January 16, 2013 Volume VII

2012 National Network for Educational Renewal conference highlights

Denver conference among the best-attended in NNER conference history

Careful attention to developing a culture of networking and collaboration was evident throughout the session. Co-hosted by the WY School-University Partnership, Nebraska Network for Educational Renewal, and Colorado State University Partnership, the conference included a wide variety of sessions focused on simultaneous renewal.

Donna Cooner, Rod Lucero, Heidi Propp, Karmen Kelly and Juliana Stovall lead the CO planning group. Nebraska’s leadership team included Dennis Potthoff, Patsy Bruner, Diane Duffin, Carrie Kracl, Glenn Tracy, Mary Volker and Jane Ziebarth-Bovill; and Audrey Kleinsasser and Beth Wiley led the WY planning work.

Brooklyn College Academy implements peer review process

Faculty from Brooklyn College Academy in Brooklyn, New York, took time to tell us about their teacher peer review process. Boasting higher teacher retention rates and increased faculty morale and trust, the peer review process is one the school plans to continue for years to come.

Working together to change attitudes about diversity

For over a year, Jenna Shim, Ron Morgan, Adam Schaefer, and Chad Gibbs have been meeting to try to change their thoughts about racism. The NNER conference featured a presentation on their project.

Terry Burant's teacher education students apply the concepts of Deep Survival to teaching

Terry Burant and nine of her former students presented findings on their connections to Deep Survival. Terry explained why she chose the text, and student Matt Gross outlined how his "personal philosophy, self-reflection, and overall character transformed from the stories in the text."

Read other NNER conference reflections from kinesiology, music, secondary education, and more.

Mark your calendars for NNER’s next conference
Florez gains honor

Vi Florez, Education Tripartite Chair, is one of 32 women selected from more than 400 nominees for Business First’s Women of Influence recognition. The selection panel highlighted the need for mentoring among professional women. They noted that recipients recognize how important that is because they’re doing it. They are teaching and learning from other women, formally and informally, juggling the roles of mentor and mentee simultaneously. They are shaping their own paths and sharing the knowledge they gain along the way so that the women who follow them have even more opportunities to succeed.

Executive Board Proposes Funding for Local Initiatives

Following up on the October Governing Council meeting conversation on how to use budget reserve to support local work, the Executive Board approved two initiatives covering a three-year period, for up to $60,000. With input from many Governing Council members, the board crafted proposals to support local setting renewal and advance local leadership development. Final proposals will be available after the March 1 Governing Council meeting.

Setting Renewal

The setting renewal proposal is designed to provide support for settings undergoing transition or settings that would like to improve current structures and processes advancing the AED. The funds will support bringing people together to examine what is working and what changes could enhance the local infrastructure. As discussed at the Governing Council meeting, changes in all settings affect partnership work—changes in university and district leadership, budgetary constraints, changing partner schools and districts. The board hopes that ongoing local change can be accommodated and ongoing practices examined through support from the NNER, ensuring the NNER mission is overt and central to local work.

Local Leadership Development

The work of the Agenda is an ongoing process that requires participation at every setting. The Executive Board and the Governing Council wish to stimulate greater involvement, both within and outside of settings. Forums in addition to the Summer Symposium and annual conference could include regional symposia and leadership associate programs tailored to local strengths and needs.

The NNER encourages simultaneous renewal between settings through stronger partnerships developed through collaborations on grants, research projects, and general resources, with the goal of settings initiating collaborative efforts by hosting leadership associate training sessions within regions.

The Executive Director and/or Executive Board members are expected to participate in these events and support local work. The Executive Board will provide as many resources as possible including readings and facilitators. The Board initiated a call for an RFP for up to $3000 per region, with local sites sharing housing and food costs, as well as other types of support as needed. Additionally, local sites are encouraged to seek funding from local and national organizations. Regional settings are also expected to use these sessions to solicit new members and potential new setting memberships.

Regions proposed by the board include: Northwest, Southwest, Northeast, Ohio Partnerships, Midwest, Mid central, Southeast, Canada. These regions were developed solely on geographic proximity; the board recognizes that collaboration will be developed by local planners on a variety of confluence points beyond geography to enhance settings’ work.
We must redefine not only what we mean by “prevention” but also how and by whom it is delivered. Prevention really involves promoting brain development for individual self-regulation. If individuals cannot stop, think, anticipate consequences, choose, and then act, societies lose their ability to operate in civil and productive manners. It becomes every person for him or herself. We should be trying to break the traditional pattern of institutions’ solitary go-it-alone operation.

