



Samantha Osaki

Hailing from Walnut, California, Samantha was raised by two loving parents who taught her to place inner-integrity and service to others above all else. In high school, Sam co-founded a nonprofit organization called “For All Mankind,” with the intent of increasing awareness of global affairs among high school students and raising money for the protection and advocacy of human rights. At Penn, Sam serves as President of Penn Education Society, Vice President/Director of Research of a women’s rights organization called Seneca International, and Head Chair of the community service committee at Ware College House. Having studied abroad in France, India, Senegal, Argentina, and Ghana, Sam has a passion for traveling and engaging with different cultures. Graduating with honors in both Urban Studies and English, Sam loves to read and write. She has been an Alliance & Understanding participant, a Moral Voices Fellow, a member of the Mock Trial team, and the editor-in-chief of both an education policy and a women’s rights journal. In her free time, she likes to visit her “Little” whom she mentored through Big Brothers Big Sisters and hang out with friends made through Delta Delta Delta. She plans to pursue a career in law and will remain dedicated to building communities wherever she goes.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

“Crisis Averted or Crisis Postponed? The Dimner Beeber Middle School Community, Post-Threat of Closing”

Faculty Advisor: **Dr. Rand Quinn**, Graduate School of Education, Teaching, Learning, and Leadership Division

Where financial and human capitals are insufficient, as is the case with the low-income community surrounding Dimner Beeber Middle School, stakeholders can derive power through social capital. This study draws out thematic underpinnings from the narratives of three parents who led the 2013 “Save Beeber” rallies. Extraneous circumstances, catalyzed by the rise of these parent-leaders and other community members, successfully influenced the School District of Philadelphia’s (SDP) decision to spare the community from crisis – for now. Failing to capitalize upon this movement, however, Beeber parents did not build the bonding- or bridging- ties necessary to sustain engagement. Its conditions failing to improve, the school remains in a precarious, though not hopeless, state. While the SDP must incorporate more inclusive methods of engaging parents within school decision-making processes, parents, too, must strive toward self-efficacy. Of the factors now stifling activism, foremost is that no effective space exists for parents to collectively overcome what they perceive to be empty promises and indifference from the SDP. Parents must organize to develop a common understanding and to challenge their own deficit mindsets, for it is only by building trust and by sealing collaborations that these often-voiceless actors can partake in the transformative work of community capacity-building.