BUILDING COMMUNITY IN SCHOOLS

Let's Talk: Creating a School Community
Clifton Taulbert's work on school communities

Creating a Plan, Making a Choice, Living a Dream
South Carolina's Maggie Glover encourages students to plan for the future

Partnerships That Matter
The UPenn partnership in Philadelphia

Creating and Sustaining School-Community Partnerships
School representatives tell their stories

Accelerating Student Learning for At-Risk Students
Local and national examples
De an’s Message and Director’s Message

Goals of the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education

Let’s Talk: Clifton Taulbert Knows That Creating a School Community Requires Constant Communication
Community expert Clifton Taulbert seeks to provide collaborative and inclusive leadership, committed and engaged followership, increased productivity, and a workplace where diversity is valued and mentoring is strategic and purposeful.

An Interview with Christine Finnan
Director of South Carolina’s Partners for Acceleration
Partners for Acceleration (PFA) is an organization committed to ensuring that all students learn in environments that cultivate their sense of accomplishment, belonging, and engagement.

Creating a Plan, Making a Choice, Living a Dream
Maggie Glover Instills Personal Responsibility and Self-Motivation in Her Students
Maggie Glover, Director of the HBCU-Undergraduate Program Testing and Learning Center at Morris College, wants her students to use their talents to pursue their dreams.

The Accelerated Program and Bridges to Success
The Accelerated Program was formed as a pilot to create a more targeted approach in advancing overage students.

Building Communities in Schools:
A Historical Perspective of the UPenn Partnership
The UPenn Partnership is one of the most extensive and successful school/community partnerships in the country.
A new trend in urban education is emerging as almost 30 public boarding schools have opened across the nation—serving various demographics.

Four award-winning Charleston school administrators share methods by which schools can begin to build successful school-community partnerships.

When transforming schools the Institute highlights community partnerships and advantages for all students.

An interview with Andrew Lewis, College of Charleston professor and coordinator for the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education’s Community Outreach Team.
PARTNERSHIPS

4

Exit View

EAR FRIENDS OF EDUCATION,

In our work with local PreK-12 low-performing schools in the Charleston area, we have come to appreciate the need for university-school-community partnerships. Whether they are with higher education, nonprofits, governmental agencies, the faith-based community, or businesses, partnerships make a difference in improving schools. They motivate and enrich the lives of students and teachers; help improve student outcomes through professional development and technical assistance, and act as advocates for struggling schools. We have the research to prove it.

On the national level, we realize the significance of university partnership programs. The Penn Partnership Schools at the University of Pennsylvania is a program on which we modeled our own Center for Partnerships to Improve Education. The university’s work in the inner-city community surrounding the UPenn campus in Philadelphia is inspirational. Not only have they created and sustained quality schools that serve the entire community, but they have also rebuilt an adjoining neighborhood to be economically self-sustaining.

We encourage staff from other universities and PreK-12 schools who want to develop partnership programs in their communities to contact us. University-school-community partnerships do make a difference in transforming schools. Please share your thoughts with me at 843.953.5272 or welchf@cofc.edu.

FRANCES C. WELCH

A MESSAGE FROM

The College of Charleston’s Dean of Education, Health, and Human Performance

EAR FRIENDS OF EDUCATION,

University of Pennsylvania is a program on which we modeled our own Center for Partnerships to Improve Education. The university’s work in the inner-city community surrounding the UPenn campus in Philadelphia is inspirational. Not only have they created and sustained quality schools that serve the entire community, but they have also rebuilt an adjoining neighborhood to be economically self-sustaining.

We encourage staff from other universities and PreK-12 schools who want to develop partnership programs in their communities to contact us. University-school-community partnerships do make a difference in transforming schools. Please share your thoughts with me at 843.953.5272 or welchf@cofc.edu.

FRANCES C. WELCH

The Director of the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education (CPIE)

EAR FRIENDS OF EDUCATION,

We are proud to present our third yearly issue of our Center for Partnerships to Improve Education magazine, now in an electronic format. Our magazine features school improvement programs and personalities from local, regional, and national perspectives.

Our theme for this issue is Building Community in Schools, and we are honored to feature Clifton Taulbert, a native of the Mississippi Delta, and his work in building community in schools across the nation. Mr. Taulbert served as our keynoter at our yearly Center for Partnerships conference in 2008, and he inspired the conference participants to transform their schools by creating communities of support. Also featured in this issue are College of Charleston professors Christine Finnan and Andrew Lewis and their respective school improvement initiatives; Maggie Glover, a South Carolina dynamo in the areas of education and politics who encourages college students to have a plan; innovative school improvement programs across the nation like the Annenberg Foundation and the UPenn School Partners; an accelerated middle school program for overage middle school students in the Charleston area that has gotten excellent student results; and a portrait of successful schools that have beaten the odds.

