

CENTER CONNECTIONS

An E-Letter from ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools

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INTRODUCING ACI'S CENTER FOR SUCCESS IN HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS

On Thursday, April 14, 2005, ACI will officially dedicate our new *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*, a comprehensive, integrated initiative that consolidates ACI's teacher development projects under one "virtual roof," and provides the platform for launching new and exciting projects for years to come.

ACI's new *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* will build and coordinate statewide partnerships among ACI member colleges and universities, master teachers and administrators, school districts, community colleges, businesses, and other interested parties to find the best new ideas for recruiting, preparing and retaining excellent teachers for schools serving our neediest children. The Center's collaborations will include innovative teacher preparation and in-service programs, alternative and accelerated teacher certification programs, faculty professional development efforts and other pilot programs and demonstration projects that enhance teacher quality in high-need schools. By developing, testing and disseminating best practices in teacher quality enhancement, ACI's *Center for Success in High-Needs Schools* can become a nationwide resource for new programs and policies that can improve teaching and learning in high-need schools.

There is no group of institutions better qualified to launch ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* than the member colleges of the Associated Colleges of Illinois. Our colleges are known for outstanding teacher education programs -- viewed as excellent sources for recruiting effective teachers. ACI's new *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* affords an opportunity to leverage the expertise of ACI member colleges, the experience of our community partners, and the benefits of public and private funding to accomplish goals beyond the reach of any single entity or institution.

Getting started

ACI first focused on high-need schools in 2000, when our *Task Force on Teacher Education and Certification* examined the key challenge of the teacher shortage: preparing greater numbers of effective teachers more quickly for critical shortage areas and providing them with support services that keep them in the profession longer. ACI's *Teacher Development Initiative* evolved from this discussion.

Launched in 2002 with a \$2.2 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education's (USDOE) Transition to Teaching Program, ACI's *Teacher Development Initiative* was designed to address the shortage of highly-qualified teachers by recruiting college-educated adults to new careers in teaching in high-need schools. With our first USDOE grant, ACI developed a series of *Transition to Teaching Partnerships* -- alternative certification programs delivered through collaborations among ACI, member colleges and school districts.

Concurrently, the Chicago Community Trust awarded ACI a planning grant to develop new programs to prepare, recruit and retain teachers in high-need schools. This grant set the stage for our new, comprehensive initiative: *ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools*.

An infusion of federal and philanthropic capital builds a public-private partnership

In Fiscal 2004, ACI secured four grants critical to launching our new Center:

- \$ **\$6.99 million from the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Quality Enhancement Program (TQE)** funding projects that transform teacher preparation for high-need schools (ACI's *Teacher Quality Enhancement Projects* on eight member campuses: Aurora University; Concordia University; Elmhurst College, Lake Forest College, McKendree College, North Central College, Quincy College and University of St. Francis)
- \$ **\$434,354 from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE)** to relieve the shortage of highly-qualified special education teachers through accelerated certification programs targeted to the "transition to teaching" population (ACI's *Illinois SPED Collaborative*)
- \$ **\$250,000 from the Illinois Board of Higher Education** to support new initiatives to provide aspiring teachers with hands-on experience in high-need schools (*Inner-City Practicum*) and to provide new teachers in high-need schools with ongoing support and mentoring during their first years in the classroom (*Teacher Induction Academy*)
- \$ **\$90,000 from the Chicago Community Trust** to support *Inner-City Practicum*, the *Teacher Induction Academy*, and new program to recruit minorities and men to teaching in high-need schools, *Diversity at the Blackboard*.

***ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools:
Core Concepts and Initiatives***

ACI's new Center for Success in High-Needs Schools asserts that closing the achievement gap depends, in part, on the presence of excellent teachers: talented men and women, with a commitment for teaching in hard-to-staff schools, where most students are from disadvantaged backgrounds. And while we recognize that there is no one "right way" to identify and recruit, prepare and retain excellent teachers for these schools, our effort is sustained by two fundamental beliefs:

- 1) Teachers destined for high-need schools need special skills, knowledge, beliefs and character traits, and they require continued support once they enter the profession.**
- 2) Collaborative partnerships provide a powerful context in which to innovate, explore and evaluate best practices and model programs that prepare talented teachers for success in high-need schools.**

To advance our mission, the Center will support four programmatic approaches:

- § **Alternative and Accelerated Certification Programs** – partnerships between member colleges and school districts aimed at attracting talented college-educated adults to new careers teaching in high-need schools (ACI's *Transition to Teaching Program* and *Illinois SPED Collaborative*).
- § **Recruitment, Retention and Enrichment Programs** – collaborative efforts to identify and recruit diverse talent to teaching in high-need schools, together with networking, professional development, on-line mentoring and other special programs that inspire long-term commitment to teaching (ACI's *Teacher Induction Academy*, *Inner-City Practicum* and *Diversity at the Blackboard Program*).
- § **Curriculum Transformation Initiatives** – *Teacher Quality Enhancement Projects* on eight member campuses seeking to redesign teacher education curricula for the special challenges of high-need schools.
- § **Pilot Programs and Demonstration Projects** -- projects that test the usefulness of specific approaches or techniques, awarded to ACI campuses or their partner school districts through a competitive grant-making process.

By rigorously evaluating the impact of these approaches on teaching and learning, and by sharing best practices nationwide, ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools hopes to demonstrate that collaborative efforts to recruit, prepare and retain effective teachers for high-need classrooms can help disadvantaged children bridge the achievement gap. By achieving this ambitious goal, the Associated Colleges of Illinois and our member colleges and community partners can improve the odds for thousands, maybe millions, of young people – who deserve the best chance for success.

ACI PARTNERS:

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE

Chicago Public Schools' Human Resource Office has been instrumental in planning and implementation of ACI's teacher development programs. Toni Hill, director of Routes to Teaching, has developed internship opportunities for ACI's *Transition to Teaching Partnerships*. Her staff helps interview and place *Transition to Teaching* interns, and she has facilitated a valuable link between CPS' Summer Scholars Program and ACI's *Inner City Practicum*. **Amanda Rivera**, director of Golden Teachers, has provided a connection to new teacher induction and mentoring; she invites us to attend CPS teacher orientation sessions to promote ACI's *Teacher Induction Academy*, attends the TIA sessions, and sits on our advisory committee. Both Amanda and Toni have made significant contributions to the development of ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*, and we appreciate their continued support.

**BEST PRACTICES:
PREPARING TALENTED TEACHERS
FOR HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS**

The Inaugural Education Forum of ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools
Thursday, April 14, 2005 2:30-4:00 p.m.
Union League Club of Chicago

ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools will sponsor its first education forum on Thursday, April 14, 2005 at the Union League Club of Chicago. Best Practices: Preparing Talented Teachers for High-Need Schools will open dialogue around the critical question: How do we recruit, prepare and retain the most talented men and women to teach our neediest children? Keynoted by Terry Mazany, CEO of the Chicago Community Trust, *Best Practices* will present contrasting perspectives on the particular set of skills, knowledge, beliefs and character traits required of teachers destined for high-need classrooms, as well as the induction supports required to motivate their long-term commitment to the profession. Participants will include teacher educators, arts and sciences faculty, master teachers, school districts, funders and others committed to improving teaching and learning. You can enrich this dialogue with creative new ideas for recruiting, preparing and retaining talented teachers for high-need schools. We encourage you and your colleagues to attend and to participate fully in the proceedings. To request an invitation, send email to centerconnections@acifund.org and put "invite me" in the subject line. Provide us with your name, title, institution, address and telephone number.

