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- [Events](#)
- [Features & Releases](#)
- [e-Newsletters](#)
- **[Ed. Magazine](#)**
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- [Webcasts](#)

[Alumni & Friends](#)

Investing in Education

Ahead of the Curve

by Elizabeth Gehrman

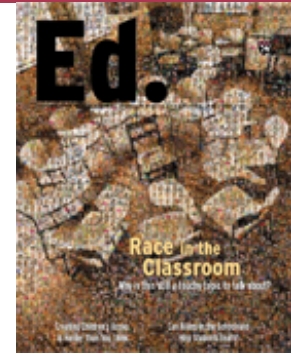


Though George and Isa Zimmerman, M.A.T.'63, Ed.D.'71, were both educators for more than four decades, "George was university physics and I was K-12," says Isa. "We agreed not to compete."

"Rather, we supported each other," George quickly adds. "I went on field trips, attended football games, and painted bleachers, and she hosted a lot of social events when I was chair of the department at Boston University."

"We were a good team," she says, patting his knee — clearly, though their career paths were quite dissimilar. While George attended Yale University, Isa received her M.A.T. in 1963 and her Ed.D. in 1971, both at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Since they met in 1964, Isa says, "I've been at six school districts and two universities. George has been at BU all this time."

Though the couple gives annually to the three schools they attended, a trip to Japan a few years ago prompted them to consider their legacy. "I wanted to give to HGSE because the school made a very big difference in my life by directing me



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- ▶ [Dean's Perspective](#)
- ▶ [Letters](#)
- ▶ [The Appian Way](#)
- ▶ [Investing in Education](#)
- ▶ [Books](#)
- ▶ [Alumni News and Notes](#)
- ▶ [Recess](#)
- ▶ [Previous Issues](#)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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professionally," says Isa. "There aren't as many great schools of education as there should be, and, as somebody said, every Ph.D. begins in kindergarten. HGSE responds to the issues that need to be addressed, such as the achievement gap and technology."

Technology, Isa says, was one of her platforms at every school or district at which she worked, whether as a teacher or an administrator. In her job as principal at Hamilton-Wenham (Mass.) Regional High School, where she began in 1974, she got the school Apple II computers, which were the first PCs (introduced in 1977) that were widely available for education. As a scientist, George had been using computers all along; when the desktop model came out, he knew it would be a useful tool and bought one for Isa. Though she allegedly retired in 2000, today Isa is a senior fellow at the University of Massachusetts' PK-16 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Initiative.

The Zimmermans hope that technology will be part of the enduring legacy of their membership in the Paul Hanus Society. "When I was at BU, I learned that it's usually pretty easy to get something endowed — a new room or a new building, for instance," says George. "But it's very hard to get money for maintenance of programs. We wanted a gift that would go into a general fund for keeping up computers, updating, and reinvesting."

By investing in the Ed School, of course, the Zimmermans hope to influence generations to come. "Today's kids use technology all the time," says Isa. "It's impossible to conceive of schools and institutions of higher learning not providing students with those tools as they grow and learn. For schools to be able to use technology, teachers need to be comfortable and creative teaching with technological tools. HGSE values the use of technology in education. We know the money we'll put into this fund will be well spent."

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About the Article

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— *photo by Ed Malitsky*

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