
MASS COALITION COURIER

Working Together to Produce Quality Teachers for Our Urban Schools'

Volume 1, Issue 3

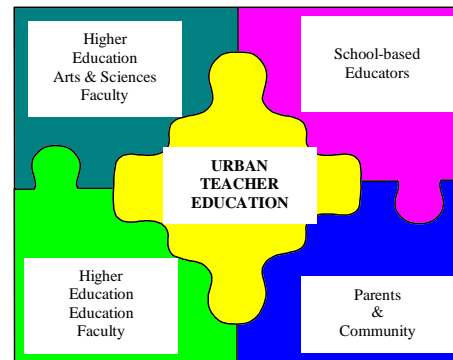
December 2000

Coalition Connections

The German Gerena Magnet School is situated between two freeways in Springfield, Massachusetts. The University of Massachusetts at Amherst is approximately 26 miles away. Despite these challenges, this new partnership moves forward with speed and a great sense of purpose. Major initiatives of the partnership are increasing teacher's cultural literacy, increasing student literacy and increasing parent engagement.

An important product of this partnership is a course taught at Gerena by Lenore Carlisle of UMass Amherst. The course, "Children and their Literacies", is available to both student teachers and school faculty. It's focus is on MCAS and ITBS analysis, literacy portfolios and multiple assessment. Additionally, the partnership was just awarded a Goals 2000 Grant. A portion of the grant funds will be used to enable classroom teachers to meet and dialogue with each other as well as observe each other's teaching practices.

One goal of the partnership's activities with parents is to shift the school culture from minimal parent involvement to maximum parent engagement. Almost two hundred parents attended the school's open house, and from surveys distributed to them "Let's Eat, Let's Talk" was developed. The program consists of three dialogues focusing on a different age cohort and parent concern. For example, K-2 focuses on literacy, grades 3-4 on MCAS and grades 5-6 on the transition to middle school. Furthermore, Gerena now has a weekly parent newsletter which includes a column titled "Ask Your Student About..." The column shares each teacher's lessons for the week. Kudos to the Gerena-UMass Amherst partnership. Keep up the inspiring work.



AACTE and AERA PROPOSALS ACCEPTED

Late last spring the Massachusetts Coalition for Teacher Quality and Student Achievement submitted proposals for presentation at both the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2001 annual conferences. To our delight, both proposals were accepted by these organizations. These proposals center on Objective 3 of the Coalition, to organize broad-based Communities of Inquiry and Practice (CIP).

The focus on CIPs highlights the importance of expanding collaborative efforts and resources available in support of beginning teachers. The traditional clinical triad of student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor is not sufficient to transform problematic issues into opportunities, particularly in urban school districts. Going beyond the triad model, CIPs add arts and science faculty as well as parents and community organizations to the equation in order to expand the resources and promote the objectives of beginning teachers. The proposal also acknowledges the collective responsibility for making CIPs functioning entities that will benefit all beginning teachers. CIPs will provide support and be a channel for change in the development of teacher training only if community stakeholders, parents, teachers, and all other components of CIP's work in a collaborative effort to further these objectives.

A Coalition team representative of all seven partnerships will present their work on developing CIPs in symposiums at AACTE and AERA. The Abt evaluation team will join the Coalition team at AERA to share some of its perspective on the role of evaluation in the collaborative partnerships that form the Coalition.

By Pam Herrup, Coalition Manager

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The 6 Objectives of the Massachusetts Coalition

Objective 1 – To increase the participation of arts & sciences faculty in teacher education

- Recruit into Coalition partnerships
- Redesign Curriculum

Objective 2 – To expand the school- and community-based nature of teacher education so that future teachers are able to work effectively in urban schools

- Higher education faculty work in the schools
- Parent/Community liaisons participate in the instruction of teacher education classes

Objective 3 – To organize broad-based Communities of Inquiry and Practice to inform our enhancement of teacher education

- Joint parent-school-community forums for discussion
- Coalition faculty conduct inquiry on their own teaching and participate in university-based “rounds.”

Objective 4 – To improve instruction in literacy across the content areas both in teacher education and in partnering public schools

- Arts and Sciences faculty concretely address literacy development needs in their university courses
- Partnership Leadership Committees and Instructional and mentoring teams redesign courses and clinical experiences with literacy development as a unifying theme

Objective 5 – To recruit, train and retain cohorts of ethnically diverse beginning teachers

- Recruit students of color for master’s programs from historically black colleges
- Place teacher candidates in urban schools

Objective 6 – To promote the Coalition’s capacity to inform public policy on issues of teacher quality

- Publication of working papers on teacher quality and student achievement
- First biennial statewide conference showcasing

Our Work on...

Building Capacity

Education Trust 2000 Annual Conference

Darlene Martin attended the Education Trust 2000 Annual Conference on November 2-4, in Washington D.C. The Education Trust consists of staff members dedicated to serving K-16 students in an effort to improve the education of all students, particularly those left behind in the efforts to improve education—students of color and those residing in low-income areas. Darlene was in attendance at the sessions focusing on community engagement, student literacy achievement, and professional development for equity, the latter of which was sponsored by the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative. She also met with Department of Education Title II Program Officer, Kathy Price. Presenting at the conference was June Kuzmeskus, Director of UMass Boston’s Teach Next Year.