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools has been guided by a project implementation team of ACI professional staff and project directors from participating member colleges and universities, who have met monthly since October 2004. Now, Jan Fitzsimmons, Ph.D., and Cindy Diehl Yang have been named Center Co-Directors. Their work will be supported by Center Assistant Heather E. Anderson, Center Consultant Jerry Berberet, Ph.D., and Center Communications Officer Leslie Joan Millenson.

Long-term strategic planning and review will be provided by a Center Education Council, representative of ACI colleges and universities, local education agencies, businesses, policy-makers, and other constituents working to achieve Center goals. A plan for the composition of the Council now is under development.

OER Associates, under the direction of Sue Rasher, has been appointed as external evaluator for ACI's Center Curriculum Transformation Initiatives, Recruitment, Retention and Enrichment Programs, and Pilot Programs and Demonstration Projects. In January, Implementation Team members voted unanimously to extend a contract to OER. OER is very excited about the work of ACI's Center, and has been hard at work reviewing the documentation accumulated so far in order to deepen their understanding of our work and our plans for the immediate and extended future. In February, OER led the Implementation Team meeting to develop and align a concrete evaluation plan and procedure.

ALTERNATIVE AND ACCELERATED CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

ACI's Illinois Special Education (I-SPED) Collaborative

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for Improvement in Post-Secondary Education, ACI's Illinois SPED Collaborative seeks to increase the number of highly-qualified special education teachers available for high-need schools. Launched in Fall 2004, *I-SPED* will accomplish this goal by establishing a statewide network of collaborating institutions, which will develop, test and disseminate an accelerated model for special education certification.

Saint Xavier University is *I-SPED*'s lead institution, responsible for coordinating dissemination of their state-approved model for special education certification. Special education professor Dr. Candace Baker is Saint Xavier's *I-SPED* program coordinator. The first *I-SPED* cohort, a partnership with Chicago Public Schools and Concordia University, began the program in January 2005.

McKendree College will build on the Saint Xavier model to develop its cohort special education program, scheduled to be launched in 2005.

ACI's Transition to Teaching Partnerships

Funded by a U.S. Department of Education Transition to Teaching grant, ACI's Transition to Teaching Partnerships (TTT) were launched in 2002. This year, we expect to have more than 80 aspiring teachers enrolled as interns in cohort programs designed to attract college-educated adults to new careers in teaching in high-need schools. Chris Johnston serves as ACI's TTT program director.

McKendree College is the lead institution for *TTT* programming in East St. Louis, with Dr. Stan Burcham serving as faculty coordinator for the Math-Science cohort program in East St. Louis and Cahokia.

Concordia University is the lead institution for *TTT* programming in Chicago, with Debbie Vinci-Minogue serving as faculty coordinator of the Math-Science cohort in collaboration with Chicago Public Schools, ACI members Elmhurst College and Saint Xavier University, and the Golden Apple Foundation.

The initial Math-Science cohorts (launched in April 2004 in Chicago and East St. Louis) will complete their programs in May 2005. Recruitment is underway for new cohorts to start in April 2005. The McKendree College cohort will expand to include Language Arts.

Key faculty implementing these collaborative programs presented at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education's conference in Washington, D.C., on February 21. Presenters were Mary Selke, Ph.D., of Elmhurst College, Bev Gully, Ph.D., of St. Xavier University, George Fero, Ph.D., of McKendree College, Dominic Belmonte, director of teacher preparation at the Golden Apple Foundation, and Chris Johnston, ACI's *TTT* program director.

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Teacher Induction Academy: The next *Induction Academy* will be held Friday, March 4, 2005 at Lewis University's Oakbrook campus. First-year teachers will engage in an interactive workshop entitled "Using Differentiated Instruction with Cooperative Learning," given by Penny Finley of Elmhurst College and Gloria Harper of the Golden Apple Foundation. Second-year teachers will deepen their understanding of assessment through "Teaching and Assessment as One," facilitated by Dr. Rebecca Clemente of North Central College. Third-year teachers will present lesson plans from their classrooms and work with Kathy Berry of Strategic Learning Initiatives to enhance their ability to address the diverse needs of learners. All attendees will participate in "Table Talk" sessions with mentor-teachers and principals. They also will be invited to participate in the exciting new *Mentor Online* program.

