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# MASS COALITION COURIER

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*Working Together to Produce Quality Teachers for Our Urban Schools'*

Volume 1, Issue 6

April 2001

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## Field Notes...

By now you're familiar with the six objectives of the Coalition. Each one is important to the redesign of urban teacher preparation, but I have to admit I am most drawn to this month's focus – Objective #2: *Expand the school- and community-based nature of teacher education so that our future teachers are better prepared to work in urban schools.* To me it says that there are a number of different perspectives that are relevant in the classroom. Moreover, we must use these perspectives to help student teachers excel in the classroom.

As I look at the development of this objective across the Coalition I am amazed by the diversity of programs that are helping teacher candidates become more aware of the perspectives of their students and school communities. This year I've seen one program go from little community participation to connecting their candidates with social service agencies to learn more about community. I've seen another begin put first year students in local non-profits to expose students to community reading programs. Other programs are beginning the process of examining and expanding their programs by listening to the needs of teacher candidates or engaging parents in the work of the school. Ultimately, the goal of these programs is "teacher quality and student achievement". Read more about them in the examples presented on the following pages.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

### Focus On Coalition Objective 2

Expand the school- and community-based nature of teacher education so that our future teachers are better prepared to work in urban schools

### Page 1 Editor's Field Notes

#### Page 2

- **UMASS Amherst/Springfield Public Schools**  
Taking Student Teachers to the Community
- **Wheelock College/Boston Public Schools**  
Strengthening Connections with Parents
- **Northeastern University/Boston Public Schools**  
Creating a Community of Learners

#### Page 3

- **Lesley University/Boston Public Schools**  
Working with Parents on the Move
- **Boston College/Boston Public Schools**  
Hearing Teacher Candidates
- **UMASS Boston/Boston Public Schools**  
Training Substitute Teachers
- **Clark University/Worcester Public Schools**  
Boosting Latino Student Achievement



## 'Engaging Parents and Community in Schools and Teacher Education'

with Steve Constantino,  
School Principal and President, Family Friendly Schools

Saturday, May 12, 2001

9:30am – 3:00pm

Boston College, Conte Forum-Shea Room

No conference fee - Continental breakfast and lunch provided

**RSVP by May 1 to (617) 552-4237**

## **University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Springfield Public Schools**

Initial meetings and activities by a newly created Family and Community Involvement Task Force at Chestnut Accelerated Middle School have been implemented by the partnership. Student interns and teachers have met with representatives from NEONN (North End Outreach Neighborhood Network) for an orientation to resources in the Springfield area. Each student intern accompanied a NEONN worker on a home visit, met various downtown agency representatives, took a walking tour of the North End, ate lunch at a locally owned Puerto Rican restaurant, and met with the personnel director of the Springfield Public Schools to talk about working in Springfield.

Three parents have been hired and three Information Center areas have been established in the school where postings of important meetings, school newspapers, etc. will be located. These parents will translate and type the newsletter, as well as use a digital camera to send home photographs of student work. They also follow up on suggestions raised at the “Let’s Eat and Talk” events and attend our bi-weekly partnership meetings.

As a result of parent input, the school is working to develop clear guidelines and expectations regarding homework and facilitating discussions on the need for school wide work on cultural awareness, anti-bias and anti-racism initiatives.



## **Wheelock College and Boston Public Schools**

Wheelock and the Young Achievers School have begun to engage families in supporting high achievement for their students. Their first steps have been to strengthen communication between teachers and families through a school-wide family program and to clarify opportunities for involvement in the working committees of the school. A site-based liaison participates in these meetings to facilitate communication related to the goals families lay out for their children. Interns are working collaboratively with teachers to discuss the needs and progress of students and the various ways to improve instruction in the classroom as well as meeting the needs of the full range of students in the class. Mentors continue to meet monthly to discuss strategies to support intern learning.

