

# CENTER CONNECTIONS

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

*Volume 2 No 1  
January 2006*

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### *Center's online journal launched December 15, 2005*

*Success in High-Need Schools, the new online journal of ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools is now available at [www.successinhighneedschools.org](http://www.successinhighneedschools.org). Issue one features articles on a variety of ACI member programs that have received Center funding, guest columns, and testimonials from Center cohort programs. An email link distributed in mid-December publicized the inaugural issues to several thousand individuals, including Center partners, teacher educators, policymakers, practitioners and funders from around the nation. Individuals who did not receive the link can register at [www.successinhighneedschools.org](http://www.successinhighneedschools.org). Once registered, subscribers will automatically receive emailed links whenever a new issue is posted. Note: [www.successinhighneedschools.org](http://www.successinhighneedschools.org) soon will become the address of the Center's web site. The online journal will be accessible from the Center's home page.*

**Submissions are invited (email [journalforsuccess@acifund.org](mailto:journalforsuccess@acifund.org)) for the next three issues of *Success in High-Need Schools*. Note themes and deadlines for upcoming issues:**

*Alternative and Accelerated Certification Programs (Winter – February 2006)*  
Articles due by January 6, 2006

*Recruitment and Retention of Teachers for High-Need Schools*  
(Spring – May 2006)  
Articles due by March 15, 2006

*Innovative, Collaborative Projects that Make a Difference in High-Need Schools*  
(Summer – August 2006)  
Articles due by June 15, 2006

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## ***Center for Success web site on the way*** ***Center Connections will go electronic***

**The *Center's* web site will be up and running by December 30, 2005, at [www.successinhighneedschools.org](http://www.successinhighneedschools.org).** The inaugural site will introduce users to the *Center's* mission, programs and partners, and provide access to research and progress reports documenting *Center* accomplishments. While much remains to be done to enhance the site's comprehensive content, the inaugural site offers a useful overview of how e-communications will help disseminate the *Center's* work. In the coming weeks, *Center* partners will be asked to submit program descriptions and other helpful content that will complete the new site.

**Beginning in February, *Center Connections* will migrate to the *Center's* web site.** All *Center Connections* subscribers will receive a link to the site when the new issue is posted, and the site will maintain an archive of past issues. [Back to headlines](#)

## ***Center Partnership Meeting, December 16***

**Christopher Koch, assistant superintendent for Special Education at the State Board of Education (ISBE), was the featured speaker at the *Center Partnership* meeting on Friday, December 16.** Koch reviewed the 2004 ISBE Report on Special Education Performance (distributed to attendees), which shows a slight increase in the number of students in all disability categories who have received special education services since 2002.

**Koch introduced *Center* partners to ISBE's approved performance plan for the next six years.** The plan adds nine new performance indicator areas to track, including where students go after high school, e.g., further education, employment, etc. While tracking performance will be costly, he said, research shows that tracking outcomes pays off in achieving improvement goals. ISBE has made it a priority to get these data into the hands of local districts for policy-making purposes. Fuller integration of general education and special education content is a major curriculum goal. ISBE's highest content priority is reading. Significant attention also is being given to assure that student disabilities are diagnosed correctly.

**Koch invited partners to go online ([www.isbe.org](http://www.isbe.org)) to review and comment on proposed rules defining Highly Qualified Special Education Teachers.** The comment period on the proposed rules ends shortly after Christmas.

**During the Q&A following Koch's presentation, Nancy Slavin, Director of the Chicago Public Schools office on alternative and accelerated certification, urged ISBE to join with schools and colleges to design a plan to redress the shortage of special education teachers –** currently, Illinois' largest teacher shortage area. CPS has a special education teacher shortage of 250 and is placing great emphasis on efforts to improve teacher retention. Slavin also called for strengthening the paraprofessional teacher corps because of the important role they play in working with the most severely impaired students.

**During the *I-SPED Collaborative* breakout session, Slavin mentioned that the report on outcomes of alternative acceleration programs compared with other programs in special education is scheduled to be completed in March 2006.** She advocated that colleges and schools work together on a model special education programs, rather than developing many different models, and that they develop multiple endorsements that provide flexible pathways for certification of candidates from a variety of backgrounds. Slavin also endorses “hybrid programs” that combine significant technology and face-to-face instruction.

