
MASS COALITION COURIER

Working Together to Produce Quality Teachers for Our Urban Schools'

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Coalition Connections

Clark University and the Goddard School of Science and Technology

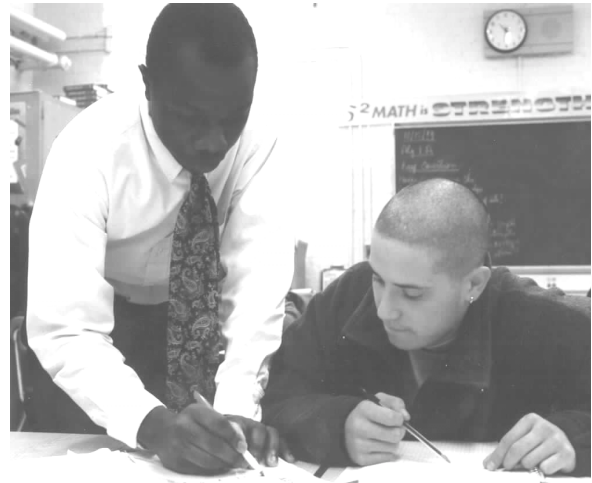
by Rebecca Abrahamson, Dina Gabianelli, Marion Guera, and Dr. Joan Merrill of the Goddard School

As a learning community, we are grappling with the dilemma of instituting best practices in the development of early literacy skills. Courses provide us with common language and examples of current practices relevant to theory and the complexity of our school population. First, we implemented a literacy leadership team comprised of Clark faculty and Goddard teachers from each grade level. The classroom became our laboratory for literacy research and experimentation. At bi-weekly meetings, team members share readings, theories and individual practice.

Fourth grade teacher Dina Gabianelli felt particularly frustrated by her children's difficulties with writing, reflected: How can I get them to become better writers and to enjoy writing? Her new practice was born out of this questioning.

Dina started out slowly by asking the children to "free-write" in their journals for 15 minutes a day. "Free-writing", as termed by Ralph Fletcher, gave the children the opportunity to write using stream of consciousness. Dina just wanted them to get their ideas down on paper

See **Goddard**, Page 3



Field Notes...

Last month I visited UMass Boston where arts and sciences faculty, education faculty and Boston teachers and administrators were meeting to discuss the new teacher licensing regulations. The meeting was organized by UMass Boston's teacher education leaders as a means to ensuring that teacher candidates will be fully prepared to work in Boston at the conclusion of their preparation program. The discussion was quite passionate as questions were asked: What are students held accountable for? What will new teachers be held accountable for? What do we want teacher candidates to leave the program with and what would it take for them to get these things?

Curriculum-based committees formed to attempt answers. Though the discussions were necessarily difficult since public schools and higher education institutions don't always have the same objectives it felt really good working on a team where dedicated folks talked about what things needed to be done, what things could be done right now, what resources were needed, and who were other folks to talk to. The social studies committee decided to develop a course uniting a pedagogy of active learning with history content for greater understanding of subject matter. First we (I am a social studies teacher) are collecting information on best social studies practices and the current history course offerings at UMass Boston. In April we meet again to develop the course. I can't wait!

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Picture above right:
Dorchester High School

Our Work on...

Steering the Coalition

In between conferences, stewardship group meetings and partnership activities, the Coalition steering committee meets to guide the Coalition. The committee puts ideas into action by recognizing member concerns when planning conference days. They also manage the organizational details of the Title II grant and represent the Coalition at conferences such as the Association of Colleges of Teacher Education and American Education Research Association. Up to four members of each partnership may sit on the committee. Usually, this includes the partnership's director (s), intern or mentor coordinator, school of education faculty member or community liaison. Other representatives on the committee are from local public school administrations or community groups that work with the Coalition such as the Institute for Responsive Education. Current items on the steering committee's agenda include:

Polishing the May Conference

Steve Constantino, a high school principal in Manassas, Virginia, will be the keynote speaker. He is the founder of Family Friendly Schools (see details on page 3).

Developing a Steering Committee Retreat

Moving into the second half of Year 2 seemed to be the perfect time to reflect on the work already completed by the Coalition and map out what remains to be done. You can keep track of our progress by reading the objective-focused issues of the *Courier*. April will feature Objective 2 on expanding the school- and community-based nature of teacher education.

Planning a Formal Evaluation

Professional evaluation by a firm not associated with the Coalition is a requirement of our federal grant. After conducting a search of several firms the Coalition hired Abt Associates to do a formal evaluation of our progress and the impact we expect this grant-funded work to have on schools and student achievement. Abt is a well-known evaluation firm located in Cambridge. They may soon be in your school to ask you how partnership and Coalition work have affected your practice.

Conducting a DOE Annual Performance Report

We are also required by the federal government to document our progress and use of funds. Each partnership collected data from the first year of the grant including the number of their graduates who teach in urban schools. Also, we documented what systemic changes are taking place due to Coalition work. For example, the increase in the number of community members who sit on the committee and directly contribute to our discussion of teacher preparation. This data will guide us as we continue to move through year two.

