Big!"

"Who is this?"

"Mac!"

"And this?"

"Tonight!"

Eventually, Ball leads them through number step by step, showing them use the easy-to-remember "Try Tonight" chant as a tool to figure out value of a multidigit number. The students mightily impressed with this new thing, give Ball—and themselves—a applause.

Ball goes on to demonstrate her creating a multiplication table by drawing upside-down T. She even shows the use the numbers on a clock for the purpose, which leaves the kids flabbergasted.

"Now you can cheat by looking at it she tells them, pointing at the banner hanging above the blackboard, she tells them, pointing at the banner that says, "Attitude is a lift that makes a big difference!"

"The phrase could be Harriett Ball



David Levin, the principal of the KIPP Academy in the Bronx, successfully adopted Ball's teaching style and went on to found two schools using her methods. He admits his mentor hasn't gotten the credit she deserves.

what to do."

"You did right," Ball reassures her. "They've caught the fever." She plans to visit the school in two days to work with some of the students. Then, it will be up to Price and her teachers to decide what to do with all this rap, rhythm, and rhyme stuff.

One first-year faculty member, Bobetta Ryan, is already making plans to incorporate some of Ball's methods. "She's given me some new ideas to go with," Ryan says during the break. "I think some of the other teachers will go back to Hayl and say, 'I'm going to stay with my own way.' Some will go back with a few ideas, but they may not do it exactly how it was done today. And some will go back and be gun-her."

For the next several hours, Ball keeps the teachers enthralled as she shows them how to teach, in the most entertaining way possible, basic math concepts: adding, subtracting, and multiplying fractions; multiplication tables; weights and measures; and the

town hotel, and on the way she nods off.

"She always does this," he says.

AT 8 O'CLOCK THE NEXT MORNING, when Kambon arrives at the hotel to pick her up, Ball is full of energy and ready to do it all over again. This time, though, she'll spend the day working her magic with students, not teachers, at three Columbus public schools.

At Franklin Middle School, in the heart of Columbus' black community, 6th grade teacher Debbie Williams is finishing up with a group of top-track students when Kambon and Ball walk into her classroom. Williams, who is white, is standing at the board working through a math equation while the students, who are mostly African-American and wearing blue-and-white uniforms, sit at their desks doing worksheets. As Ball takes a seat in the back of the room, she notices the students have calculators. "What is

345 Spear St., Suite 510
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KIPP

Fax

To: Trent Gabert	From: Rachel Hosmer
Fax: 405-325-7132	Pages: 5
Phone: 405-325-1061	Date: October 9, 2001
Re: Materials for Brock Contest	CC:

Urgent **For Review** **Please Comment** **Please Reply** **Please Recycle**

Mr. Gabert,

I'm sorry that we did not get the materials out to you sooner. Catherine North in our Houston office is faxing an article on Harriett Ball as well. Let me know if you need anything else.

Thank you and have a nice day!

Rachel Hosmer ☺

KIPP

October 9, 2001

Trent E. Gabert
Chair, Executive Committee
Brock International Prize in Education
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Studies
1700 Asp Avenue, Room 226
Norman, OK 73072-6400

Dear Trent,

Enclosed are the materials for my nominee, Harriett Ball.

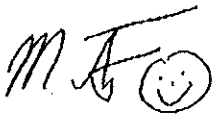
For nearly 25 years, Harriett Ball was a master teacher in the classroom. She began teaching in 1969, and taught all the various elementary and middle school grade levels in public schools in Austin, TX and Houston, TX. Early in her career, she realized there was a catch-22 to effective teaching: her students, who were far behind academically, needed to learn a great deal of academic skills to catch up to grade level, but learning these skills was not a source of interest to her students. This was and is partly the case due to kids "turning off" to things they find difficult, and partly due to the fact that teaching and learning rudimentary skills is not very exciting. Harriett began developing her whole-body, multi-sensory teaching techniques to help children learn the academic skills with mastery, build confidence and self esteem, and have a good time in this process as well. Harriett retired from Houston ISD seven years ago in order to have the time to further develop her techniques, called "Musical Ball Points", and to be available to help teachers and schools across the nation improve their instructional practices. Harriett has won numerous awards and has done workshops in schools across the country all in the name of teaching teachers how to teach, and teach well.