We always welcome your input for making our magazine more relevant and more useful. In addition, as our Center continues to evolve and grow, we need your ideas, support, and feedback for its continual improvement. As we face tough economic times across the country, it’s comforting to know that educators will continue to support and guide one another as we improve the nation’s schools one step at a time. If you’d like to contact me, I can be reached at 843.953.7629 or egelsonp@cofc.edu.

PAULA E. EGELSON
The Center for Partnerships to Improve Education (CPIE) is a consortium of educators, school districts, business and civic leaders, and communities collaborating to strengthen the educational outcomes of students in South Carolina. Located in the College of Charleston’s School of Education, Health, and Human Performance, it was established in 2005 to address improvement of PreK-12 education in South Carolina. Three strands are associated with the partnership—Teaching and Learning (staffed by College of Charleston professors), Research, and Community Outreach.

The Center for Partnerships’ goals are to:

- improve performance and reduce the drop-out rates of students.
- increase enrollment of minority and low-income students in institutions of higher learning.
- prepare youth for employment in the 21st century workforce.
- re-engage disaffected students in education.
- educate teacher candidates to work effectively in low-performing schools and to seek employment in such schools.
- establish expectations, incentives, and professional development for teachers to make a long-term commitment to work in low-performing schools.
- improve understanding in higher education and businesses of the issues limiting urban and rural students’ futures and identify ways to address these issues.
THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY WAS NOT THE ONLY development in the Mississippi Delta in the 1950s. Raised on the front porches of Glen Allen, Mississippi, during a time when segregation was real and the future uncertain, Clifton L. Taulbert grew up in a place where family, education, and community stood strong against adversity and offered a sanctuary that cultivated well-rounded youth.

Unaware of it at the time, a young Taulbert was learning the “timeless and universal” lessons that he would later develop into the foundation of the Building Community Institute, which he established in 1995. Located in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the Institute’s mission is to ensure organizational effectiveness at all levels through training that engages and challenges people in business, education, and service organizations. Taulbert and the Institute seek to provide collaborative and inclusive leadership, committed and engaged followership, increased productivity, and a workplace where diversity is valued and mentoring is strategic and purposeful. Over the past 14 years, Taulbert and his team have served corporations, government agencies, K–12 education associations, non-profits, and institutions of higher education throughout the United States and around the world through keynotes, executive experiences, interactive workshops, E-learning, and professional consulting.

TRANSFORMING A SCHOOL INTO A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Taulbert defines a school community as an environment where all members feel safe and encouraged to do—and be—their very best, both individually and together. Foremost, Taulbert feels educators and students must understand the importance of community. He says it is imperative that this generation of students be educated in a school community because current educational environments differ substantially from other environments (e.g., a student’s home or workplace). When students learn in a school community, they gain the know-how to construct community among their peers as the steps and the habits essential to building community become ingrained in the way they live (Taulbert, 2006).

Once a school understands the need to create a school community, the school must define the process to attain it. To achieve community, Taulbert is a proponent of a call-to-action approach and puts first-step responsibilities on administrators to transform a school into a school community. Taulbert says that while community is often talked about, what is missing from those conversations is discussion focused on the process required to actually create it.

“The word community is a feel-good word often eluded to in conversations about schools, but what needs to be understood is that community is not automatic,” explains Taulbert. In other words, each member of a school must see and walk the path.

He believes principals and superintendents must do more than
merely define community; they must consider what actions they will take as individuals to build this community because it takes individual accountability to, as Taulbert puts it, “make the definition come alive.”

He suggests inviting the faculty and its staff to come together and answer the question, “How does our community look?” He added that being aware of the caliber of your community and being accountable for it are the fundamentals necessary to advance initiatives, enhance the learning environment, and attain established goals.

Administrators should ask what local schools are doing to identify, achieve, and sustain community within their own school environments.

WORKING AS A FAMILY TO SUSTAIN A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Cecelia Rogers, the principal of the Charleston Development Academy (CDA), a charter school located in a housing project, reported that CDA recognizes their community as a loving and caring professional learning community wherein, “staff and community stakeholders are all a part of the community, and we work as a family to make decisions and improvements for the school.”