Title II Project Director’s Meeting

Dennis Shirley, Pamela Herrup, and Darlene Martin attended the director’s meeting for Title II funded projects September 21-23, in Chicago, IL. They participated in all three categories of Title II Teacher Quality Grants: State, Partnership, and Teacher Recruitment. Title II Director Ed Crowe noted that grantees have been awarded extra money for site visits. We are contacting other awardees in New England to share our activities and perhaps gain valuable resources and support. Although the Massachusetts Coalition is funded by a partnership grant, many of our efforts are focused on teacher recruitment and policy.

Professional Development School Network

Pamela Herrup and Darlene Martin were in attendance at the PDS Network Steering Committee meeting. The network is facilitated by Coalition members Karen O’Connor and Najwa Abul-Taw’wab. The Network is currently working on submitting a grant proposal to the NEA to study best practices and developing a position paper advocating K-16 PDS. Also in attendance were Lee Teitel of the UMass Boston, Bob Maloy of UMass Amherst and Rachel Curtis of Boston Public School’s Center for Leadership Development.

To see the Education Trust materials or other conference and meeting notes, please call Darlene at (617) 552-4237.

VOICES of the Coalition

“Lively Workshops with Ernesto Cortes, Jr.”

By Lauren Seigel
Lesley/Dever Partnership

On November 2, Title II coalition members attended a morning of workshops with Ernesto Cortes, Jr., a community organizer and national leader of the Industrial Areas Foundation. The morning focused on community organizing for school reform, with a special emphasis in one session about the special challenges to organizing presented by the current high-stakes testing environment.

In the first session, Cortes focused on the differences between parental involvement and parental engagement. When parents are leaders, trained to organize themselves and affect the policies of the school, results are more real and long lasting, he argued, and offered examples from his own work with the Alliance Schools in Texas. After Cortes spoke, a panel of respondents offered their perspectives, and then the entire group continued the discussion. Respondents for the first session were Michelle Brooks, Executive Director of the Boston Parents Organizing Network (BPON), Maria Brisk, Professor of Bilingual Education at Boston College, and Catalina Montes, Principal of the Thomas Gardner Elementary School. The ensuing discussion raised many questions and issues, including the changing roles of schools and the need for legal clinics, voter registration, political empowerment and long-term planning.

After a brief break (which many participants used to continue conversations and meet members of other groups), the second workshop began with a discussion of “Challenges of the High Stakes Testing Environment.” Along with Mr. Cortes, Walter Haney of Boston College spoke about his work researching and analyzing “The Myth of the Texas Miracle” (for more on this topic, see Dr. Haney’s book of the same title). Other presenters in this session included Naajwa Abdul Ta-wa’ab of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, and Lenore Carlisle from UMASS Amherst. Topics in this session ranged from books such as The Manufactured Crisis and Teaching the New Basic Skills to providing an appropriate “place at the table” for parents in discussions of school reform.

One of the most powerful aspects of the workshop was the strong presence of the BPON and GBIO (Greater Boston Interfaith Organization). Their involvement brought home the reality that groups other than those immediately involved in schools can and must be strong and effective community stakeholders. Their energy and goodwill was abundant and represents an important resource for Title II members. We hope to look toward forging strong and regular connections with both groups.

Spotlight on ... Coalition Conference

“Challenges and Strategies in an Era of High Stakes Testing”

December 6, 2000
Heights Room, New Dining Hall
Boston College

AGENDA

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| 8:30 | Registration and Continental Breakfast |
| 9:00 | Greetings and Introduction |
| 9:15 | <i>Challenges of Closing the Achievement Gap for Urban Students</i>

<i>Moderator: Bailey Jackson, Dean of the School of Education, UMass Amherst</i>
Panel Discussion with Felix Arroyo, Efraim Martinez, Leah Ingraham, and Robert Schwartz. |
| 10:00 | Break |
| 10:15 | <i>Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement</i>

<i>Moderator: Meiko Kamii, Director, School and Community Partnerships, Wheelock College</i>
Panel Discussion with Peter Murrell, Rachel Curtis, Donna Lashus, and Donna Rodrigues. |
| 11:00 | Roundtable Discussions On Panel Presentations |
| 12:00 | Reconvene for Next Steps |
| 12:30 | Lunch |
| 1:00 | Stewardship Group Meetings |
| 2:00 | Adjourn |

Calendar of *Events*

Coalition-Wide Conferences:

December 6 – Boston College
February 8 – Boston College
June 28-29 - Summer Institute

Steering Committee Meetings:

January 8 – Clark University
February 20 – Clark University
March 19 – Boston TBA
April 2 – Clark University
May 7 – Clark University

Coalition Conference Presentations:

AACTE- American Association of
Colleges of Teacher Education
March 1-4 -Dallas, Texas
AERA- American Educational Research
Association
April 10-14 -Seattle, Washington

Next Month in the Courier:

The Coalition on High Stakes Testing

- Student Editorial: MCAS
- Report: December 6 Conference

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