When Dave Levin and I started teaching in Houston in 1992, we were lucky to have Harriett as a mentor teacher. She took us under her wing and helped us become great classroom teachers. With these abilities, Dave and I had a strong foundation to build schools that ensured educationally underserved students could and would succeed in school.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again (and write it☺): Harriett is God's gift to the classroom, and if our nation is going to significantly improve public education, we must invest in the most important resource of all: the human resource. With more great teachers, more kids will be set up for success in life, and Harriett is making sure the numbers of great teachers out there in our schools continues to increase.

I look forward to seeing you and the other jurors next month.

Sincerely,



Mike Feinberg
Co-Founder

**Educational Consultant
Musical Ball Points**

HARRIETT J. BALL

452 - 74 - 8305

Multi-Sensory Teacher Training Program

6223 CREEKBEND, HOUSTON, TX 77096

(713) 981-5249 F: (713) 981-1758

EDUCATION: Huston-Tillotson College, BA Education - 1969
Prairie View A&M University, MA Guidance & Counseling, 1973
University of Texas at Austin - Adm. Cert. 1985
Southwest Texas State University, Adm. Cert./ Bilingual Ed.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: Elementary Teacher/ Counselor: Austin & Houston ISD, 20+ yr.
Title I Reading Teacher, Austin ISD, 5 yr.
Title I Reading Coordinator, Austin ISD, 2 yr.
Campus Math-a-Thon Coordinator
'Beating The Odds' Summer Program for HS - Houston ISD
Austin and Houston ISD Teacher-Trainer Presenter
Assistant to the Principal, 2 yr.
Teacher Mentor
SITES Coordinator 2yrs, Houston
SPARK PARK Campus Coordinator
Site-Based Management Officer
Educational Consultant (Elementary - High School) '94-present

PRESENTATIONS: National School Conference Institute, Phoenix, AZ
Houston Council of Teachers of Mathematics
Schools of Excellence Conventions & Winter Energizers-Houston
Keynote Speaker/ Presenter: Teach For America Corps
National Alliance of Black School Educators
Texas Alliance of Black School Educators
Beaumont Area Alliance of Black School Educators
Houston Alliance of Black School Educators
Cleveland Principals' Initiative (Ohio)
Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) of New York/ Houston
TSU, Center for the Pedagogy of African-American Learners
Keynote Speaker- Ohio, South Carolina, Delaware, Alabama +
Some School Districts in Texas include: Houston, Lubbock, Aldine
Galveston, LaMarque, Dickinson, Texas City, Killeen, Alief, & Tyler
Outside of Texas include: Florida, Ohio, New York, Georgia, Nevada
California, Arizona, Indiana, S. Carolina, Illinois, Kansas, Mississippi,
New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Oregon, Wisconsin, Michigan...

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Created Musical Ball Points Educational Training Program,
Board Member, Fellows Trainer - KIPP Academy (Houston/Calif.)
Talented Youth Coalition Inc. (Houston), Board Member
Elected Campus "Teacher of the Year" 6 times (Austin, Houston, TX)
Prof. Best Leadership Award /Oldsmobile & Learning Magazine
Received Proclamation from City Council & Mayor of Galveston, '99
Author, 'Fearless Math' (Multi-Sensory Teaching Strategies)
Spotlighted on TV, in magazines, books, and newspapers: '21 No
Excuse Schools', Teacher Magazine '01, Education Weekly Jan '01
Created and instituted 'Knowledge Bowl Competition' at 2 schools
Educational contributions spotlighted at '00 Republican Convention
Helped many schools across the nation move from 'Alert' status
Began After-School tutoring program- HC F EDU. Bldg, Houston, TX