**CPS is also increasing efforts to attract elementary education teachers to special education programs.** Because these teachers already are certified, they are immediately identified as highly qualified, and the teacher supply is larger in elementary education than in other areas. However, as Jan Fitzsimmons pointed out, *Transition to Teaching (TTT)* stipends are not available to teachers who are already certified. Chris Koch suggested that the U.S. senators from Illinois be contacted to broaden this provision in *TTT* legislation, which can be a barrier to attracting teachers to critical shortage areas.

**A second breakout group met to develop ideas on the *Center's* proposal to the National Science Foundation to increase participation of women and girls in science, technology, and mathematics (STEM) subjects.** Women are underrepresented in STEM-related professions and teaching areas. A draft proposal is available from Akila Ruffin, *Center* assistant, by contacting her at [Akila.ruffin@acifund.org](mailto:Akila.ruffin@acifund.org).

**Following the breakouts, Cindy Yang demonstrated the newly-developed *Center* web-based grants administration system, which will be accessible from the *Center's* web site.** The system will both facilitate disbursement of grant funds to partners and improve expenditure tracking for audit purposes.

#### **Announcements:**

Tony Bell was introduced as the new *Center* program officer for *Diversity at the Blackboard* (DATB)

Dameka Redic of CPS invited juniors in teacher education to apply online for the six-week CPS summer Residency Teacher Internship Program ([www.teachchicago.com](http://www.teachchicago.com)). Juniors and seniors may attend an abbreviated two-week program.

Jan Fitzsimmons invited input for the September 2006 *Center Arts and Science Colloquium* (Email Jan at [jan.fitzsimmons@acifund.org](mailto:jan.fitzsimmons@acifund.org).)

## **Next Center Partnership Meeting: January 20, 2006**

11:00 am – 3:00 pm

One North Franklin – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room  
Chicago, IL

**Topic:** ISBE's Paths to Teaching

**Guest Speaker:** Marti Woelfe, ISBE

**Please RSVP by January 13, 2006**, if you plan to attend. Contact Akila Ruffin at 312-263-2391, ext. 37, or by email at [Akila.ruffin@acifund.org](mailto:Akila.ruffin@acifund.org). All ACI *Center for Success* partners are invited to attend *Center Partnership Meetings* to help us work together to improve teaching and learning in high-need schools. [Back to headlines](#)

## **Highlights from TQE Project Director's Conference**

**Jan Fitzsimmons, Center Director, and Cindy Diehl Yang, ACI's Executive Vice President and the Center's Chief Operating Officer, attended the annual TQE Project Director's Conference, in Washington, D.C., November 29 – December 2, 2005.** This conference was designed to share best practices and afford all TQE grantees the opportunity to meet with USDOE Program Officers, who monitor and facilitate grant implementation. Fitzsimmons noted that this was a great opportunity to reflect on the growth and accomplishments of ACI's *Center* and to think about the questions we must continually be asking: 1) What are the systemic changes made as a result of this project? 2) What curriculum transformations have resulted from this project? 3) Where do we want to be by the end of the grant project?

### **Some best practices and findings that were shared included:**

- 1. Georgia's Destination Teaching Project** developed a course called, "Issues and Practices for Teaching in High-Need Schools." The most effective assignments were cultural walks and home visits.
- 2. Recruiting from historically black colleges, military bases, community colleges, and churches** proved to be an effective strategy.
- 3. Minnesota created a web site clearinghouse** so that they know where all the openings are for hard-to-staff schools, and colleges provide a list of candidate names to the database. Then they match these two together in order to help streamline the recruitment and hiring process.

- 4. Using recruitment dollars as a stipend to offset income and then using other dollars as a scholarship** in order for paraprofessionals to become highly-qualified.

