Harriett J. Ball

Educational Consultant
Musical Ball Points

Multi-Sensory Teacher Training Program
October 9, 2001

Trent E. Gabert
Chair, Executive Committee
Brook 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
EDUCATION:  
Houston-Tillotson College, BA Education - 1969  
Prairie View A&M University, MA Guidance & Counseling, 1973  
University of Texas of Austin - Adm. Cert. 1985  
Southwest Texas State University, Adm. Cert./Bilingual Ed.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:  
Elementary teacher/ Counselor, Austin ISD, 20+ yr.  
Title I Reading Teacher, Austin ISD, 5 yr.  
Title I Reading Coordinator, Austin ISD, 2 yr.  
Campus Math-a-Thon Coordinator  
'Reading The Odds' Summer Program for HS, Houston ISD  
Austen and Houston ISD Teacher-Trainor Presenter  
Assistant to the Principal, 2 yr.  
Teacher Mentor  
SITES Coordinator 2 yrs, 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  
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TSU, Center for the Pedagogy of African American Learners  
Keynote Speaker, Ohio, South Carolina, Delaware, Alabama +  
Some School Districts in Texas Include: Houston, Lubbock, Alcona  
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, '09  
Author, 'Fearless Math' (Multi-Sensory Teaching Strategies)  
Highlighted 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
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.
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,

Harriet 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 DISMOS

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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 pin-striped 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.

Sound like a cross between Mahalia Jackson and an Army drill sergeant? Ball shouts out, in call-and-response style, "I can'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 "multi-sensory, multi-modal, whole-body learning 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 model. You're our 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.
Academies, two nationally acclaimed charter schools, helped inspire the KIPP unconventional methods. Not only that, but she's also written a book on the subject, which we'll discuss later.

So why has no one ever heard of her?
... for the most part, she kept to her classroom, "minding my own business," as she puts it. Word 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 disproved 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."

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 charts verbatim. A 1999 Texas 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 Hartnell whenever he's interviewed, but the message doesn't always get through. "Hartnell 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 Hartnell Bye-Bye-Bye drills and the "Knowledge Is Power" chant, new KIPPers told the delegates: "These lively lessons were inspired by the life work of master teacher Hartnell 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 stooped her ideas. She, too, blames the media for overlooking her role in the KIPP success story. Besides, she has 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 fad, 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 sis-
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."

After Levin and Feinberg got off the ground, Ball figured she'd work at Quantan 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 phone calls started coming in. "It was always somebody who knew somebody who knew 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 students' scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, Ball became known as the "TASB Hunter." 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 1993, the city of Galveston proclaimed Sept. 14 "Harrington Ball Day" and recognized the teacher for "generously volunteering her time and efforts to help the children of Galveston succeed on the TASB 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. "Mimesis," she asserts, "stimulates and enhances the learning of concepts, strengthens the attention span, and builds 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 highbrow criticism. "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 food off her feet at a table near the
God," Ball says of her teaching techniques. "A lot of people don't hear me when I say that, but it's true."

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 downtown hotel, and on the way she nods off. "She always does this," he says.

**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 he deserves.**

**What to do, Ball reassures her. "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, Robert Ryno, 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.

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 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.

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**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 magic with students, not teachers, at three Columbus public schools.**

At Franklin Middle School, in the heart of Columbus' black community, 5th grade teacher Debbie Williams is flippin' seen 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 example while the students, who are mostly African-American and wearing blue-and-white uniforms, sit at the desks doing worksheets. As Ball takes a seat in the back of the room, she notices the students have calculators. "What is...?" she whispers to herself. The students file out of the wind room, and several minutes later, a group of 5th graders trickle 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, Mr. Hartfield Ball, and I'm from Houston. I'm going to do some fun things with today. All eyes on me. Say, 'Try B tonight!'

The kids have no idea what this is looking lady with the fancy clothes, long hair and the costume jewelery, B quickly get into the groove, repeating, chanting, 'Try Big Mac tonight!'

"Oooh, no!"

"Try Big Mac tonight!"

"Big!"

"Test it again?"

"Try Big Mac tonight!"

"All right," Ball says, "guessed what I learned how to read a 15-digit number!"

The students, buffed, look each other: "What is this lady talking about?"

Ball steps up to the blackboard and a 15-digit number: 426,604,393,774,5

"OK, what's that number?" she asks.

"Everybody raise your hand up at once."

One boy makes a half-hearted attempt.

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

"Count your commas and label, dents reply.