'Musical Ball Points' by Harriett J. Ball

INTRODUCTION -- What 'Musical Ball Points' is All About

As teachers we **must teach all** of our students. Finding the learning style that best suits and captivates the interest of each student challenges even the most experienced teachers. Just as deaf and blind students can and do learn through their best learning modalities, all students need to be taught through their strongest sense, then reinforced through their next strongest. Since no group of students learn the same way, teachers need to develop '**multi-sensory teaching**' techniques that address every style of learning. The **Musical Ball Points** program provides training in multi-sensory teaching techniques that allow equal access to learning for our At-Risk population.

Musical Ball Points, MBP, weaves the state objectives/ proficiency skills into multi-sensory (whole-body) teaching techniques. Multi-sensory teaching, often referred to as **mnemonics**, is an effective venue to reach and teach students who do not perform well with traditional teaching techniques. **Mnemonics** is an array of memory enhancements that include rhythm, rhyme, codes, verbal and visual cues, patterns, and story webs that evolve around experiences that are relevant and concrete in the life of students. Mnemonics stimulates and enhances the learning of concepts, strengthens the attention span, and bolsters self-esteem.

Most children, ages 7-12 need to '**move**' and '**respond**' to learn optimally. Our usual teaching tools—textbooks, paper, and blackboard—emphasize the visual and auditory, and minimize verbal feedback, student demonstrations, and movement. Students in general, especially the '**At-Risk**' of any age or race, learn most naturally and best through play, songs, patterns, movement, imitation, imagination and rhythm. For example, pick any student and ask them to sing a '**rap**' song. They know every word and are able to execute the complex moves seen in the videos. Another example of how a presentation (with multiple sensory entry points) can enhance productivity can be seen while observing a student on a Sega-Genesis or Play Station. They are combining visual acuity, manual dexterity, decoding skills, competition, pattern finding, and musical stimuli for extended periods, totally blocking out any interruptions.

**ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT PRODUCES MASTERY, HOLDS ATTENTION,
INCREASES STAMINA, AND BUILDS SELF-ESTEEM.**

MUSICAL BALL POINTS * An Educational Training Service
6223 Creekbend Dr. • Houston, TX 77096 • 24 Hr. O: (713) 981-5249 F: (713) 981-1758
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Gone are the days when we can expect students to learn simply by sitting still, listening, and flipping pages. Students of today require teachers who are **willing and capable** of captivating their attention, motivating and engaging them in active learning, and expanding their ability to communicate. This must occur in a **'fail-safe'** environment wherein **'put-downs'** are not tolerated, and an undeniable team spirit to help one another excel is demonstrated by the class and teachers.

Such an approach is particularly advantageous when working with 'At-Risk' students who typically *DISPLAY* short-attention spans and have limited prior educational success, for whatever reason. Developing vocabulary and teaching through mnemonics across the curriculum are the basis for the formation of stronger academic skills for 'At-Risk' students. Mnemonics, which I affectionately call **'DISPOSABLE CRUTCHES'**, will be thrown away when students see fit, which typically **follows mastery**. These **'crutches'** are created to allow each student equal access to learning, with minimal mistakes.

With **fear and anxiety** drastically reduced, there is no great need to get negative attention. Now, you see students—who have experienced so much failure for years – craving to **'show-off'** what they know. They have **learned and feel important**. We have done our job.

The **Musical Ball Points** Training Program was developed to serve as a springboard to unleash creative talents, bring many to the realization that all of us can learn, and remind us that asking for help is not a sign of failure. **Success can be learned**. Teaching, like learning, needs to be cooperative and an on-going experience. **Musical Ball Points** will make a difference in any school that is committed to being a beacon in the lives of ALL students. Make MBP an integral part of your campus team and live your dream in 3-D, **Dream, Dare, and Do**.

