

**Progress Briefing and Case Studies:
ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools
at
5th Anniversary Breakfast
The Associated Colleges of Illinois'
Center for Success in High-Need Schools
Friday, September 25, 2009
Union League Club of Chicago**

Welcome Remarks: Michael Portland, chairman, the Associated Colleges of Illinois

Welcome, and thank you for joining the Associated Colleges of Illinois for this 5th anniversary breakfast for ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*, with special guest the Honorable Arne Duncan, United States Secretary of Education. I am Mike Portland, chairman of the Associated Colleges of Illinois, and one of 35 Business Trustees serving alongside college presidents on ACI's Board of Directors.

ACI is a group of 23 mission-driven, private colleges and universities, rooted in the liberal arts tradition, that provides underserved students with new educational opportunities. With input from community and business leaders, ACI leverages the expertise of our member colleges and universities and their longstanding ties to Illinois communities to solve some of the toughest problems across the continuum of elementary, secondary, and higher education.

ACI targets three critical challenges: 1) improving the chances of college success for first-generation, low-income, and minority students through ACI's College Success Network... 2) raising graduation and college entrance rates among at-risk high school students through ACI's College Readiness Program...and 3) enhancing teaching and learning in K-12 schools serving our nation's neediest students through ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools.

It's our commitment to the Center that set ACI on the trajectory that brings us here today. In 2001, Illinois' high-need schools were already struggling to meet state learning standards and to recruit and retain a corps of highly-qualified teachers. ACI members decided to take on this problem – and with generous support from the Chicago Community Trust, they developed an innovative plan to graduate more and better prepared teachers for high-poverty, hard-to-staff schools.

When ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* was established in 2004, this plan became a reality. Over five years, ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* has convened 17 member colleges and universities in authentic partnerships with 38 high-need Illinois school districts, and 106 high-poverty Pre-K-12 schools... engaging more than 8,500 teacher candidates, teachers, school leaders, and faculty... and touching the lives of more than 77,000 children. By 2009, ACI colleges and universities had increased the number of candidates they certify by more than 110% -- accounting for more than 27% of all teachers certified in Illinois.

Today, 55 percent of new ACI teachers go to work in high-need schools -- up from 35 percent in 2002. 100% of these teachers are highly qualified. 100% of them pass the Illinois certification exam... and more than 98% pass relevant subject matter competency tests. While other teachers stay in the profession an average of three years, many teachers from ACI institutions are still in the classroom after seven years...and these new teachers say Center programs gave them the confidence to succeed in high-need classrooms.

So we have quantity... We have quality...We have staying power. And after only five years, ACI partner schools -- equipped with more and better teachers -- are measuring real improvements in student achievement.

We have accomplished all this because ACI colleges and universities have that rare combination of social conscience and entrepreneurial spirit required to fundamentally change the way teacher preparation programs do business -- and to take on the challenge Secretary Duncan issued at his January 2009 confirmation hearing. Identifying education as the civil rights issue of our generation... the only sure path out of poverty... and the only way to achieve a more equal and just society -- Secretary Duncan warned against condemning millions of children to be less than they could be --by consigning them to schools that should be so much more. That, he said, is a blight on our country and a brick on our progress. ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* is removing that brick.

Our Illinois colleges and universities are helping to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers by providing a key ingredient for success: excellent teachers...prepared for the specific challenges of schools serving our neediest students.

Thank you again for helping us celebrate five years of progress toward educational equity.

Introduction: Jerry Fuller, executive director, the Associated Colleges of Illinois

Each of you should have a copy of the Center's Progress Briefing at your seat. This report provides tangible proof that the investments our 23 colleges and universities are making in teacher quality improvement can pay real dividends.

Jan Fitzsimmons, Director of ACI's Center for Success in High Need Schools is here to hit the highlights. Please welcome Jan Fitzsimmons.

Progress Briefing: Janis Fitzsimmons, PhD, director, ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*

Thank you, Jerry. As director of ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools, I am inspired every day by the dedication, flexibility, and inventiveness energizing our partnerships across the state.

