

MASS COALITION COURIER

~ Working Together to Prepare Quality Teachers for Our Urban Schools ~

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Save the Date!



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The Publick House

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U.S. Dept of Education Title II Teacher Quality Project Directors Conference

Los Angeles, CA

December 3-6, 2003

By Pam Herrup, MassCoalition Manager

Nine representatives of the MassCoalition attended the 3-day conference that brought together nearly 300 participants of Partnership and Recruitment grants from across the country. The conference was chaired by Dr. Stephani Stoll Dalton, the Director of the Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants Program. Participants heard keynote addresses from Dr. Susan Scalfani, the Counselor to the U.S. Secretary of Education, Dr. Ken Howey, Research Professor at the University of Cincinnati and former director of UNITE (Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education), and Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, Education Professor at Stanford University. Dr. Scalfani tied being a highly qualified teacher to having the skills to teach a diverse student and using research-based programs and strategies, and urged the higher education institutions to take a greater role in supporting new teachers. Dr. Howey both amused us with 'The Far Side' cartoons and, on a more serious note, exhorted us to think strategically and creatively about the power of partnerships for schools, universities and communities to effect strong teaching and learning. Linda Darling-Hammond was ever mindful, thoughtful and respectful of the teaching profession urging us to keep our sights and standards high.

Mostly, however, the conference provided an opportunity for the 32 on-going partnership grants to share and discuss the work we have been doing over the past 2-4 years, while new grantees learned the ropes about grant management and accountability from U.S. DOE staff. We were given a free hand to develop our part of the conference program. This effort was led by a planning group of five tireless Project Directors and produced an abundant choice of topics and forums that challenged even our Coalition team of nine people to cover. (Cont. on pg. 2)



MassCoalition members at the National Title II Conference: (From left to right) Ricci Hall, Rebecca Corwin, Nancy Dickerson, Peter Murrell, Pam Herrup, Mieko Kamii, Dennis Shirley, Nicole Guttenberg and Darlene Martin.

Clark University-Worcester Public Schools Partnership Teacher Reflects on Experience at the Nat'l Title II Conference

By Ricci Hall, Teacher, University Park Campus School

Recently, I was invited to join a team representing the MassCoalition at the National Title II Conference for Teacher Enhancement. Since it was a chance to travel to warm and beautiful Los Angeles in the beginning of the doldrums of winter, I, of course, reluctantly agreed.

In addition, as a graduate of Clark University and a teacher in an inner city high school, I felt I could be a useful contributor to the MassCoalition team. Thus, I went into the conference with two goals in mind: 1) How can I help to express the ways these projects affect classroom teachers; 2) What lessons can I learn from these national programs that can be used in our own programs in Worcester and throughout the state?

I was thoroughly impressed with the depth and breadth of the schedule of events at the conference. I was representing our team in several sessions, most of which had direct application to the role of a classroom teacher. The most memorable of these was on content mastery, a topic very important to me. As a history teacher who also mentors pre-service teachers, I often see student teachers come to my class unprepared for the vast history curriculum with which they are charged. I am also aware that some educators lose contact with the latest interpretations of history and content as these things change regularly. It made me think about how universities and schools could work together to enhance the quality of teaching within our schools. I was happy to learn that several partnerships existed around the country dealing with just this issue. For example, University of South Carolina has doctoral students in science working with a local middle school. These doctoral candidates fulfill their community service requirement by volunteering as "experts in residence" in local middle or high schools. Since these graduate students are clearly on the cutting edge of the most recent research in science, they bring a fresh look to topics that in-service teachers may have taught for years. Middle school students get great instruction, work with state of the art equipment, and are infected with a love for science, and graduate students help their community and learn something while teaching it to others. The relationships that are forged are, of course, profound and long lasting, and this was just one example of the fine work being done by our colleagues around the nation.

I also had the chance to explain the unique relationship that exists between the Worcester Public Schools and Clark University. Attendees were impressed with the innovation of several programs used by Clark and other members of the Massachusetts Coalition. It was nice to hear that many of our ideas lead the way in teacher enhancement across the country.

As I left sunny California for winter storm beaten New England, one clear lesson of this national conference became clear to me. Though each partnership may differ, we are all working on a common cause- enhancing the quality of teachers in our nation's schools. I found this a warm and comforting thought as we touched down in chilly Boston.

Title II TQ: Project Directors Conference

(Cont. from p. 1)

Thanks to the response of so many projects, nearly 70 workshops and small group discussions were offered over the 2 ½ days. The major themes were: Pre-Service Teacher Education; Alternative Certification Programs; New Teacher Support and Mentoring; School University Partnerships; Scientifically-based Research; Content Proficiency; Documentation, Evaluation and Research; Institutional Reform and Policy Development; and Technology.