Upcoming Teacher Induction Events:

The final Induction Academy for this school year will take place on Friday, April 22, 2005.

Discussion will focus on the best ways to meet learning objectives of students with special needs.

Induction Academy Retreat: June 23-24, 2005 at Lake Lawn Lodge in Delavan, WI. More information is coming.

Inner City Practicum: Education students from all 24 ACI member colleges and universities have been invited to apply for ACI's 2005 *Inner City Practicum*, and applications are steadily coming in. The application deadline has been extended to Friday, March 4. Summer interns will be notified of acceptance by March 11, and training will begin at the end of April at North Central College.

CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES

At the heart of ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools are eight campus-based initiatives aimed at transforming teacher education in a manner that better prepares teachers for the challenges of high-need classrooms. The eight campuses participating in these *Curriculum Transformation Initiatives* are Aurora University, Concordia University, Elmhurst College, Lake Forest College, McKendree College, North Central College, Quincy University, and University of St. Francis.

Projects under development on these campuses include: offering teacher-candidates immersion experiences at professional development schools; building interactive, distanced-learning relationships between ACI member colleges and neighboring high-need schools; and convening education and arts and sciences faculty to identify field experiences that provide a real world context for teaching math, science, English, and social sciences. Each of the eight campuses now has submitted a Year I work plan and budget, and they have begun building school, community college, and business partnerships.

PILOT PROGRAMS AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

This Center department includes projects sponsored by the Center, such as special events and research initiatives; special projects conducted by ACI member institutions or local education agencies, with funding from ACI's TQE grant; and Center communications initiatives, such as a website, an online journal and special events.

Center Projects: Five ACI member colleges have submitted preliminary proposals for Center projects and activities. A committee of three Implementation Team members has evaluated these proposals based on a standard rubric, with criteria that reference our grant objectives. Their recommendations have been forwarded to Center staff, and decisions about funding are in progress. A new round of proposals is due on April 1, 2005, and ACI members already have contacted Center staff to express their interest.

Special Events: Nearly 50 ACI member teacher-candidates and *Induction Academy* participants attended portions of the Association of Teacher Educators' Annual Meeting on February 13-14. On Sunday, February 13, attendees enjoyed a presentation by renowned classroom teacher and classroom management expert Dr. Harry Wong, author of *The First Days of School*. On Monday, February 14, attendees enjoyed a day-long pre-service teachers fair, which included a panel discussion about job searching, an expanded presentation by Dr. Wong on how to have a successful first year of teaching, a presentation by Craig Zablocki on using humor in the classroom, and a short job fair. Teacher-candidates who took advantage of this opportunity were all very impressed by Dr. Wong's wisdom and Zablocki's dynamic style, and all indicated that the presentations provided them with considerable professional development and growth.

Upcoming events

March 4: University of St. Francis will host an all-day institute on Professional Development Schools. Contact Cathy Nelson via email at cnelson@stfrancis.edu for more information.

March 11: Implementation Team Meeting at ACI from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

April 1: Special Implementation Team Meeting with Arts and Science faculty members from each member college. For more information, contact centerconnections@acifund.org.

April 14: *Best Practices Forum* and ACI's 53rd Annual Meeting, *Making the Grade: High Expectations for High-Need Schools*, at the Union League Club of Chicago, beginning at 2:30 p.m. For more information, contact centerconnections@acifund.org.

April 22: The final *Teacher Induction Academy* for the school year, focusing on the best ways to meet learning objectives of students with special needs. For more information, contact centerconnections@acifund.org.

June 23-24: *Induction Academy Retreat* Lake Lawn Lodge in Delavan, WI. More information is coming.