Mike Portland said it best earlier this morning: ACI's *Center* has changed the way our teacher preparation programs do business in five fundamental ways. First: By expanding institutional

capacity. The numbers Mike Portland quoted earlier are so dramatic they bear repeating. By launching innovative programs, including alternative paths to certification, ACI colleges and universities have increased the number of candidates they certify by more than 110% -- from 1,813 in 2001 to 3,813 in 2009. Today, ACI institutions account for more than 27% of all teachers certified in Illinois.

Second: By bridging the gap between higher education and Pre-K-12 education. ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* has built authentic partnerships between 17 ACI colleges/universities, 38 high-need districts, and more than 106 high-poverty, hard-to-staff schools serving more than 77,000 Illinois students. By engaging more than 8,500 academics, practitioners, and school leaders in preparing new teachers and supporting inservice teachers... these partnerships bring teacher education directly to Pre-K-12 classrooms and take the realities of classroom practice to higher education. The result is a shared vision of what defines teacher quality -- and a shared sense of responsibility for improving student achievement.

Third: by transforming teacher preparation. Teacher preparation now includes new and restructured courses and workshops focused on high-need populations and preservice teachers benefit from early and intensive clinical experiences that prepare them for the challenges of high-need schools. Teacher educators and arts & sciences faculty at ACI partner institutions are collaborating to boost teachers' content knowledge -- especially in math and science.

These reforms are systemic and sustainable. They have wide-ranging impact across multiple departments and disciplines at ACI member colleges and universities, and they mean that now and for years to come, more teachers... better qualified teachers will dedicate themselves to Illinois' most vulnerable students. Again, great numbers stand up to repetition: 55% of new ACI teachers are now going to work in high-need schools.

Fourth: By keeping talented teachers in the classroom. The average teaching career in Illinois' lasts three years. For under-resourced schools, the cost of attrition can be overwhelming. We're working to change that. ACI's *Teacher Induction Academies*, *Summer Institutes for Teachers*, and *Mentor Online*, help new teachers connect with peers and mentors... and provide professional development that helps keep teachers in the classroom in year four... year five... year six... and beyond.

Fifth: By realizing measurable gains in student achievement. The reforms originally designed to boost the quantity, quality, and staying power of teachers in high-need schools, are blossoming into long-term, public-private partnerships that team private higher education with public Pre-K-12 education -- to help low-income and minority children achieve more and do better at school. At ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools, teacher educators and arts & sciences faculty are in the trenches -- working alongside principals, teachers, parents, and students to achieve educational equity.

ACI owes an enormous debt of gratitude to all our partners -- in colleges and universities, district offices, and local schools throughout the state. Their enthusiasm, dedication, and know-how drive the Center's success.

Three of our 17 college partners are here to tell the story of how their partnerships in Joliet, Quincy, and Waukegan, Illinois are changing how teacher education does business, and achieving success in high-need schools. Please welcome John Gambro, dean of the College of Education at University of St. Francis, in Joliet.

Case Study/University of St. Francis: John Gambro, dean of the College of Education at University of St. Francis, Joliet, IL.

Good morning. University of St. Francis is proud to be celebrating the 5th anniversary of ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* and to share the exciting work that has transformed our university's teacher preparation program – from a traditional, university-driven model to a professional development school -- known by the acronym: PDS.

In fall 2002, University of St. Francis was looking for ways to give our teacher candidates early and intensive clinical experiences that would nurture their commitment to high-need schools. Just around the corner from our Joliet campus, School District 86 administrators were looking for ways to help struggling local schools. Farragut Elementary School, only a block away from the university, had just been placed on the state Watch List – because its students were not making adequate yearly progress.

We realized we could help each other: District 86 could offer challenging clinical experiences for our teacher candidates... and those candidates, university faculty, and staff could help District 86 improve student achievement. To achieve these results, University of St. Francis, District 86, and Farragut Elementary School launched the Joliet PDS Partnership in fall 2003.