Ohio is beginning such movement forward, supporting meaningful community prevention science. The “Our Futures” program in Licking County (http://ourfutures.org/) is a viable model of community wellness and prevention that would protect all members of our society. Partners involved in this movement include Wright State, local school districts, clinical counseling sites, the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Clark, Greene, and Madison counties, providers of mental health and recovery services, parents, law enforcement, business partners, Ohio Departments of Mental Health, and Alcohol and Drug Abuse/Prevention and others. It is an opportunity to establish partnerships between higher education, community service providers, schools, and community stakeholders leading to reduced rates of mental health disorders and addictions, improved performance of students and teachers, reduced healthcare costs, and enhanced economic health and growth.

This collaborative effort between WSU and the numerous community partners aims to break down walls between individuals and organizations, allowing thinking and acting across silos. Teachers can incorporate behavioral kernels in classroom management strategies. Parents can learn skills promoting pro-social behaviors in their children while making life at home more pleasant and engaging. Probation officers can gain more compliant behaviors while reducing recidivism rates. Business owners can support programs that improve employee recovery rates. Prevention can move from the last item on the agenda to a science based activity that is woven into the fabric of community life.

This effort not only can help us change direction, it can help us save lives.
2012 NNER Fall Conference Hosts Governing Council Meeting

The Governing Council of the NNER held its second meeting of 2012 at the Denver fall conference. The council expressed their appreciation to the three host settings – Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming – for organizing an outstanding conference. The council also endorsed the conference being scheduled for Albuquerque, New Mexico in October of 2013. Lemuel Watson and Jean Eagle were elected to serve on the executive board as at-large members representing the governing council. Audrey Allen was introduced as the newly elected chair of the P-12 section of the Tripartite Council.

The annual budget was updated and extended conversation suggested some reserves should be utilized to support the work of the settings. The Executive Board agreed to take action on this recommendation at their next meeting in December (see p. 2 of this newsletter for results of that meeting).

Ann Foster reported that several new membership settings are exploring potential membership, and that Southern Maine had left the NNER. The Tripartite Chairs reported on the their meeting earlier in the day, emphasizing settings taking collective action in communities to support children and youth. Arts and Sciences chair Leslie Wilson and Colleges of Education chair Vi Florez reported from their groups. The NNER journal was delayed and current editor Deb Shanley shared a revised schedule for distribution in March 2013. Deb Shanley, Leslie Lewis and Greg Bernhardt offered a brief update on the collaboration with UNESCO'S Teacher Education for Sustainability. Ann and Greg also shared a draft of an RFP for settings to consider hosting the NNER, with a timeline targeted to the first quarter of 2013. Coinciding with that effort is a process and timeline for applications for executive director. Finalists for these settings and candidates will be identified and visits and a review process leading to a selection of a site and a new executive director is anticipated by May, with an official start date of July 1. Settings were encouraged to consider submitting a proposal or a candidate or both. Minutes of the meeting have been posted to our website.

Newtown community exemplifying democracy

Marijke Kehrhahn, University of Connecticut

As part of the Connecticut community so directly affected by the events at Sandy Hook school, one of the things that has been so striking in watching the town of Newtown work together in the face of disaster is seeing democracy in action.

There was a wonderful posting on the We Are Newtown Facebook page talking about the first selectwoman of the town and her leadership during the crisis. She has begun to host a series of 'community conversations', providing a platform from which anyone can speak and be heard.

The Sandy Hook Promise movement is establishing a long-term commitment to dialogue and citizen action. There has been no finger-pointing (so refreshing!) - and a real spirit of inclusion and cooperation. I am just so inspired by these folks.

Montclair St. social justice pieces published

Two articles regarding social justice written by Montclair State's Bree Pickower and Doug Larkin were featured in newsletters from Teachers College Record this fall: Resisting Compliance: Learning to Teach for Social Justice in a Neoliberal Context by Bree Picower, and http://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentid=16527 in Researching Teacher Preparation for Student Diversity by Douglas Larkin.
Jennie Rakestraw assumes editorship of NNER Journal, invites submissions

NNER Colleagues:
I have been asked to serve as editor of the NNER journal this year. As most of you know, Education in a Democracy: A Journal of the NNER is a peer-reviewed journal sponsored by the National Network for Educational Renewal. John Goodlad refers to the NNER as proofing sites for the ongoing research and inquiry conducted by the Institute for Educational Renewal. This means that, as members of NNER, each of our university and school campuses engages in various types of activities—from collaborative inquiry, curriculum development, teacher/leader preparation, and professional development to policy development and advocacy. We are advancing the NNER Agenda for Education in a Democracy and its four-part mission—that is, promoting responsible stewardship of schools and universities; improving teaching and learning through challenging and nurturing pedagogy for all learners; providing equal access to quality learning for all students; and providing students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become fully engaged participants in our democracy society.