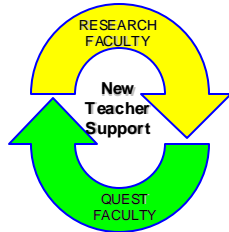
In addition, grant projects displayed their work and offered poster sessions in the main conference hall. Conference bags filled with project brochures and artifacts were given to each project team.

Here are some highlights of how our Coalition team participated in the conference. Dennis Shirley, the Coalition's Principal Investigator, was on the conference planning committee and organized and moderated the larger workshop on "Institutional Reform, Sustaining Reform and Policy Development." Dennis also served as the facilitator for the small group session on Institutionalizing Innovations. Pam Herrup, Project Manager, also served on the conference planning committee and organized the workshop on New Teacher Support in which Darlene Martin, Project QUEST coordinator, participated as a panel member. Darlene and Mieko Kamii, the Wheelock College-Boston Public Schools Partnership Director, gave a small group session on the work of Project QUEST which began a year ago. Mieko also served as a panel member in the workshop on "Content Proficiency." Peter Murrell, the Director of the Northeastern University-Boston Public Schools Partnership, was a presenter in the workshop on "Technology in Teacher Education." Ricci Hall, a lead teacher at the University Park Campus School in Worcester and representing the Clark University-Worcester Public School partnership, was a presenter in the small group session on "Partnership Development."

Nancy Dickerson, the coordinator of the U Mass Boston-Boston Public Schools partnership, represented the Coalition in the workshops on "Student Achievement" and "School/University HDS Partnerships." Nicole Guttenberg represented the U Mass Amherst-Springfield Public Schools partnership at several of the large workshops as well as smaller group sessions. Nicole also put her technology know how to work by running the audio-visual component of the Coalition's table top exhibit.



Pam Herrup, MassCoalition Project Manager, and Nicole Guttenberg, a MassCoalition Graduate Assistant, at the National Title II Teacher Quality Conference



Project QUEST News

From Darlene Martin, Project QUEST Coordinator

Project QUEST, Quality Urban Education and Support for Teachers, began last year as a research project funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education. The goal of the project was to investigate how school-university partnerships in Boston, Worcester and Springfield, might support their teacher graduates through the first years of teaching. In the first year of the project each partnership in the Coalition appointed one of its members to work on the project as either a researcher or a mentor.

These two groups came together in the first year to convene new teachers who were graduates of the university's teacher preparation programs. In small focus groups the new teachers talked about the support they received in their schools and districts, their needs as new teachers and ways they thought the school-university partnership could support their development.

In September, Project QUEST entered its pilot year with 24 new teachers. After analyzing the data from the first year's focus groups the mentor faculty developed a program that focused on issues of equity with an eye toward supporting the new teachers as agents of change in the classroom. Four times a year the teachers meet with the faculty mentors to discuss case studies they have written that represent the challenges they face as they enter their classroom each day. At the end of each session the new teachers complete a short reflective piece which is used by the researchers to gather data about how well the program meets the needs of the new teachers.

The responses of the new teachers indicate that Project QUEST is largely successful. Having a place away from their schools to reflect on their practice in a supportive group where they sometimes "agree to disagree" has kept them invigorated and excited about their chosen profession. In addition, the researchers report that many of the new teachers describe situations in which they've felt empowered to advocate for themselves or their students. One teacher initiated a study group on special education curriculum adaptations. Another used the Saturday protocol to structure conversations around equity with another teacher. Still others are considering in-school mentoring programs for other new teachers and are using materials gleaned from Project QUEST to develop their programs.

Despite these positive outcomes, Project QUEST is not without its challenges. Due to budget cuts in education, a number of our participants have had to accept positions outside of Massachusetts' three large urban districts. Thus, we are only at one-half our capacity for mentoring new teachers this year. We also struggle with keeping a balance between the timely practical classroom needs of the teachers and some of their broader concerns on maintaining the teaching identity and pedagogical ideals developed during their teacher preparation programs that come in conflict with the culture of the schools in which they are teaching.

In the next year, we look forward to increasing our number of new teachers. We would also like to increase the number of Saturdays that new teachers meet and are considering regional meetings in lieu of bringing all the districts together. Most importantly, we will revisit the curriculum of the meetings to balance the needs of all of our participants. We invite all new teachers to join us. For more information go to <http://www.bc.edu/masscoalition>.

UMASS-BOSTON – BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Training for Cooperating and Substitute Teachers

By Nancy Dickerson, Partnership Staff, UMass Boston

Just in time for the spring cycle of student teachers, the UMass- Boston Public Schools partnership is offering a seminar to cooperating teachers in its three partner schools. The late afternoon sessions are instructed by Mari Koerner, and are intended for new and "veteran" cooperating teachers. In an informal setting in the beautiful Condon School library, the group is exploring a range of topics including first introductions to the classroom, acquainting student teachers with the culture and climate of the school, and strategies for providing growth-producing feedback. The seminar is designed to support the dedicated practitioners who have a significant role in shaping the University's teacher candidates to become successful teachers. The seminar will run through early May and concludes with a joint session with cooperating and student teachers.

