

7S Educator Collaboration

Shortly after the appointment of the Urban Education Task Force in January 2008, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University convened a statewide collaborative of local organizations to provide research, technical assistance, and analytic support to the work of the Task Force.

The Research Collaborative currently includes six member organizations: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and the Urban Education Policy Program at Brown University, the Providence Plan, the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council, and the Regional Educational Lab Northeast and Islands (at Education Development Center). The Rhode Island Department of Education has provided data to support analyses conducted by the Collaborative.

A grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation (the main source of funding for the Task Force) included a \$20,000 allocation for the work of the Research Collaborative. Additional support from the Rhode Island Foundation allowed the Collaborative to expand its work scope over the final phases of the Task Force and to fund a critical analysis of student mobility and its consequences for the five urban districts.

Role and Work of the Research Collaborative

The role of the Research Collaborative has been to fulfill specific requests from the Task Force and its subcommittees and working groups. The major types of activity have included:

- Prepare secondary data analysis of student, school, and community indicators for the urban districts.

- Produce promising-strategy briefs in key areas of reform.
- Document all meetings and community forums and synopses of expert testimony and community input.
- Prepare preliminary and final reports.

During its first ten months of work, the Research Collaborative produced two installments of a Task Force Resource Guide, which included the following analyses and research products.

1. **Population Indicator Profiles for Rhode Island and the Five Urban Districts** Rhode Island KIDS COUNT prepared population profiles for each of the five districts participating in the Task Force, along with a state urban-aggregate table. Profiles featured indicators of student population, performance, and teaching. (These profiles are included in appendix A.)
2. **Presentations by the National Advisors to the Task Force** Summaries of individual presentations of six leading national education reformers at several meetings of the Task Force were prepared for its members. The advisors were:
 - Barnett Berry, Center on Teacher Quality
 - Frederick Hess, American Enterprise Institute
 - Milbrey McLaughlin, Stanford University
 - Charles Payne, University of Chicago
 - Paul Reville, Secretary of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
 - Jesse Register, Superintendent, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

3. **Information from the October 4 Community Forum** The Collaborative documented a community forum sponsored by the Subcommittee on Public Engagement, in partnership with Rhode Island Young Professionals, on October 4, 2008. The purpose of the forum was to seek public comment and input on the major strands of work being undertaken by the Task Force. The documentation included:
 - Agenda and information on featured speaker and panelists
 - Summary of presentation by the featured speaker, Dr. Charles Payne, the Frank P. Hixon Professor in the School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago
 - Synthesis of themes from previous community engagement efforts
 - Summary of feedback from facilitated “table discussions” among community participants
4. **Promising Strategy Briefs** The Collaborative prepared snapshots of promising strategies for the Task Force subcommittees in the following specific areas:
 - **Alternative Routes to Certification:** The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence
 - **Teacher Competency Programs:** Teach for America
 - **The Diverse Provider Model:** The Philadelphia Experiment
 - **Teacher Residencies:** The Boston Teacher Residency Program
 - **Community-Based Support Systems:** The Harlem Children’s Zone
 - **Initiatives in Human Capital:** Denver’s Professional Compensation System for Teachers
 - **Early Childhood Education:** Evaluating the Benefits
 - **State Investment in Early Education:** Oklahoma Universal Pre-K Program
 - **Early Childhood Curriculum:** Pre-K Mathematics Curriculum
5. **Memorandum on Warren Simmons’s Progress Briefing with Governor Carcieri** Task Force chair Warren Simmons sent a memorandum to all Task Force members summarizing his meeting with the Governor on October 17, 2008, to brief him on the progress of the Task Force.
6. **Mobility Analysis** Led by the Providence Plan, the Collaborative prepared an analysis of student mobility in Rhode Island, including data on the effects of mobility on performance, relative cohort stability rates, and mobility rates of English language learners, as well as suggested discussion questions (included in appendix B8).

Possible Role for the Collaborative beyond the Work of the Task Force

The initial funding of the Research Collaborative has tested its viability as a source of technical support and capacity building to state and local education agencies beyond the immediate work of the Task Force. Similar entities in Chicago, New York, and Boston have contributed to the overall civic capacity in their communities by helping inform citywide reform strategies in their local communities. To cite one example, the Consortium on Chicago School Research has, for nearly two decades, been a major source of independent educational research and evaluation in that city.

Local circumstances in Rhode Island also attest to the need for a research collaborative. The relatively small size of our local education agencies limits the resources any single district can devote to research and evaluation, and what capacity exists is consumed by the administration of accountability obligations, which continue to increase. Informally, the Annenberg Institute has learned from district leaders that a Research Collaborative would be a valued addition, both for the capacity issues noted above and for the importance of having a “third party” conduct some studies.

The Research Collaborative could expand on the types of analysis conducted by school districts and the broader community. For example, there is currently no reliable mechanism for reporting to Rhode Island high schools on how their recent graduates are performing in colleges or universities. In partnership with RIDE, the Collaborative could offer the technical wherewithal to inform the design of such a system. Part of the role of a Research Collaborative could also include working directly with districts to build capacity in new techniques and best practices for providing data as a tool for teachers and school leaders. Finally, the Collaborative could be the training ground for the next generation of education policy analysts who are currently graduate students in our member institutions.