Similarly, Anne Dukes, Assistant Principal at Hunley Park Elementary, said she calls for community discussion by way of class meetings involving students and staff.

“The highly connected administrative team is another important part of the school community at Hunley Park,” notes Dukes.

Once a school has defined the process to attain community, it takes action to sustain it. Taulbert teaches that the way to sustain school communities is to “make conversation about community a daily event.” He says that faculty and staff must meet frequently to “walk through the process of creating community.” In addition, Taulbert stressed again the importance of accountability. Each member of the faculty, the staff, and the administration must be held accountable and must respect and value the process by contributing to it. An illustration of this is modeled at Charleston Development Academy, where staff members and faculty attend monthly team meetings as a step in the process to sustain community within their school.

Taulbert explains that, “education is not an isolated endeavor, and teachers must share their storehouse of knowledge.” He teaches the importance of not only realizing community but also igniting action in one another to create and sustain community on a daily basis. Community-building in today’s distinctive educational environment requires everyone—faculty, staff, administrators, students, and parents—to remember and use those basic lessons taught to us from our youth and to give value to the day-by-day process necessary to foster a true school community.

WORKS CITED:


HAVING BEEN INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING THE RESEARCH BASE OF THE Accelerated Schools project at Stanford University, Dr. Christine Finnan moved to Charleston, South Carolina, in the early 1990’s. In 1993 she established a satellite center of this national school reform project in the College of Charleston’s School of Education. In 2007 she branched off from Accelerated Schools to develop a different approach to school improvement, Partners for Acceleration (PFA). PFA is committed to ensuring that all students learn in environments that cultivate their sense of accomplishment, belonging, and engagement. Finnan’s research orientation is evident in the initial thrust of PFA service—to collect and analyze a wide range of data that informs school members’ understanding of the strengths and challenges at the school and classroom levels. Then PFA guides the school through addressing the places in which improvements should be made and how best to make those improvements.

EDWARDS:
Please describe your professional background.

FINNAN: I came into education as a researcher, with specific training in ethnography. I entered a doctoral program in social sciences in education at Stanford University. While at Stanford, I did research on children’s play and on the role of job training in assimilation of refugees. After graduate school, I worked for a few years at a large research company that did mostly government contract work, focusing on large-scale program evaluations. I ended up cutting back on my professional work when I had kids. I co-taught a qualitative research methods class at Stanford for two years and reconnected with Hank Levin who was starting up a school reform project called the Accelerated Schools Project at the time. Hank hired me to do an ethnographic study of the program start-up in local middle schools. Eventually, in 1993, my family and I began toying with moving to South Carolina. I came to visit the College of Charleston for possible jobs. The dean was very interested in the Accelerated Schools Project and encouraged me to start the program here. During that time I have split my time between work as a College of Charleston faculty member and as the director of South Carolina’s Accelerated Schools Project. Two years ago, we decided to go in a slightly different direction, and I started Partners for Acceleration. This year I added another dimension to my professional life and have split a faculty line between the Teacher Education Department and the Sociology and Anthropology Department.

E: Tell me about the philosophical underpinnings/theory behind Partners for Acceleration.

F: Partners for Acceleration builds off of a lot of the philosophy that was behind the Accelerated Schools Project. The belief is that it is better to engage children actively in learning, even if they are low-performing. Hank’s saying was, “Accelerate, don’t remediate.” If children are struggling, you’re more apt to re-engage them by giving them something exciting, rather than going over the things
they have had trouble with. PFA is different because we believe learning must happen in environments that foster accomplishment, belonging, and engagement. This focus has come out of recent research I have done with Lorin Anderson, a retired professor from the University of South Carolina. This research indicates that to be successful and happy, we need to be encouraged in those areas. We all have a basic need for a sense of accomplishment, belonging, and engagement. It is a rare person who can develop these attributes without supportive environments; we cannot do it alone. My anthropology background shapes how I see issues and interactions; I tend to look for the complex interactions that occur within social interactions and to focus on how assumptions and beliefs and values come together in social settings such as the classroom. Children have three primary environments that most affect their development: the home, the classroom, and the school.

E: Please describe the PFA framework and implementation steps.