**Some examples of successes and insights from other grantees included:**

Development of new graduate level certificate programs focused on urban schools and classrooms

Teacher prep courses aligned with state teacher standards

Integrated courses balancing content depth and content pedagogy

School personnel and faculty-led professional development efforts

Faculty served as professors in residence, working alongside clinical practitioners

District and faculty partners rated long term advisory boards as likely to be sustained

Faculty partners also rated the expansion of PDS arrangements as likely to be sustained

Faculty were more optimistic (than district staff) about sustaining efforts to collaborate within their IHEs and maintaining district-college relationships

Sustaining funding remained a concern

Respondents indicated partnership grants were key to effecting reform

**A few examples of challenges and lessons learned from others at the conference included:**

Pre-existing relationships can greatly facilitate formal partnerships

Geographic distance may impede collaboration and participation among distant partners

“Other” partners may not sustain their involvement

Lack of time and lack of recognition are the greatest impediments to faculty participation

Districts are constrained in their participation by the economic conditions, turnover, and competing reform efforts

**Keep in mind these DOE concerns as we move into Year Two of TQE and Year One of TQE-R:**

Large amounts of unobligated funds

Excessive/infrequent requests

Project goals not met

Close monitoring of students who receive scholarship dollars—we must be able to tell their stories and notify DOE if they drop out of the program within 30 days. [Back to headlines](#)

**Recruitment and Retention Programs**

**ACI's 2006 Teacher Induction Academy Summer Retreat**

**Save the date: June 22-23, 2006**

**More than 100 teachers are expected to attend ACI's *Teacher Induction Academy Summer Retreat, June 22-23, 2006, in Bloomington, IL.*** The retreat will bring together beginning teachers from across the state for two days of workshops and speakers. The first planning session was held on December 16, 2005. Potential breakout sessions were discussed at this meeting. Some of the ideas include a session on the Administrator-Teacher relationship; *Transition to Teaching: Best Practices in Survival*; Technology: High-Tech, Low-Cost; a breakout session focusing on National Board Certification; the role that fine arts and physical education play in high-need schools; and many more.

**The next retreat planning is scheduled for January 20, 2006 (9:30 to 10:30 am), prior to the monthly *Center Partnership Meeting.*** Colleges interested in participating in the planning session and providing their input for this event should contact Lidia Han at [Lidia.han@acifund.org](mailto:Lidia.han@acifund.org). [Back to headlines](#)

### **New Principal Forum will be introduced at the February 3, 2006, *Teacher Induction Academy***

**ACI's *Center for Success* will introduce its new *Principals Forum* at the next *Teacher Induction Academy* on February 3, 2006.** The new forum will be open to principals from the Chicago metropolitan area as an opportunity to discuss effective strategies for creating and strengthening professional learning communities in schools, especially in high-need communities.

**Both principals and assistant principals are invited to attend this forum.** The new educational leadership strand is designed to build an understanding of how to support and retain beginning teachers. School leaders who attend this event will have an opportunity to interact with beginning teachers over dinner. The first-ever *Principals Forum* will take place on February 3, 2006, from 5:00 to 7:30 pm, at Lewis University's Oak Brook Campus, 2122 York Road, Oak Brook, IL 60523. Contact Lidia Han (312-253-2391, ext. 38 or [Lidia.han@acifund.org](mailto:Lidia.han@acifund.org)) for additional information or to register for this event. [Back to headlines](#)

### **Alternative and Accelerated Certification Programs**

**ACI members wishing to propose cohort programs for 2006 in special education with FIPSE grant support and cohorts in high-need areas such as mathematics, science, and bilingual education with *Transition to Teaching* support are asked to contact Jan Fitzsimmons by January 6 ([jan.fitzsimmons@acifund.org](mailto:jan.fitzsimmons@acifund.org), or 312-263-2391, ext. 34).**  
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## Innovation Projects

**To better reflect the Center's emphasis on innovative programs and practices, the Center's "Pilot and Demonstration Projects" have been renamed "Innovation Projects."** Four *Innovation Projects* were submitted in the last round of RFPs. They are currently being reviewed by an evaluation committee. Funded projects will be announced in the January issue of *Center Connections*.

**The next deadline for proposal submissions is March 15, 2006.** Proposals are invited from all ACI member colleges and partner LEAs. Grants of up to \$10,000 are available to support collaborative efforts to improve teaching and learning in high-need schools throughout the state of Illinois. To request a copy of the RFP, contact [centerforsuccess@acifund.org](mailto:centerforsuccess@acifund.org).  
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## Upcoming Events

[View Center Events Calendar.](#)