In late February the Center for Leadership Development, the professional development center for Boston Public Schools, will conduct its third annual training for Boston's substitute teachers. UMass Boston's Title II grant will again underwrite the workshops designed to better prepare substitute teachers, many of whom spend a significant amount of time in Boston's classrooms. Approximately thirty of Boston's substitutes will spend some twelve hours over several weeks in such training workshops as behavior management, building teacher and student classroom relationships, and effective teaching strategies. Participants are also given tools to prepare for full time teaching positions. Past evaluations from per diem and long-term substitutes indicate that they felt they were better prepared to face the challenges of being an effective substitute teacher.

BOSTON COLLEGE - BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

"Social Context" Course is Presented at 8th Annual Holmes Partnership Conference

By Afra Hersi and Maria Sanchez, Graduate Students, Boston College

The Holmes Partnership 8th Annual conference was held this year in sunny San Diego, California. Professor Dennis Shirley, doctoral students Maria Teresa Sanchez and Afra Ahmed Hersi of Boston College, Elizabeth MacDonald, 4th grade teacher at the Garfield Elementary School, and Patrick Tutwiler, history teacher at Brighton High School, shared their experience co-teaching a graduate level field-based course on the "Social Context of Education". The instructors met on a biweekly basis to plan the course in the summer of 2003 to develop the course as a research project with both qualitative and quantitative components. We are currently in the midst of data analysis.

The purpose of the course was to advance teacher candidates' knowledge about effective strategies for working with parents and communities and to develop more effective forms of parent engagement at Brighton High. Built upon four years of collaborative partnering between Boston College and Brighton High, the class gave teacher candidates the opportunity to interact with classroom teachers, parents, and students and provided them with a variety of activities that deliberately linked the home, school, and community. Thus, these teacher candidates got hands on experience like meeting with a panel of parents at the Commonwealth Housing Tenant Association, and interviewing high school students to learn about their lives in school and outside of school.

In dialogue with colleagues from other school-university partnerships during the Holmes conference, the BC-BPS partnership team discussed the challenges and rewards of field-based courses and reflected on ways to continue our efforts to improve the clinical and community based nature of teacher education. The conference was a timely reminder of the national interest in urban teacher education and collaboration between the faculty of schools of education and arts and sciences and teachers in public schools.

BOSTON COLLEGE – BPS PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Fourth Graders at Garfield ES Raising Terrapins for Release to Wild

By Anica Miller-Rushing, Student Teacher, Garfield ES & Grad. Asst. for the Urban Ecology Initiative



Starting in October a fourth grade class at Garfield Elementary School, a member of the Boston College/ Boston Public Schools Partnership, became crazy about terrapins. What are terrapins you wonder? Diamondback Terrapins are a small brackish water turtle that live in salt marshes and coastal estuaries from Massachusetts south to the Gulf Coast and are protected as threatened under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. Fourth grade students are participating in a larger headstarting conservation project in which students are raising hatchling turtles over the winter and releasing them back into the wild the following summer in an attempt to increase survival. Garfield students currently are caring for four young turtles. These students not only provide daily care for their turtles but they engage in weekly lessons and develop and conduct their own research utilizing scientific observation techniques. The turtles have a temporary safe place to develop and the students have adopted exciting and stimulating creatures that have sparked numerous creative interests in the students, this is definitely a win-win situation!

This project is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Peter Auger and Dr. Eric Strauss, members of the Biology Department at Boston College, Boston College students, Anica Miller Rushing, and Meredith Houle.

UMASS AMHERST – SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

National History Day Celebrated at Chestnut Accelerated Middle School

By Kathy Gagne, Teacher, Chestnut Accelerated Middle School

Over 120 students participated in National History Day at Chestnut Accelerated Middle School in January. Students were required to do extensive research in an area of choice and respond to the theme of "Exploration, Encounter, Exchange" using either a written, visual, or dramatic format. Students were directed to include as many primary resources as they could in order to be as historically accurate as possible. Panels of judges examined each project. Then individuals or teams of students answered questions relating to their topics. Several projects were selected for the regional competition in late February. Among them are "Kate Danaher: Encountering Chimpanzees", a ten minute documentary investigating the impact of human-chimp relations; "Rabbit Proof Fence", an exhibition examining the "lost generation" of Aborigine children in Australia; and an historical paper entitled "Effects of English & Indian Interactions on the Development of Colonial Springfield, MA Culminating in King Philip's War (1675-1676)." 180 Days Clinical Teachers Jonathan Mello and Doug Dale served as consultants to the seventh and eighth graders who participated. Boston College doctoral student and 180 Days graduate Amy Ryan, a former state National History Day winner, judged the exhibits.