

NNER Setting Annual Report 2005-2006

Setting Name: Georgia Center for Educational Renewal at Georgia Southern University

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Highlights of Progress Toward:

Promoting and Conducting Comprehensive Research Related to the AED

Highlights

- Our College of Education *Partnership Council* is working on restructuring school/university partnerships. One goal is to facilitate action research within their learning communities.
- Our ILC, through the leadership of our Director of Field Experiences and Partnerships, continued to sponsor field research visits from our school and university partners in the UK. In this program groups of teachers, head teachers and university colleagues in International Learning Community (ILC) partner schools do extended visits in our partner schools in order to address research questions (comparative studies) related to strategies used to close the achievement gaps of all learners in the U.S. and U.K.
- Two professors (new to our NNER work) will attend the *Hawaii Think Tank on Equity in Education*, as a way of furthering and sharing their research in this area. They will then return to our setting with the goal of sharing and expanding research efforts focused on equity issues in our region.

Challenges/Gaps

- This area of our setting work has been the last and most difficult to get implemented. The recent expansion of our NNER interest base (beyond our teacher preparation faculty) to faculty in our Leadership and Curriculum, Foundations and Reading departments has enabled to tap into a group of faculty who, in addition to doing undergraduate teacher preparation work also have a primary interest in graduate education and research. They are very interested in leading this piece of our NNER work.

Influencing Local and/or National Policy

Highlights

- *Partnering for Portal*, our DN work, has been successful with influencing local government priorities and student achievement through its network membership which includes local church leaders, governmental leaders, and school and university leaders. Examples of this work include building sidewalks from the main street to the elementary school; installing and operating a computer lab for after-school-hours drill and practice/tutoring purposes in a local church; establishing a satellite medical facility in a distant Portal community to service basic medical needs of children, parents and seniors; and influencing developers to consider locations and affordability of housing projects.

Challenges/Gaps

- This project could serve as a model for other surrounding, rural Georgia communities. The biggest challenge of this project relates directly to its major goal, and that is to mature this networking work in the community to the point that the community people are assuming the major leadership role of the network, rather than the university. We believe, with the addition of our LSDS school, we will increase the potential to influence state policy.

Forwarding the NNER Statement on Equity

Highlights

- *Our Professional Development District* (FIPSE-funded work) has focused on systemic changes toward greater equity of learning opportunities for all students in the district. To facilitate this process faculty groups from elementary, middle and high schools formed learning communities and were provided training in culturally responsive teaching, poverty education, and differentiated instruction. Instructional coaches were placed in each building to assist teachers in implementation and evaluation of new teaching and learning strategies. Finally, PDD faculty redelivered the training to our teacher candidates.
- *Our League of Small Democratic Schools* work is just beginning with the formation of Eastern Region LSDS. This work is being led by a principal who recently received LTPS training.
- *Our Partnership with the International Networking for Educational Transformation (iNET)* collaborative work with our local and UK partner schools/universities is focused on planning proactively and futuristically to meet the learning needs of all students into the year 2020. This work follows closely the model of simultaneous renewal.
- *Our GCER made a promotional video seeking funding for a series on "Teaching the Minority Male"*. We will make one video in the series and present/distribute 20 copies at our session of the 2007 At-Risk Conference in March. We hope to gain interest for financial support of the series by requesting data from the recipients of the 20 copies on the effectiveness of the one video.
- *Our East Central Georgia Region PRISM (Partnership for Reform in Science and Mathematics funded by NSF)* is designed to address equity issues around science and mathematics achievement for all P-12 students with the goal of closing the achievement

gaps. Seven school districts and Georgia Southern University's College of Education and College of Science and Technology are partnering on this project to establish learning communities, mini-grants, ongoing in-service opportunities, and a wide range of other resources to support this goal.

Challenges/Gaps

- Certainly more of this work needs to occur within our other partnerships. The first two initiatives will provide a model which we plan to expand to other partnership sites. The biggest challenge we face is not faculty and administrator vision, but rather faculty resources (time and finances) for partnership work. Our Partnership Council is currently addressing the restructuring of our partnership models.

Engaging the Community to Advance Educational Renewal

Highlights

- *The College of Education is working with the College of Science and Technology, its Bulloch County Partners, ILC Partners in the UK, and iNET to enhance the work of Project Lead the Way in Bulloch County Schools. During the Fall 2006 semester a team of folks from the Bulloch Co. Schools, the College of Science and Technology and the College of Education visited St. Benedicts School, one of our ILC Partner Schools in Derby, England, to learn from their model Project Lead the Way work.*
- Our partner schools in Bulloch County have taken advantage of the *LTPS training* for their principals and lead teachers. During the past two years 3 principals and 6 teachers have received training.
- *Our NNER work has now converged with our College of Education's National Youth-At-Risk Conference to expand the criteria for High-Flying Schools to include the Moral Dimensions. We appreciate the support of Ann Foster in the expansion of this work.*
- Please see *Partnering for Portal* discussion above for another example of our work to engage the community.
- Our recently established "*One-Room School Project*", an effort being led by a member of our COE Board of Advisors, is focused on preserving the history of the one-room school educational experience in South Georgia. This project will provide opportunities for our public school partners and university faculty to design curriculum and lead students in a reenactment of teaching and learning in a one-room schoolhouse, an early institution of our democracy.

Challenges/Gaps

- The biggest challenge we have in all of our work is finding the resources (time, energy, finances) to address our vision in all of these areas.