

**NNER Setting Annual Report**  
**November 1, 2004**

**Setting:** Georgia Partnership for Educational Renewal at Georgia Southern University

**Setting Contact:** Dr. Stephanie Kenney, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Teacher Education and Accreditation, [skenney@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:skenney@georgiasouthern.edu)

**Setting Tripartite Representatives:** Ms. Dianne Bath, Bulloch County Schools  
Dr. Missy Bennett, College of Education, Georgia Southern  
Dr. David Alley, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Georgia Southern

**Setting highlights on progress toward:** Promoting and conducting comprehensive research related to the Agenda for Education in Democracy – In July 2004 the Georgia Center for Educational Renewal (GCER) at Georgia Southern University began its work under the direction of Dr. Charles Reavis. The Center’s mission is to be “Committed to Closing the Gaps” in P-16 education. Several initiatives (including NNER) fall under the umbrella of the GCER, for purposes of oversight and collaboration. The GCER currently houses two major research projects focused on closing the achievement gap for all children through improved teaching and learning. Our FIPSE grant, in its first of three years of activity, supports the work of our Professional Development District (PDD). The PDD is a school district-wide collaborative of university, public schools, an alternative school, and school for adjudicated youngsters. The Partnership for Reform in Science and Mathematics (PRISM) is a statewide NSF grant collaborative among several Georgia universities. Also in its first of three years, PRISM builds on university/public school collaboration, focusing on improved Math and Science teaching and learning for all students. PRISM mini- and midi-grants provide opportunities for field based research collaboratives. Both FIPSE and PRISM grants support the activity of school/university study groups. For example, part of the early FIPSE work is focused on evaluation research into the impact of poverty on PDD students’ learning. Additionally, the GCER is supporting international and regional “parallel studies” in the areas of school curriculum, teaching, and leadership.

Influencing policy – To date we do not have a formal plan or mechanism in place to insure that we are influencing public education policy. The deans and associates deans’ office facilitate and support faculty’s attendance at hearings on state education rules and regulations and, whenever presented with the opportunity, the deans and faculty participate on state and national government education policy advisory committees. Finally, many faculty and the deans hold offices in state and national teacher education organizations that impact policy-making at state and national levels.

Collaboration with other organizations – In addition to the collaborative activities central to the FIPSE and PRISM grants, the work of “Partnering for Portal”, a grant under the “Building Networks of Responsibility to Educate America’s Youths,” is focused on building a **sustainable network** within the Portal community through collaborations with

the community's schools, government officials, churches, social services, and business leaders. Additionally, the ongoing work of our International Learning Community (ILC), a College of Education/College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences/partner schools collaborative with four universities and their partner schools in England, is focused on improved teaching and learning for all students. A trans-Atlantic, parallel study of curriculum and instruction is one example of valuable ILC collaborative activity. An example of a partnership activity initiated by Bulloch County Schools, one of our partner districts, is the Performance Learning Center. The Center is designed to provide a nontraditional learning environment for those students who are in jeopardy of dropping out or have already dropped out of the traditional high school. The course work is on-line and the program includes service learning components, supported by the university and community. Another activity initiated by our public school partners is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools grant, a partnership between Bulloch County Schools and the Boys and Girls Club, to provide after-school programming for high-risk students.

The NNER statement on equity - The PDD, "Partnering for Portal", and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools initiatives focus on equity in educational and social services. The Partnering for Portal "listening groups" and Steering Committee meetings have featured very rich discussions regarding equity in educational and social services in the Portal community vis-à-vis other larger neighboring communities within the county in which Portal is situated. It is this very issue of equity in opportunity that has fueled the development of the infant community network called "Partnering for Portal. Additionally, one piece of the early work of the PDD is focused on the understanding of their community's poverty and its impact on the learning of their students. These three grants are designed to address the Agenda theme of equity of access for learners. Finally, the direct involvement of our teacher, counselor, school psychology, and leadership candidates in these initiatives allows our faculty and public school partners to opportunity to develop educators who nurture the learning and well-being of every student.

**Reflection on gaps in these areas and the challenges facing the setting in addressing them.** Our largest gap is in the area of influencing policy. While we participate in state and national opportunities to shape policy, as described earlier, we do not have a plan to proactively influence policy. This gap will be discussed at our November Tripartite and core group meeting.

**General Reflections on work related to the four part mission.** We currently have strong initiatives addressing three parts of the mission. As our Tripartite and core group continue to meet we will reset our Agenda foci. That discussion will include, but not be limited to, the following topics: (1) our existing partner school policies and activities; (2) a plan to influence education policy; (3) a leadership/support structure for the work of our setting; and (4) a plan to encourage and support more faculty and public school involvement, in the face of decreasing budgets and decreasing numbers of faculty.

**Highlights of initiatives, changes, and updates within the setting, names and contact information for those working on initiatives.** In addition to the major initiatives described in sections 1, 3, and 4, we are beginning to work with the American

Democracy Project group on campus. We have proposed and received funding from our Campus Life Lecture Series to bring in Roger Soder for a campus and public schools to help us educate about and facilitate simultaneous renewal around “doing” (teaching and practicing) Democracy in our educational settings. This project has great potential to get our campus and public school community much better acquainted with NNER’s Agenda. Finally, Dr. Anny Morrobel-Sosa, Dean of our College of Science and Technology, is currently participating in NNER Leadership Associates Training.

<b>Major Initiatives</b>	<b>Contact Persons</b>	
Georgia Center for Educational Renewal	Dr. Charles Reavis, <a href="mailto:careavis@georgiasouthern.edu">careavis@georgiasouthern.edu</a>	
Professional Development District	Ms. Pat Parsons, <a href="mailto:pparsons@georgiaosouthern.edu">pparsons@georgiaosouthern.edu</a>	
PRISM/NSF collaborative grant	Dr. Fred Rich, <a href="mailto:frich@georgiasouthern.edu">frich@georgiasouthern.edu</a>	Dr. Jennie Rakestraw, <a href="mailto:jrakestraw@georgiasouthern.edu">jrakestraw@georgiasouthern.edu</a>
Developing Networks “Partnering for Portal”	Dr. Greg Chamblee, <a href="mailto:gchamblee@georgiasouthern.edu">gchamblee@georgiasouthern.edu</a>	