

---

---

# MASS COALITION COURIER

---

---

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

Volume 2, Issue 2

Winter 2002

---

---



## **Word from the Director**

“Pita Fajitas” and the Mass Coalition

I once read about some entrepreneurs who came up with the idea of the “pita fajita.” It works like this: take your traditional Tex-Mex fajita with all the fixings, and instead of throwing it into a tortilla, place it in a pita pocket. Not only does this reduce the likelihood of spilling guacamole salsa all over yourself, but it also allows you to try out a tasty new variation on an old favorite.

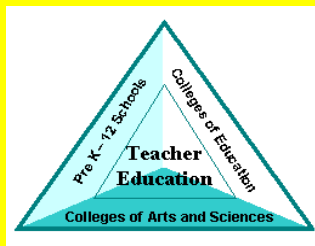
Sound good? Well, just switch the venue from culinary creativity to school reform, and you get a glimpse of what the Mass Coalition is all about. Our Coalition is about continually reinventing how we do school reform, by bringing the whole range of community stakeholders together to rethink how we prepare, recruit, and retain high quality teachers in our urban schools. In the process, classroom teachers become collaborating instructors with college faculty, college faculty teach in urban schools, and grass-roots community groups become policy makers. If you like pita fajitas, you’ll love the Mass Coalition!

Dennis Shirley

## **INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

*Conference Report*  
*Summary of Keynote Addresses*  
*Pictures*

## **TEACHER EDUCATION: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT?**



## **Field Notes...**

Kudos to Parents’ P.L.A.C.E. (Parents Learning About Children’s Education) who pulled together a group of seven sponsors to host Families and Schools Working Together for Kids II, the second of their community conferences. In addition to the Coalition, sponsors included the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, EdLaw Project, Youth Advocacy Project, Boston Parents Organizing Network, and the Dudley Neighborhood Based Team.

The conference, an attempt to respond to parent questions on MCAS and student achievement, brought parents and children from around Massachusetts including Boston, Medford and Worcester to the Boston Children’s Museum. While the children toured the museum exhibits and received free books, a panel answered parents’ questions on the legal issues presented by the high stakes nature of the test, addressed special education and bilingual testing policy, and listened to parents’ doubts about the MCAS though the doubts were mixed with high hopes for bringing attention to the need for better quality in urban schools.

I listened to the concerns of the parents, which were translated simultaneously in Spanish and Portuguese, and I thought about how little we in higher education and in the schools really know about the differences in communities and the desires of parents for the children. As parents go about the business of gathering resources for their children to succeed some harbor fears of prejudice against their children just learning to speak English and others are angry at their children being thrown another hurdle to gain entry to mainstream society. One parent spoke eloquently about the need to encourage children to overcome any obstacles thrown at them and to succeed despite the popular myths as to how little poor children and children of color can accomplish.

Thanks to the parents, children, and sponsoring staff who came out early Saturday morning for this inspiring event. *Darlene*

## **NEW COALITION GROUP**

A school-based constituency group has formed to give voice to the concerns and interests of the Coalition’s school-based stakeholders. Call Nicole in the Coalition office for information and meeting times. (617) 552-4237

## Voices of the Coalition: *Teacher Education: Whose Responsibility Is It?*

### CONFERENCE REPORT

On Friday, October 26, 2001, over 200 educators from Massachusetts and surrounding states met to discuss the changing face of teacher education. As states, districts, parents and communities ask for more accountability from the schools we probe the question of whose responsibility is it to ensure teachers have both the content and pedagogical knowledge that they need to be effective in schools?

The day-long event, divided into three parts, attempted to answer this question. Keynote speakers Sally Frost Mason and Kati Haycock presented data and personal experience highlighting the urgency of the conference question, in smaller group presentations they provided more in-depth insight on some of the successes and challenges related to the question, and afternoon



A small group discussion with participants from around the state.

discussion sessions focused on working to create and sustain the K-16 partnerships promoted by the speakers. These sessions included the Westfield, Watertown and Worcester professional development school partnerships, urban teacher training at Northeastern and Lesley Universities, Mt. Wachusett Community College on their role in teacher training, and arts and sciences faculty working on-site with teacher candidates at Wheelock and Becker Colleges.