The NNER journal is a key way in which we can document and disseminate our work and impact educator preparation and school practice nationally and internationally. We want this publication to increase engagement and participation across various parts of the Network—that is, higher education faculty, including those in education and in arts and sciences, P-12 educators, and community partners. Therefore, we encourage collaboration in the submission and review processes. However, our primary intent is to publish scholarly manuscripts that portray the successful, informative, and innovative work being accomplished at NNER member sites.

For the 2013 edition, the due date for submission of manuscripts is March 31. The journal will be published on-line in fall 2013 with a limited number of hard copies provided to NNER Fall Annual Conference attendees.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions regarding the journal or seek guidance about the submission of a manuscript. I encourage every NNER member site to contribute to our next edition.

Jennie F. Rakestraw
Winthrop University/South Carolina Network for Educational Renewal
Seeking a New Home and Leadership for the NNER

The NNER’s Governing Council and Executive Board has released a call for proposals to host the NNER administratively beginning in the summer of 2013 and is seeking a new executive director to lead the organization into the future. While this has been discussed at the fall conference in Denver and the RFP has been released it seems appropriate to share with the entire NNER the background and reasoning for these decisions and actions. First, a quick historical summary:

In 1985 John Goodlad and colleagues created the NNER to advance the simultaneous renewal of schools and the education of educators. The research base, for the initial partnership was provided by the Study of Schooling reported in “A Place Called School”. In the beginning, the network had no separate organizational structure and was operated as an initiative of the Center for Educational Renewal (CER) at the University of Washington. Subsequently, much of the operational support shifted to the Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI), a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization also created by Goodlad.

Following recommendations from a Futures Committee convened in December 1997, action in the NNER annual conference in Seattle in August of 1998 led to changes in the network that included payment of dues from each NNER setting, and election of a governing council. Over the next several years, the decision was made to retain a part-time executive director housed at the IEI, and after another year of study, adoption of a governance structure that included an expanded governing council with provisions to ensure representation from schools, arts and sciences, and colleges of education. Also, the governance structure included a tripartite council with three persons (A&S, COE, and Schools) from each setting to provide guidance on the vision of the network, and an executive board to handle business between the two annual meetings of the governing council. In 2007 the NNER, while still working closely with John Goodlad and other like-minded colleagues, became a self-sufficient 501 (c) 3 not for profit organization. The new structure continues to include a governing council, an executive board, the tripartite council, and a 0.50 executive director (currently a shared position with Ann Foster and Greg Bernhardt) who works closely with the governing council, and the executive board and carries out policy decisions of these two groups.

By mission, the NNER facilitates the simultaneous renewal of schools and the education of educators to promote the public purposes of education in a democracy. To accomplish this, the NNER is committed to facilitating close collaboration among colleagues in education, arts and sciences, and schools.

After more than 8 years of outstanding service in the executive director role, Ann Foster has decided to transition from the leadership position. Ann has operated the NNER out of her home office for many years, and will continue to serve the NNER going forward, but not full time or solo. With John Goodlad nearing his mid-90’s the time seemed appropriate to consider a new administrative home along with a search for new leadership.