Edutainmently yours,

Harriett J. Ball

It's Time to STOP the 'Waiting to Excel'

FEARLESS MATH • FEARLESS LANGUAGE ARTS • PARENT WORKSHOPS •
MOTIVATIONAL WORKSHOPS • TEST-ANXIETY BUSTER RALLIES • CLASS DEMOS

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KIPP ACADEMY
10711 KIPP Way
Houston, TX 77099
School (832) 328-1051
Fax (832) 328-0178

facsimile transmittal

To: Trent Gabert Fax: 405. 325. 7132
From: Catherine North Date: 10/9/01
Re: Pages: 5 + cover
CC:

Urgent For Review Please Comment Please Reply Please Recycle

Please find attached an article that Mike Termburg asked me to submit on behalf of the nomination of Harriett Ball for the Brock International Prize in Education.

Please note that the type is very small. I don't know how well this will fax. Please don't hesitate to call if you need anything or if it's not clear on arrival.

Thanks!
Catherine North

I have a copy of this fax



RC

NO:

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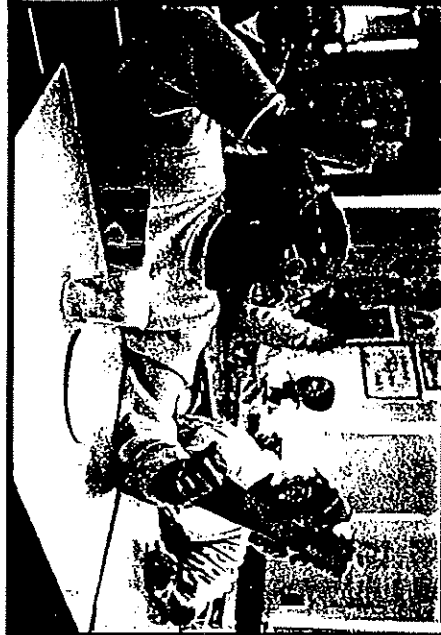
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Dr

S:

them, but for the most part, she left to her classroom, "handling my own business," as she puts it. "We'd shoot Ball out, though, and every now and then, when we would come back on her classroom door, I'd usually be busy by then, but I'd see her and usually by that time, I'd be from her house, usually family, Susan, however, did not let her off as a "black thing."

David Levin approved that theory. Fresh out of Yale University, he signed on with Teach For America and ended up teaching 6th grade at Barbara. "I was struggling immensely," Levin says. "The other teachers were looking at how long I was going to last.



Some of them didn't think I'd make it until Christmas. It happened to notice what was going on inside Ball's classroom and one day asked for help. "I sort of begged her to be my mentor," he says. "And she agreed. I spent every single day in her room. One day, she came in and said, 'I've got a problem. I've got 45 minutes what I had been trying to teach them for three weeks.'"

"He was hungry," says Ball, adding, "He couldn't hold a tune in a house, let alone in a building." But that didn't stop Levin from eventually adopting Ball's nontraditional style, and the next year, he was named Barbara's teacher of the year.

David Levin, Michael Pinkney, also a former teacher, and Barbara's principal at the time, David Levin, are seen in the photo above. Levin and Pinkney were assigned to the program but had been assigned to a different school. "I was a craggy, struggling teacher," he says. "David kept talking me about how he was going to get to know me and see my mentor teacher. She's unbelievable." "Levin did just that, and soon he was using Rube Roybin, and Roybin is his

own classroom at Grand Elementary School. "You're talking to a white Jewish boy who never had much rhythm," he says. "But I'm able to employ her strategies."

Levin and Pinkney went on to start their own middle school academy, first in Houston and then in the Bronx in 2007. The school was named after Barbara. Levin and Pinkney bonded in tough urban areas and serve predominantly poor minority students. Yet their success came, as measured by test scores, have been phenomenal. Levin's and Pinkney's data have gained the KIPP Academy for demonstrating that all children, no matter what their socioeconomic background, will receive educational success.