"How many commas do you see?"

"Four!"

"Who is this?" she asks, pointing first comma.

"Try B tonight!"

Eventually, Ball leads them to number step by step, showing them the way-to-remember "Try B tonight!" chant to figure out value of a 15-digit number. The students mightily impressed with this new tool, give Ball and themselves an applause.

Ball goes on to demonstrate her creating a multiplication table by draping a 2. She even shows the students the numbers on a clock for the sphere, which leaves the kids flabbergasted. "Say you see things by looking at it, she tells them, pointing at the hanging above the blackboard, with the same old formula. "Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference!"

The phrase could be Hartfield Ball
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 😊
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 73072-5400

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Sincerely,

Mike Feinberg  
Co-Founder
EDUCATION:
Huston-Tillotson College, BA Education – 1960
Prairie View A&M University, MA Guidance & Counseling, 1973
University of Texas of Austin – Adm. Cert. 1985
Southwest Texas State University, Adm. Cert. / Bilingual Ed.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:
Elementary teacher/ Counselor, Austin & Houston ISD, 20+ yr.
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Outside of Texas: Florida, Ohio, New York, Georgia, Nevada, California, Arizona, Indiana, S. Carolina, Illinois, Kansas, Mississippi, New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Oregon, Wisconsin, Michigan...

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:
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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.

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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, Darc, and Do.

Edutainmently yours,

Harriet J. Ball

It’s Time to STOP the ‘Waiting to Excel’

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Please find attached an article that Mike Sternberg asked me to submit on behalf of the nomination of Harriet 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.

Thank you!

Catherine North

[Handwritten note: I have a copy of this. JRG]
Rap, Rhythm, and Rhyme

BY DAVID HILL

It's early morning, and inside the Northside Center there—a former convent school now used as a staff-training facility for the city school system—about 20 teachers are unpacking bags and sipping coffee, awaiting for a professional-development workshop to begin. They don't know it yet, but Dr. Margaret Ball, today's presenter, hopes to rock their world.

Also known as the president of the Visitation Leaders Foundation, 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 introduction Ball, Kinnick 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 education exists," he says, "and it remains the backbone of children. We've got to learn how to use this strategy and bring it into the classroom to meet today's young people. And with that, I want to bring up the master of using the skill...I give you...I give Margaret Ball, of Boston, Texas."

Ball, a tall African-American woman dressed in a black-and-white plaid pantsuit and minimally accessorized with her large gold rings, several gold bracelets, gold-colored bangles, and rhinestone-encrusted designer glass, saunters up and sits sipping her coffee in a foot-long Apple/Clap /Clap/Clap/Clap/Clap.

"Drop your head," she says, but when looking at the camera moves quickly along.
ASSIGNMENT

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 to be absorbed, not written down on a piece of paper.

At the blackboard, Ball draws an equation. On the right side of the vertical line, she writes a one and an S. "Remember, one is your head. (If you forget to start with one, the chart won't work.)"

Then, moving up the vertical line, she writes the number two through nine. On the other side of the vertical line, she writes a six at the bottom, an eight on top of that, and so on, until she gets to zero. As she writes, she insists on keeping the numbers on the left side lined up with the ones on the right. In fact, she often little saying to remind the students to do just that. "When I was in high school," she says, "setting 'em, it's at the board, or it'll kill you."

The method is sometimes called, with the number other version as $99 \times 98$ on the bottom, and all the other benefit in place is in between. Ball has similar lessons in help learn all the multiplication tables.

"That's awesome!" says one of the teachers in Ball's class. "She knows her math. She does it again, 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.

For teaching this way" Ball tells them, "you're..."

SIX YEARS AGO, Ball was running a grade school in one of the most crime-ridden parts of the city. She was a second-grade teacher, and she taught her students math, science, social studies, and art. She had seen too many workshops here and there, none of which she thought was useful. She decided to teach in a way that was more effective.

Through her method, Ball was able to teach her students to love learning. They would come to school every day with a smile on their faces, eager to learn something new. They would take their time to work through the problems, and when they finished, they would feel proud of their work.

Ball's method was simple: she would present a problem to the class, and then give them time to think about it. She would then have them write down their solutions, and then discuss them with the class. This way, the students were able to learn from each other, and they were able to learn from Ball.

Ball's method was so effective that it was adopted by other teachers in the city. They saw how much their students were learning, and they wanted to teach in the same way. Ball's method was a game-changer, and it was the start of something big.