So, like a maturing young adult who is leaving home, the NNER is looking for one of our partnership settings to administratively host us going forward. Simultaneously we are seeking a new executive director. The Executive Board released an RFP and call for applications on November 15, 2012, with proposals and applications due February 15th. Plans call for the Governing Council to review proposals and applications and make recommendations for a host setting and executive director at the March 1, 2013, Governing Council meeting to be held in conjunction with the AACTE convention in Orlando, Florida. Site visits are to be held in the spring and the new home and director will begin in July 2013. The RFP, application, process, timeline, etc. can be found on the NNER webpage.
We are pleased to announce the opportunity to study the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) again this summer in Seattle. The executive board is developing a new week-long summer symposium for those who have not had the opportunity to participate in year-long leadership programs or other NNER initiatives and who are interested in learning more about the Agenda and how to apply its principles in their work and the NNER mission. Activities and interaction will be developed using evaluation information from previous symposium participants. The symposium will provide opportunities to meet with colleagues from across the NNER, discuss issues pertinent to the health of our public schools, universities, and communities, and to study and interact with NNER leaders committed to advancing the AED. During the week we will study the AED and NNER mission, the conditions necessary for their implementation, and strategies we find most promising for putting the concepts into action. Prior to the session, Executive Board member Dennis Potthoff will be in communication with all participants to engage in online community building and share perspectives from the online resources to build background knowledge for the session. In addition, session readings will be sent to participants beforehand to ensure that participants have the background knowledge to participate fully in the session. Social democracy in the larger surround—public places beyond education institutions—will be explored. There will be time for informal interaction with colleagues where participants can raise questions and proffer strategies that advance our work in these challenging times. We encourage settings to send teams as this supports the tripartite nature of our work and allows teams to plan how to work together after the session. We also want to emphasize that an important outcome for this session is that participants leave with skills and background knowledge to become leaders in their settings to advance the NNER mission. Local activities such as leadership associates programs, book study sessions, action research, and boundary spanning conversations are just some examples of leadership roles participants can play. The board would also like to extend its support for developing local leadership associates programs. Networks by definition include multiple points of support and leadership and the board recognizes that the NNER’s commitment to renewal requires participation from all to extend and deepen the work.
Teacher Corps at New Mexico--in second year, growing, learning

The Teacher Corps program at the University of New Mexico, a partnership between UNM’s Community Engagement Center, Teacher Education Department, and Albuquerque area schools is in its second year. The program aims at making teacher education responsive to the community: listening to and learning from parents, increasing parental and community engagement, and addressing achievement gaps.

It is an experiment in democracy, based on the teachings of Paulo Friere and others. Interwoven throughout teacher candidates’ field experiences, reflection sessions, and professional development workshops are the ideas of community-based service-learning and civic engagement; antiracism and social justice; partnerships with families, community leaders, and community-based organizations; and interdisciplinary teaching methods. The Teacher Corps experience includes academics, community engagement, and leadership development.

Teacher Corps provides field experiences, reflection sessions, and professional development workshops to incorporate the following themes, not only for teacher candidates, but also for their cooperating teachers:

- Innovative teacher preparation with a focus on community-based service-learning and civic engagement;
- Community issues through an assets-based, antiracism, social justice lens;
- Partnerships with families, community leaders, and community-based organizations; and
- Classroom communities of caring learners and thinkers through interdisciplinary teaching methods.

The program’s guiding philosophy illustrates the praxis approach, in which knowledge, action, and reflection are practiced in a cyclical process through key program components of academics, community engagement, and leadership development.

Teacher Corps members grew in many areas typical of teacher candidates during their field experiences, including appreciation of the support they received and the importance of a listening and constructively responding faculty. They felt that faculty addressed the concerns they had and that assistance with classroom management was valuable. Through the Teacher Corps reflection sessions, they gained valuable perspective on topics including service-learning, hunger, and community assets. Students commented that “Teacher Corps allows us to take what we’ve learned and take it to another level.”

In initial surveys, students speculated on the achievement gap between different racial and ethnic groups. Themes that emerged here included lack of relevant curriculum, parents not valuing education, low socioeconomic status of students, racial and ethnic differences, and lack of community and school resources. Members nearing the end of their program voiced concerns that the “achievement gap” was really an “opportunity gap,” noting they observed the numerous challenges faced by their students outside the classroom. They see their skills increasing to approach such challenges alongside their students, being “better able to manipulate my teaching several different ways for each one of my students to learn.”

They found the infusion of service-learning into their field experience valuable, too: “I now know how to teach through service.” They also appreciated the “inspiration” they gained from the presenters at the reflection sessions.

Comments shared by speakers in the reflection sessions became a way to emphasize what needs to be valued in teacher education. Topics covered included asset-mapping, funds of knowledge, community-based service learning, restorative justice, Indigenous education, African-American education, immigration, bilingual education, environmental justice, LGBTQ education, civic engagement and policy perspectives, and family engagement.

The challenges of covering some of the most pressing issues in education within one year cannot be over emphasized. If nothing else, the students were given a foundational understanding to open their minds to the complexity of their profession and the role they can plan in changing the lives of their students through learning and serving in their own communities.
Challenges await us
As a new year marks the second Obama administration in Washington, it is useful to look at the challenges to education, including those to teacher education. This is of particular relevance to members of the National Network for Educational Renewal, because we ascribe to tenets that are extremely vulnerable to current thinking about what is important in preparing and assessing teachers and educating students. A major challenge is that teacher education and education in general, as institutions serve many “masters.”