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Rote memorization has been out of fashion for some time, but Ball insists there's nothing wrong with drills—as long as they're fun for kids.

"Drill won't kill," she says. "Boredom is the killer."

lor Frances Harris, known as Aunt Frank, 50, a temporary substitute teacher and a job at a general building. She wears size clothes, and her hair was real pretty. To me she was the epitome of a teacher. I wanted to be like Aunt Frank."

When Ball got her first teaching job, she figured she'd be doing a "sabbic," but—would she get her first paycheck. She called her sister and asked her to manage to get her first paycheck. She was on a vacation, but she had her husband, who worked at the ship chandlery, to call her. She said, "I'm not doing pretty well because as a consultant, the drivers around Houston in either a Lincoln Town Car or a Plymouth Prevue, depending on her mood."

In 1984 Ball was teaching 2nd grade at Houston's Fairchild Elementary School when she had an epiphany. "My students and I were doing a lesson on the story of the blind men and an elephant. I was standing at the board one day, and all of a sudden it was like a light bulb. God spoke to me, and I started writing down a rhyme that explained how to change a written number to a numeral."

Ball had used some charts before to engage her students, but this was the first time a rhyme had come to her in the form of a poem. She had written it down, and she was proud of it. She had written it down, and she was proud of it. She had written it down, and she was proud of it.

"They were revelations from God," says Ball, who was raised a Baptist but now attends a Methodist church. "A lot of people don't hear me when I say that, but it's true." Later, someone told Ball that there was a handwriting expert—memorization—for children who was doing a workshop for teachers. When I went, she says, "I employ the eyes, the ears, and the something else, the movement, and the rhythm, and there's a song. I also use whole-tone composition. But I don't allow any judgments. I don't allow the students to laugh at one another." To help, she added, to be "a natural tutor" to teach her way, but you don't have to

be. "Not everyone can teach like I do," she says, "but I can be a springboard for doing something different."

AFTER LEVIN AND PENBERG got off the ground, Ball figured she'd work at Houston Elementary School for another five or six years and then retire. Even though she was increasingly in demand as a workshop presenter, she couldn't give up her steady teaching job. "I had to pay my bills," she says. Then, one day at school, she heard a voice. It was like a light bulb. She had written it down, and she was proud of it. She had written it down, and she was proud of it. She had written it down, and she was proud of it.

She put the word out that she was available to conduct workshops during the week, not just on weekends as she had been doing, and—surprise!—she was called to give a workshop. "It was always somebody who knew me," says Ball, who charges in the neighborhood of \$1,500 a day for her services. She has been known to work for less than that, and even for free! Seventy percent of Ball's workshops are in mathematics; 30 percent are in language arts.

After several schools credited Ball with boosting student scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, Ball was named a State's Education with just seven has proved to be a boon for Ball. Some schools and districts hire her for the sake of purpose of increasing scores. In 1998, the city of Galveston proclaimed Sept. 14 "Harriet Ball Day" and recognized the teacher "for generously volunteering her time and efforts to help the children of Galveston to succeed on the Texas state tests."

Ball is proud that her students are doing well on the tests. She has a list of testimonials from parents and teachers, but she insists that her methods go beyond test scores. "Memorization," she asserts, "isn't just about the learning of concepts, it's about the retention of them, and that's what's important. The retention means that students must also develop a conceptual understanding of math so they can use what they know to solve problems they've never seen before."

Ball, however, always of such high regard. She's still in demand, she says, so what I do is make it concrete so they can relate it to their own lives. I've seen a lot of people who come to my workshops and they're like, "I've never heard of this before." I've seen a lot of people who come to my workshops and they're like, "I've never heard of this before." I've seen a lot of people who come to my workshops and they're like, "I've never heard of this before."



