

## **NNER Setting Annual Report 2006-2007**

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

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### **Highlights of and Gaps/Challenges in Progress Toward:**

**Findings across the setting related to the NNER equity self-study:**

(Please see self-study documents)

Highlights:

- In responding to the self-study questions we found that we have pieces of most issues addressed; however, we do not have a systematic, comprehensive plan and continuous evaluation process to guarantee that we are systematically addressing equity practices across stakeholders and issues. As outlined in the “plan” sections of our self-study, our first step is to develop a plan. Within that plan, the first step is a needs assessment (survey and focus groups) that invites all stakeholders to voice their current beliefs and activities around each equity practice.

Challenges/Gaps:

- Since we have not yet completed our needs assessment, we do not know the scope of our gaps. The largest challenge we currently have is the personnel and time to conduct this work.

**Engaging the community to advance educational renewal:**

Highlights:

- Partnering for Portal, our Developing Networks initiative, continued to meet periodically and the work that is an outgrowth of Partnering for Portal continues. This project focused on developing a network to build the needed infrastructure to (a) support the learning of all students in Portal and (b) attract new families to the Portal area. A local church and Portal Elementary continue to work together to provide after-school tutoring at the church. Infrastructure work continues through

the Mayor's office. An early Partnering for Portal effort to bring affordable private housing to Portal has resulted in two housing developments in which homes are being built. A restaurant has now opened in Portal. Finally, groundwork continues for the development of a Portal area Boys and Girls Club. Finally, Portal is in line for a new high school.

- The Professional Development District work continued. This was the final funding year for the FIPSE Grant that supported the work of the PDD. The evaluation has shown positive results in student achievement with a narrowing of the achievement gap and improved pass rate on the Georgia High School Graduation Test for Screven County High School. A positive change in teachers' perceptions of students' abilities to learn, and in their own competencies to teach at-risk students. University faculty became more aware of and involved in partnerships with P-12 schools. Some of the activities related to FIPSE goals will continue, and their costs will be absorbed by individual entities.
- International Learning Community (ILC) work continued. Working with our U.K. partners, St. Benedicts, and its Head Christopher Reynolds, Dean Chance engaged one U.K./U.S. industry, JCB, to support the ILC's work of simultaneous teaching and learning renewal with U.K. and U.S. universities and the partner schools. Chris Reynolds has agreed to sponsor eight (8) of our partner high schools iNet membership.
- The College of Education's National Youth At-Risk Conference joined with NNER to broaden their High-Flying Schools awards to recognize at-risk schools who not only made significant gains on test scores but who were at the same time involved in curriculum and activities that focused on democratic practices in schools and communities. At the Youth At Risk Conference in the spring of 2008, an international conference hosted by GSU, a poster session will be held on the League of Democratic Schools to bring more awareness to this work.

Next Steps: We will continue these projects while developing a comprehensive Umbrella Plan for systematic implementation and evaluation of our Equity Practices and the Moral Dimensions. (Please see self-study documents)

Challenges/Gaps:

- As we revitalize our school/university partnerships, we will add the community focuses to that work. We now have two models to help us: Partnering for Portal and the PDD.
- The perennial challenge is resources (personnel, time, and money).

**Current local initiatives that advance the Agenda for Education in a Democracy in addition to what is described in the two areas listed above:**

Highlights:

- We began to develop our first LSDS site at Stilson Elementary School. The principal and two teachers received training. Our COE and A&S Tripartite members began meeting with Stilson faculty to look at needs, possibilities and resources.
- We continued LTPS training, with one Middle School Principal receiving training in the second cohort. We nominated 2 more principals and two teachers for the final cohort. The goal with our Bulloch County cohorts is to have a principal and an aspiring principal trained across feeder schools (elementary, middle and high). We believe this will help establish our Moral Dimensions/Democracy work in the schools.
- At our June 2007 Tripartite planning meeting we decided to divide our work and each member agreed to focus on a particular aspect of the work, such as LSDS initiatives and LTPS selection and follow-up.
- We sent two of our Tripartite members to the Summer Symposium to receive in-depth training in the NNER work.
- GSU is preparing to submit its Education Leadership Program for review and approval at the state level. The influence of the NNER work has led to development of three courses related to the agenda. At the masters degree level a course entitled “Developing the Democracy Centered School Leader” and at the specialist degree level will be “Mobilizing Communities in Democracy-centered Schools” and “Leading School Renewal”.

Next Steps:

- Add the Educational Leadership faculty and their principal cohort to our work. This will be facilitated by adding a faculty member from this program to our Partnership Council.
- Maintain involvement of LTPS principals/aspiring principals. This will be done by adding these individuals to our Partnership Council.
- Next steps for the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) and the College of Science and Technology (COST) include creating a database of activities, grants, research, and more informal connections between Arts and Sciences faculty (and their various departments) and the public schools. We also plan to survey our partner schools’ teachers and administrators to find out just what kinds of collaborative programs they would like to see in their schools. Once we have a clear sense of what is already being done in the way of partnerships (and what schools would like to see in the future), we can better assess what our new directions should be.

Challenges:

- The LSDS work was interrupted by personnel changes in June. The principal resigned and our COE Tripartite member (who was active in the LSDS work) resigned. We appointed replacements and nominated the new principal to receive LTPS training. Our COE and A&S Tripartite members will continue to work with Stilson in Fall 2007.
- The primary challenge with our LTPS work is personnel changes. Getting principal-aspiring principal teams trained and keeping them stable in a school setting is an ongoing challenge.
- The challenge for the A&S arm of the Tripartite is (and has always been) getting A&S faculty involved in the collaborative process. Work in the public schools is often not considered in promotion and tenure decisions, and money (for stipends and course releases) is rarely available. We have a few dedicated people in both the arts and sciences, but they end up having to do the lion's share of the work. In addition, schools often seem reluctant to take on collaborative projects that may (they believe) distract students and teachers from their curriculums and interfere with preparation for standardized exams.