In addition, the days' events included remarks by State Representative Peter J. Larkin who heads the House Subcommittee on Education and Humanities and University of Massachusetts President William Bulger. In general, the conference was viewed positively. Participant evaluations noted that the sessions were helpful but more time was needed to network with those attending from varied institutions doing similar work. Many participants requested follow-up meetings that would keep the discussion flowing in the months ahead as colleges and universities struggle with the difficult task of redefining teacher education. To assist in this task the Coalition with the Professional Development School Network will publish the conference proceedings on our website so that we might review the discussion as well as include others as we forge ahead.

(For more conference evaluation data see page 4)

### KEYNOTE SUMMARIES

Dr. Sally Frost Mason, Provost of Purdue University, whose article, "Do Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences Need Schools of Teacher Education", sparked interest in developing the conference, centered her keynote presentation on six points:

1. By 2007, more than 53 million students will be enrolled in grades K-12 nationwide. It has been predicted that we will need to hire 2.2 million teachers between now and 2020, and some states, like Texas, already face severe shortages in trained and licensed teachers.
2. Starting salaries for teachers, although better than a decade ago, still do not make teaching as attractive profession.
3. Strong movements toward home schooling, charter schools, and more and more privatization of education speak to the continued growing dissatisfaction with public schools and in particular with public school teachers and/or curriculum.
4. Significant numbers of retirements and an inability to train the necessary workforce, coupled also with problems retaining newly trained teachers, are creating enormous problems in the profession.
5. Alternative certification programs, proposed as viable solutions to the problem of teacher shortages, are in place nationwide.
6. Whose responsibility is it to train teachers?

While many of these points have been deliberated in the public arena it is the last which, in its infancy, has the potential to facilitate the preparation of quality teachers just as it has the potential to divide campus' colleges of arts and sciences and education.

Sally Frost Mason presents her favorite question, "Whose responsibility is it to train teachers?"



The notion that both schools should work together is based on overturning the assumption that students smart enough to earn an advanced degree they will enter the classroom and be "magically transformed into excellent teachers." Often, this does not happen because universities hire new Ph.D.'s who have outstanding research skills but little classroom experience. Notes Dr. Mason, these "teachers" may receive no professional development and have to model themselves after those they observed whether or not the models have been good.

(Continued on page 3)

Dr. Mason's main objective is to forge the partnerships between education, arts and sciences, and K-12 schools that will create change. How to accomplish this? Dr. Mason believes, "Schools of education need to be less defensive and more aggressive about being the lead



partners in teacher training. Arts and Sciences faculties need to dispel

Kati Haycock answers questions on education data.

"the mythologies about what goes on in schools of education, the perception of the lack of rigor that accompanies programs in schools of education, the notion that if you can't do anything else you can always teach all need to be dispelled, and posthaste." K-12 must assist in defining and understanding the challenges. We are all stakeholders, says Dr. Mason, teacher education is everyone's responsibility.

Katie Haycock is the director of The Education Trust, a non-profit education organization which collects and analyzes state and national data on education achievement and opportunity for all of America's children. The Trust's work is used to provide policymakers, advocates and educators with the concrete information needed to shape effective policy and practice, especially for students who have been ill-served.

Ms. Haycock's message is simple: We need to set aside all the old bargains, the old politeness, and do what it takes to make needed changes before it's too late for the children and for public education. Why? The achievement gap between low-income and students of color from that of other youth was cut almost in half during the 1970's and 1980's. Since the late 1980's these gaps have remained stable or widened.

Among the stories told by the data:

- By 1996, the math skills of our fourth and eighth graders were nearly a year ahead of their peers in 1990.
- Within this overall improvement in math, African American and Latino children also made significant gains.
- Our eighth grades were making steady progress in reading.