VOICES of the Coalition

"How Did We Get Here?"

by Dennis Shirley, Coalition Director

The Coalition began as a smaller group of partnerships. In the late 1990s Clark University, Lesley College, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst were members of the Massachusetts Consortium for Initial Teacher Professional Development. This Consortium was supported by federal Eisenhower funds channelled through the Massachusetts Department of Education. These three higher education institutions began implementing performance-based assessment in their partnerships as part of their activities. The Consortium impressed many advocates of school reform by making school and university partnerships a cornerstone of innovative teacher education programs in the Commonwealth.

The availability of Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants was announced by the Office of Postsecondary Education of the United States Department of Education in January 1999. Some local partnerships between schools, colleges, and universities used that opportunity to apply for funding, while other partnerships continued to promote similar activities under Eisenhower grants. Those who had a hand in each kind of partnership convened at Northeastern University in March 1999 to talk about merging the projects under the Title II banner. A hardworking and dedicated team of writers spent much of the summer of 1999 crafting a proposal. The grant was approved in September and the Massachusetts Coalition received \$7 million of funding for five years of creative and challenging work!

Today, the Coalition grows in much the same way. We come across people whose work is similar to ours and we invite them to participate as speakers at our conferences. You probably know someone in who should be a member of the Coalition. Why not ask them to:



*Come join
the
conversation*

Why not tell them how they can get information:

Read more about us

Talk to Darlene

Write to the *Courier*

www.bc.edu/masscoalition

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The class shared and responded to each other's writing on a daily basis, "pointing" to aspects of the writing that they liked the best and suggesting ways to improve weak areas.

After a period of time, Dina asked the students to stay on one topic during "free-writing" in order to develop their ideas. Students used thesauruses to include what they called "wonderful words." In "morning message", she taught meaningful grammar lessons, word studies and vocabulary in context.

In conjunction with these practices she began immersing students in rich literature. Two books, Sarah Plain and Tall by Patricia MacLachan and Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse provided phenomenal examples of powerful writing. In-depth discussions centered on what authors do...what makes a great book, the use of "leads" or "cliff hangers", what kinds of words they use to convey thoughts, feelings and images and the impact these techniques have on their readers.

Positive changes in children's reading and writing and their desire to write became evident. Children made connections between different works of literature, debated the power of each, and adapted the author's styles into their own writing. For example, in an essay on "Your Favorite Season" a struggling student wrote, "I like winter because when I walk outside the soft, white moist snow falls on my face and melts gently on my soft skin." Student responses: "That sounds like poetry." "That reminds me of Sarah, Plain and Tall when the author wrote about winter." The writer said simply, "Yeah, I loved that part in the story and I wanted to write like that." She and her classmates are finding their voices as writers.



Did you ever want to tell everyone all the good things going on at your school?

Tell the Coalition, we take information by phone at (617)

552-4237, email martacz@bc.edu or, at the address on the back of this page. We have over 250 members who read the *Courier* each month.

They want to hear from you!

Spotlight on ...

“Parent and Community Engagement in Schools and Teacher Education”

May 12, 2001

10:00am – 3:00pm

Gasson Hall 100
Boston College

AGENDA

- 10:00 am** Registration and Continental Breakfast
- 10:30-11:15 am** **Keynote Speaker:** Steve Constantino
Principal, Stonewall Jackson High School
in Manassas, Virginia
- 11:15 – 12:15** **Panel Presentation:** Making the
Connection between schools, families and
communities. Moderator: Dr. Karen L.
Mapp. Panel will consist of teachers,
principals, and parents talking about their
role in creating and sustaining the
partnership.
- 12:15 –1:00 pm** **Working Lunch**
Partnership teams will discuss what
teacher preparation programs are doing to
address partnerships and identify action
steps they will take in this area
- 1:10 – 2:00 pm** **Breakout Groups**
Role-alike groups will discuss initiating,
sustaining and supporting partnerships
- 2:00 pm** **Wrap up**
- 3:00 pm** **Adjourn**

Continental Breakfast and Lunch Served

For more about our presenter and family and community involvement: www.familyfriendlyschools.org

Calendar of *Events*

Coalition-Wide Conferences

May 12 – “Engaging Parents and Community in Schools and Teacher Education”
Boston College

June 28-29 - Summer Institute, Sturbridge

Steering Committee Meetings

March 19 – Young Achievers School, Boston

April 2 – Clark University

May 7 – Sturbridge Retreat

Coalition Conference Presentations

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

Partnership Events

March 20 –Urban Families Conference,
UMass Boston

March 26 –Measuring Success in Science Education, Clark University

March 31 –Spanish Children’s Literature,
Boston College



Know someone who’s not in the know?
Share your *Courier*
Bring a friend to the May 12 conference.
Get everyone on our mailing list!
**Call me, Darlene, the Editor, at
(617) 552-4237**

Next month in the *Courier*

Focus on Objective 2 –

Expand the school and the community-based nature of teacher education.

What are the partnerships doing?