Five disturbing policy directions

• Race to the Top which promotes value added measures (VAM) as essential to school improvement, despite research casting doubt on the power of the statistic for high stakes individual judgments.
• Probable Changes to Title II of the Higher Education Act. An extension of the RTTT theme, likely including success of individual teacher education program graduates in raising student scores as part of program evaluation, publically reported.
• National Center for Teacher Quality. The extraordinary credibility given to this private organization in judging the quality of teacher education graduates using input data. Somehow, this group is immune from using outcome data.

• Teacher Performance Assessment for evaluating the ability of new teachers (and eventually in-service teachers); assessors hired and trained by Pearson make judgments about videotaped teaching segments. This turns over the high stakes responsibility to third party educators and further empowers Pearson.

**Anchor policies** promoted by Students First, the organization founded by Michelle Rhee, former Chancellor of the DC system and former Teach for America leader. These policies focus on assessment using student growth to determine teacher pay, employment, and public judgment of K-12 schools using letter grades. The 2013 report has had wide publicity and distribution. (StudentsFirst, 2012)

What are we to do?
• Remind the public and policy makers that the question, “Why do we educate in a democracy?” must always be asked and answered. Do our assessment and accountability measures match up with answers to the question?
• This question should be central to our professional development and pre-service work with teachers. Teachers, K-12 and University, need to be “smart” about policy developments and we must encourage and lead discussions on them.
• It is difficult to be against VAM these days without being accused of being against accountability. More must be done in our settings and nationally to develop strong authentic assessment measures that match our commitment to the agenda.
• We cannot dismiss those with different points of view as not being well intended. We need to be open to other perspectives, ready to debate them, and willing to compromise in the spirit of negotiation and democracy, while retaining our integrity.

These are difficult times—perhaps the most difficult we can recall in our careers—but as educators with moral and professional responsibilities, we must push to be a part of the conversation to make a difference.

—Nick Michelli, CUNY

Understanding and Confronting Policy in the Current Era: Implications for the NNER
Intentional Engagement, Intentional Results

The Evolution of Community Schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico

As communities and education endure their individual battles, it leaves a growing number of children and families terribly isolated from caring relationships, emotional support, and access to referral services. Communities need strong schools, and the inverse is even more profound, especially in the case of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The challenges within communities have powerful and immediate impacts on school.

In Albuquerque, barriers have been recognized as jointly shared by the educational system and the community. When communities and schools accepted a common agenda for students and families, a movement toward systems alignment, resource allocation, collective impact, and shared results was catalyzed in local examples including the ABC Community School Partnership (ABC), Albuquerque Business Education Compact, the Early Childhood Accountability Partnership, and the United Way Vision Council.

ABC Partnership was created as a means to support institutional and systems collaboration necessary to create an effective and sustainable community school system, and it has witnessed significant progress since its inception. With an initial contribution of $100,000 from APS, City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, and ABEC, and a 2010 $400,000 18-month planning grant from WK Kellogg Foundation, ABC sought to build systemic capacity by learning through national examples and partnering with key players. One such capacity building trip included a delegation of 16 individuals, including 5 ABC Board Members and APS Superintendent, to Portland, Oregon. While in Oregon, individuals listened to and conversed with leaders from the SUN System, Portland’s community school system, and attended the Strive national convening to collectively discuss how to develop a community school system in Albuquerque through ABC Partnership.

The Community School Planning Grant, called Success by 8, also led to the identification of 4 elementary community school sites that would act as pilot sites for early implementation. ABC has embraced a challenge few others have attempted to tackle in Albuquerque—bringing three major public institutions—Albuquerque Public Schools, Bernalillo County, and the City of Albuquerque together, across silos, and, with the community, to make an impact on education. ABC has been able to find success and avert institutional lock-in by hiring an Executive Director, who has helped play a strategic role in unifying public entities. The City of Albuquerque passed a resolution that the ABC Community School Partnership will provide programmatic oversight of the city’s Elementary/Middle School Initiative (EMSI). This $1,000,000+ funding is presented to schools that demonstrate their ability to effectively provide quality afterschool programming for academically at-risk youth. With this oversight, ABC now works with 90 elementary and middle schools and has hired a Community School Manager to oversee EMSI coordination and horizontal scale-up efforts.

The support of the growth of Community Schools is a major focus for the future work of ABC Partnership in collaboration with other partners in the community and the University of New Mexico.
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*denotes multiple IHE site settings