Today, with support from ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*, the Joliet PDS Partnership includes four District 86 schools, the district's Department of Special Services, and Joliet Junior College. Partnership activities address professional development – building a community of learners among all partners -- conducting action research to identify best practices, transforming teacher preparation, and improving student achievement.

Our transformed teacher education program prepares new highly qualified teachers by providing intensive, closely supervised field experiences, aligning district and university curricula, using state of the art technology, and helping students transition from community colleges to professional programs at four-year colleges -- like University of St. Francis.

Candidates enrolled in our partnership program complete a year-long internship that immerses them in school culture – through a co-teaching model that positions them as members of the school educational team, treated like any other staff member. By collaborating with cooperating teachers to enhance student learning, teacher candidates provide struggling students with the individualized attention they need to excel. And because Joliet schools serve many low-income and minority families, partnership field experiences allow candidates to draw on their students' diverse cultural knowledge to enhance learning – and to practice strategies that promote success among English Language Learners.

To improve student achievement, the Joliet PDS Partnership engages not only the University of St. Francis College of Education, but also the College of Nursing and Allied Health, the Social Work department, the College of Arts & Sciences, and the Recreation Management Department to partner with educators to support development of the whole child – physically, socially, emotionally, and academically. For example: More low-income children are able to participate in school sports, and fewer are being excluded from first-day attendance -- because our College of Nursing is providing mandated physicals and immunizations at partner schools.

The College of Arts and Sciences has developed life science and physical science courses for teacher candidates, and college students visit partner schools to teach concepts from these classes to elementary students. Recreation Management provides a course that encourages college students to develop and conduct recreational programs that supplement Physical Education at partner schools.

To help convince Joliet students and parents that a college education is important and attainable, University of St. Francis often hosts students from partner schools for academic enrichment programs, campus tours, and holiday celebrations that help them envision themselves as college students. Partner schools reciprocate by inviting the university community to high school basketball games, Family Reading and Family Game Nights.

All this adds up to a track record of success for the Joliet PDS Partnership. More and more teacher candidates are choosing the Joliet partnership field experience, and research shows that this experience is giving them the confidence to seek and accept teaching jobs in urban, high-need schools. In the past five years, District 86 has hired more than 65 new teachers prepared by University of St. Francis. Best of all, student achievement is on the rise. Test scores in partner schools are improving steadily. Not only have two partner schools, Farragut Elementary and A.O. Marshall, been removed from the State Watch List, the state has named them Spotlight Schools – recognizing their success with high-need students.

Last year we came full circle -- and demonstrated that our partnership is sustainable: A University of St. Francis graduate who was a teacher candidate during the very first year of the partnership became a cooperating teacher -- managing her own classroom in a partner school, where she is co-teaching with a new teacher candidate, passing the baton to the next generation.

Professional development schools challenge us to look at teacher preparation through the lens of collaboration. Built around innovative partnerships between higher education and Pre-K-12 schools -- a PDS is founded on shared decision-making, mutual commitment, and trust among all the partners. We have established that kind of trust and commitment in Joliet, and the results are truly inspiring. By engaging the entire university community to actualize our mission, to educate the whole person, to prepare children and adults for the dynamic world of the 21st century – we are changing the way we prepare teachers, and advancing successful learning in schools serving our community.

Thank you.

Case Study/Quincy University: Ann Behrens, interim dean, College of Education, Quincy University, Quincy, IL.

I am Ann Behrens, Interim dean of the College of Education at Quincy University -- where our partnership in ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools has truly been transformational. Since 2004, Quincy has reinvented our undergraduate teacher preparation program – instituting a professional development school model that immerses future teachers in authentic clinical experiences beginning as early as freshman year.

Our PDS partnership with Quincy Public Schools and several local parochial schools creates a professional learning community that allows Quincy teacher candidates to interact directly with K-12 students across the continuum of their teacher preparation courses.