## **Northeastern University and Boston Public Schools**

The winter quarter at Northeastern is underway and bringing about changes and new programs in collaboration with the Boston Public Schools. The Introduction to Education course continues this quarter with over 75 students involved in fieldwork, in six community-based education programs such as the Madison Park Literacy Initiative.

We will host a May Day Celebration to bring together students in the course with each other and the children of the Boston communities they served. The event will reinforce motivation, commitment, mutual understanding, and a strong belief that adults thrive when participating in a “community of learners” that extends beyond the classroom.

Northeastern has continued the training for the community education-based agencies on math and science with the Center for Enhancement of Science and Mathematics Education at Northeastern. Karen Mapp, president of the Institute for Responsive Education, gave a presentation to community agencies and continues to plan parent/family workshops for our partner schools.

### **Lesley University and Boston Public Schools**

At the Dever School site, the partnership has been working to engage the parent community and is making significant progress. Lauren Siegel organized a roundup of 400 parents at the fall Open House. A parent newspaper with news, dates, recipes, and children's work is regularly published and the Parent Council meets regularly.

Follow-up on the three largest of the parents' interests has started: First is the development of a school library that can be used by families as well as children. Second, MCAS concerns have been addressed with MCAS bulletins and practice problems sent home weekly. Finally, to focus on family literacy we have assisted in the first of a series of family reading nights, offered in English and Spanish, with childcare provided. We have also scheduled a series of 10 parent and parent/child workshops this spring called "Family Matters," focused on issues the parents want to discuss associated with their children. The sessions will be led in a variety of languages and held evenings and Saturdays.

In addition, we participate in a community leadership meeting held by business partners, schools, and residents of our area. This is a superb forum for important conversations about what we all want in a good learning and living community.

### **Boston College and Boston Public Schools**

Throughout the year teacher candidates in the Donovan Scholars Urban Teaching Program have participated in a seminar course to share their thoughts on urban teaching. They express their fears and expectations of urban teaching, as well as concerns about social justice, school culture, instructional practice and social conditions. These conversations better inform the preparation of future teachers.

Boston College English Honors students are getting their feet wet in urban schools by tutoring Brighton High School students by email. Other students serve as mentors to high school students on campus tours. Might these undergrads be future Donovan Scholars?

### **University of Massachusetts-Boston and Boston Public Schools**

The partnership had presentations from community organizations including Colonel Daniel Marr Boys and Girls Clubs of Dorchester and the Boston Parents Organizing Network, both concerned with urban education. The groups offered a number of resources such as mentoring and career workshops for high school students in collaboration with the District Attorney's Office.

Also in development - a proposal in collaboration with ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now- Boston Chapter, to train a cohort of BPS substitute teachers. Seminars will be offered on topics ranging from classroom management, lesson planning, developmental behavior and literacy to writing across content areas.

### **Clark University and Worcester Public Schools**

The Latino Coalition, a group of concerned leaders focused on improving Latino student achievement, has committed to working closely with us on secondary school reform as Latino students compose about one-third of the student population of Worcester. Together we have examined school performance data, comparing Latino school performance to others in the city, and has noted the progress made by Latino students in our small partnership school, University Park Campus School. We will convene a work group of teachers, parents and Coalition members to identify the success factors at University Park in order to duplicate them.



## Calendar of *Events*

### Coalition-Wide Conferences

May 12 – Boston College  
June 28-29 - Summer Institute

### Steering Committee Meetings

May 7 – Sturbridge Retreat  
June 5 – Boston College

### Coalition Conference Presentations

AERA- American Educational Research  
Association  
April 10-14 -Seattle, Washington

**Please Note:**  
**May 12th Conference**

**New Location:**  
The Shea Room  
In the Conte Forum  
Next to Stadium Parking Garage

Yes, I want to submit my news to the  
Coalition:

Step 1: Write something



Step 2:  
Email news to Darlene at:  
[martacz@bc.edu](mailto:martacz@bc.edu)

**Next Month in the *Courier*:**

Student Teacher Round Up  
Reflections on a year spent as a teacher  
candidate and the challenges of the future.