On the other hand:

- By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, African American, Latino and poor students of all races are already about two years behind other students.
- By the time they reach grade 8 they are about three years behind.
- If they reach grade 12 minority students are about four years behind other young people. 17-year-old African American and Latino students have skills in mathematics and science similar to those of 13-year-old Whites.

(Continued next column)

Six lessons for school districts: we need clear goals – there is a role for standards, assessments and accountability systems must provide honest information and signal needed improvements, all students must have a challenging curriculum aligned with standards, every child deserves good teaching, provide extra time and instruction for those who need it, it's time to ante up. For access to this data, or more on The Education Trust see their website at [www.edtrust.org](http://www.edtrust.org).

### DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHT

Education consultant Dr. Rob Baird highlighted his extensive work in Long Beach, California. The focus of the work was building relationships among K-16 institutions to strengthen student achievement. The program began with 10 faculty members in the areas of biology, geology and math who addressed standards, assessment and curricula. In order to keep teachers informed of ways to strengthen their content knowledge The National Faculty (TNF) was created.

TNF created a five phase framework for the design of programs of study for results-based professional development. IN phase one the design team focuses on student performance and classroom practice using student performance reviews and comparisons to school district, state and national standards as well as other factors affecting student achievement such as curriculum alignment, teachers' content knowledge and assessment practices, teachers' collaborative planning and school and district supports. Phase two is comprised of setting clear expectation for student improvement based on identified student and teacher needs. In phase three effective design and implementation strategies are used during a one-year program of study to achieve the stated expectations. Phase four consists of using on-going assessment including surveys of teacher attitudes and reactions, student progress through use of portfolios and disaggregated data and teacher demonstration of deeper subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge through means such as classroom video, action research, self-evaluation and portfolios. Finally, in phase five, the team uses internal and external facilitators to develop leadership and collective involvement with the goals of aligning resources and institutionalizing the professional development process.



Rob Baird highlights K-16 work.

The project's challenges included faculty with competence in academic work but lack of knowledge of classroom practice. Teachers also noted a disconnect between higher education content design and measures of student achievement. Indeed, the key outcome is student success which can be achieved through greater focus on improving student performance, greater focus on classroom, more support and direction from the local school leadership and collective action by the faculty.

(Continued page 4)

From the project emerged several changes including regular meetings of the deans, provost and higher education presidents to address improved preparation of teachers, the development of state frameworks based on local and national standards and increased content knowledge of K-12 teachers. In addition, training of faculty to facilitate professional development in K-12 environments is paramount and should include assessing teacher needs, outlining expected results developing content and strategies and evaluating the project through



forms of assessment.

KerryAnn O'Meara of UMass Amherst reports on faculty incentives.

**Conference Evaluation Data from Respondents:**

- 50% voiced approval of keynote speakers.
- 36% want additional conferences and collaboration about teacher education.
- 30% enjoyed the networking possibilities on 10/26.
- 30% mentioned the need to include more representatives from schools, community organizations and the state legislature.
- 18% wished for more concrete examples and evidentiary discussions than theoretical presentations.



**Calendar of Events**

**Steering Committee Meetings**

- January 22 – Clark University
- February 28 – Clark University
- March 12 – Clark University
- April 19 – Clark University
- May 14 – Clark University

**National Title II Meeting**

January 14-16 San Diego, California

**Partnership Events**

The Institute for Responsive Education  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Parent Leadership Exchange  
 Conference: Supporting Student Outcomes through  
 Family Involvement  
 Sat., May 4, 2002  
 Northeastern University Curry Center  
 See: [www.responsiveeducation.org](http://www.responsiveeducation.org)

**For Coalition info: [www.be.edu/masscoalition](http://www.be.edu/masscoalition)**

Boston College, Campion 109  
 Massachusetts Coalition for  
 Teacher Quality and Student Achievement  
 140 Commonwealth Avenue  
 Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

NON-PROFIT  
 ORG.  
 US POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 BOSTON, MA  
 PERMIT NO.  
 55294

Mailing Address  
 Street Number and Name  
 City, State 98765-4321