Here's how it works: Even before beginning Quincy's teacher education program freshmen and sophomores enroll in four pre-professional courses. These courses meet once or twice each week at partner K-12 schools, where content can be teamed with clinical experience – and where school leaders and other professionals can participate in instruction.

After teacher candidates attend content sessions, they observe classrooms or interact with students. University faculty circulate to monitor candidates, make notes on their performance... and formulate questions that guide subsequent reflection. Teacher candidates attend parent conferences and meetings for special education plans to learn how to work with parents, deliver both good and bad news, and to develop problem-solving skills.

Because our candidates are better prepared for later field experience courses, the university has upgraded expectations for those placements and redesigned student teaching to include two eight-week placements at different grade levels. We also take candidates on visits to other districts where they can observe small rural settings or inner-city schools with more linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity than we find in Quincy.

The transformation of Quincy University's School of Education has delivered significant benefits to our faculty, our candidates, our community partners – and, ultimately, to the students in Quincy schools. We've gained renewed appreciation for and understanding of the role all our partners play in developing strong teacher candidates. University faculty value the insights of the practitioners, and K-12 teachers are benefiting from learning about evidence-based best practices. Faculty now collaborate to plan course activities, and partner with K-12 teachers to develop syllabi, schedule classroom interactions, and evaluate the courses. Action research projects have forged collaborations between arts and sciences faculty and teacher educators, who have worked together to revise and strengthen secondary methods syllabi.

Quincy teacher candidates report feeling confident about entering the classroom as first-year teachers, and their more experienced peers describe them as better prepared than other first-year teachers. We've learned that the powerful combination of field experiences directly tied to course content helps teacher candidates understand the implications of what they are learning in their professional coursework. And thanks to early exposure to at-risk students, a growing number of Quincy teacher candidates are considering teaching in high-need schools.

Finally, our PDS partnership is impacting student achievement in Quincy schools. Students are making adequate yearly progress, and their test scores continue to improve over time. While Quincy University cannot claim full credit for this success -- the presence of additional help in the classroom, collaboration between the university and partner schools, and opportunities for shared professional development clearly have benefitted K-12 students.

We began by transforming teacher preparation. Now, the teachers we're preparing are transforming what happens in K-12 classrooms. Being a partner in ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* has helped make Quincy University a full partner in school improvement in the community we've called home since 1860.

Thank you.

Case Study/Lake Forest College: Dawn Abt-Perkins, professor of education, Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, IL

I am Dawn Abt-Perkins, and I am delighted to represent Lake Forest College at this 5th anniversary celebration, and to chronicle the journey toward school improvement we have traveled in partnership with Waukegan Community School District 60.

To say that Waukegan schools are challenging is an understatement. This high-need district serves more than 16,000 students in 21 schools, including 9 on the state watch list. 45% of students are low income...most are Hispanic...and there is a 20% learning gap between students of color and white students. But Waukegan also is a place where many dedicated and creative teachers are finding new ways to close that gap. Lake Forest College is proud to be helping them reach that goal.

Our journey actually began in 2000, when Lake Forest redesigned our 14-week junior-year teaching internship to place all candidates in Waukegan Public Schools -- where they interact in similar schools with similar demographics and similar challenges, and we can set consistent expectations for their teaching. We also knew that Waukegan's inventive teachers were open to new ideas and would welcome another "set of hands" to help advance student learning. And although we acknowledged the special challenges of working in a culturally diverse, high-need school district -- multiculturalism was not our central focus. We sought to prepare Lake Forest candidates with the skills, dispositions, and experiences to be effective teachers in any and all classrooms.

Joining ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* re-ordered our priorities. First, we replaced our standard intern orientation with a two-week introduction to the Waukegan community, its resources, immigrant patterns...family values and attitudes toward schooling. We restructured Lake Forest literacy courses to emphasize culturally appropriate texts and supports for English language learners. Next, we defined culturally responsive instruction and required that all candidates bring primary documents and community resources to the classroom, and reflect on how their instruction reflects students' culture and ethnicity.

Candidates now must do more than get students' attention and "deliver" a problem-free lesson.

They also must observe and assess students in various learning situations... provide differentiated instruction that meets the needs of individual students...and collect and maintain data that documents how their teaching impacts individual students.

Lake Forest teacher educators also began working with new Waukegan teachers in a summer induction program. We hoped to discover how well our knowledge base as teacher educators translated to real world Waukegan classrooms. We also wanted to grow our own pool of cooperating teachers who would not only allow us to "experiment" in their classrooms with our interns, but would understand enough of our philosophy and methods to effectively coach our interns and provide models our instructional practices.

We enlisted Lake Forest arts and sciences faculty to serve as resources to our interns and to our work with new Waukegan new teachers. Now, Lake Forest's history, math, English, foreign language, and chemistry faculty have emerged as critical resources for teacher candidates developing community-based units of study. These faculty are more committed than ever before to teacher education, generally, and more knowledgeable about teaching and learning specific to Waukegan.

The lessons of partnering with ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools inform and inspire Lake Forest College. First, we've confirmed the value of long-term college-school partnerships. When teacher educators are truly involved in a school district, we feel more comfortable in the schools and classrooms – and interns respond in kind. Second, the cohort model – that is, placing groups of teacher candidates in the same high need school community – builds the confidence of prospective teachers. High need environments are endlessly challenging, and very little about these schools or students is familiar to Lake Forest teacher candidates. They need peers who understand the challenges and who will collaborate with them to meet those challenges.

Third, multicultural education must be more than political correct-ness. It must be fully integrated into teacher preparation, married to more traditional concepts addressing like brain-based teaching, humanistic learning, direct instruction, differentiated instruction, and learning styles, grounded in practice, and supported by success stories that illustrate how these approaches positively influence student development. Hands-on experience in high-need schools enables all of us to “walk the talk” of multiculturalism.

Fourth, in high-need schools, careful, thorough reflection is just as important as methods. Reflection allows candidates to assimilate lessons from their field work – the importance of cultural connections, community-based resources, and differentiated instruction. These community-specific values, orientations, and skills are foundational to good teaching -- because generic approaches to teacher education lack the power to transform teacher candidates from observers to active agents of change. Where you teach, whom you teach, and who you are as a teacher *does* matter. When teacher candidates gain this perspective early in their preparation, they come to view teaching as a service, as well as a profession, and consider, with confidence, teaching in high-need schools.

Fifth, new teachers are great teacher educators and interns benefit from working with optimistic,

reform-minded, new teacher leaders. New teachers can share, in fresh and compelling ways, how they faced their own prejudices and fears when they began working in Waukegan... how they developed a new perspective on daily and long-term success... and how they struggled daily to maintain high expectations and help learners meet them.

But just as our interns benefit from being part of a cohort of peers, new teachers also need a community of positive, forward-looking colleagues to sustain them. Lake Forest College extends that lifeline to them. When we provided new teachers with an historical framework of the Waukegan community and challenged them to respond to their students as members of that community – they bonded together as new teachers for a new America...and they inspired Lake Forest teacher educators to commit to Waukegan Public Schools for the long haul.

Today, as ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools celebrates its 5th anniversary, we are all part of instructional reform for Waukegan. Thank you.

Conclusion: Janis Fitzsimmons, PhD, director, ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*

Thank you, Dawn, Ann, and John for the wonderful work you are doing as Center partners, and for telling your stories today.

As these stories demonstrate, ACI's *Center* makes a compelling and coherent case for the positive impact our colleges and universities can have on public education in Illinois – and across the nation. When authentic partnerships between higher education and Pre-K-12 schools bridge the gap between educational theory and classroom practice – they can produce scalable, sustainable solutions that meet the challenges of high-need schools.

Further, teacher candidates who gain hands-on experience in high-need schools, and who study the history, sociology, and psychology of high-need communities are more willing (and more competent) to teach in these communities – and they can effect real progress in closing the achievement gap...and advancing educational equity.

Thank you for sharing and supporting the success of ACI's Center for Success in High-Need Schools.