F: There is a focus and belief that student achievement, both academic and social, is influenced by students’ sense of accomplishment, belonging, and engagement. So we seek to understand where schools and classrooms are in relation to those three constructs. We provide two levels of service. The first level is the data collection and analysis phase. We developed a number of instruments, including surveys, a student writing prompt, and a teacher assessment of students. We conduct classroom observations and rate classrooms in relation to the PFA framework. We also correlate some of the data to the MAP test (Measure of Academic Progress test). We also use any existing data that is available, such as the State Department of Education climate survey. We go to the school with a very complete picture of what the school looks like. The second level of service is giving the report, but we do not want to just say, “This is what to do to improve.” Instead, we lead the staff through looking at the data. They see how the data shows issues in the school. We help them see what to work on. Each school figures out for itself what is the most appropriate response, and we help with implementing that response. The school might want to have the faculty take a class or do a book study, or they might decide to bring in an outside partner to help with student behavior issues.

E: What type of schools do you recruit? Tell us about a typical PFA school.

F: Most of our schools are Title I schools that serve low-income kids. Right now we have two rural schools, one downtown school, two schools in the North Charleston area, and one on James Island. The schools we serve are schools that need us most. We are only working with elementary schools right now, but the framework could work at other levels.

E: What can you tell us about your PFA successes?

F: We are really just starting with pure PFA services and the two levels of service. We collected data from two schools last year and will do so with four schools this year. Tysa Austin, our field services coordinator, was providing a lot of on-site support to schools last year. In the most recent study of test results, our schools have made strong gains in science and social studies, good gains in math, and slight gains in reading.

E: What are your challenges? Are there areas that you want to change or improve?

F: Funding [laughs]… We need to fine-tune what we are doing to balance having a product that is recognizable as something that PFA does and yet, still be individualized to what each school needs. We are working through how much we can do, what is worth doing, and what is not. Our schools do not have many resources right now, so we have to give them something that is truly valuable.

E: Do you have any advice to those attempting to improve schools?

F: [You should] recognize that it is really hard. There are always forces that pull you back to what seems to be normal; change is hard. People do not like to take risks, and for good reason. It is important that you understand the change process from a lot of different perspectives, especially those of students. They are often the ignored part. We too rarely ask children their opinion on what is important to them and what they feel good about. You want them to be saying they feel good about things and feel cared for. If that is not happening, then there is a problem.
CREATING A PLAN, MAKING A CHOICE, LIVING A DREAM

Maggie Glover instills personal responsibility and self-motivation in her students

BY CHRISTY HEITGER

Maggie Wallace Glover starts off each one of her Life Skills college classes in the same way: by asking her freshmen students to envision their life’s dream and then develop a plan for how they will pursue that dream.

“If you could map out the perfect life for yourself, what would it be?” asks Glover, Director of the HBCU-Undergraduate Program Testing and Learning Center at Morris College, an historically black liberal arts college in Sumter, South Carolina, 45 miles west of Columbia.

Dream On
Growing up, we are usually programmed to think of dreams and reality as two separate things—and that the two could never overlap. But Glover is working to change this way of thinking by asking her students to prioritize their goals and aspirations in life. She often uses journaling to help her students articulate their strategies for implementing a successful plan.

Glover, now in her fifth year at Morris, wants her students to approach college with the idea that they can carve out the life they want as long as they are motivated to use their talents to pursue their dreams.

“My job is to help these students see that they are solely responsible for the choices they make,” says Glover. “They need to learn that it’s pointless to blame their teachers, their parents, their boyfriend/girlfriend, or the weather for the way in which their lives unfold.”

Glover believes that her students’ time is better spent identifying their strengths and weaknesses in order to create—and live—a better life.

Accepting Personal Responsibility
At the beginning of the semester Glover presents the class with a Personal Responsibility Inventory (see sidebar), a ten-question inventory that helps illustrate how each student is personally responsible for the choices he or she makes in life. The 0–10 ratings scale is designed to help students determine their level of personal responsibility (scoring 8–10 is considered responsible, 5–7 is mildly irresponsible, and 0–4 is very irresponsible). Glover also distributes this inventory at the end of the semester so that students can see whether their level of responsibility has improved.
"I want students to look at the inventory sheet and essay and realize that these same skills can be employed for everything in their lives," says Glover, who admits that initially many students struggle to take full responsibility for their lives and well-being. When good things happen to them, they feel "lucky," and when things don't go their way, they complain about how unfair life is. Glover insists that people who have a plan for their lives are undaunted by the accidents and happenings of life—that they are able to fall down but quickly get back up again. They tweak their plan, develop another strategy, and continue implementing it.

“My job is to help students see that they are solely responsible for the choices they make.”

“Most of life's successes are planned," Glover maintains. "We don't just haphazardly do things and they turn out really well. In order to succeed, we do a lot of thinking, planning, and working."

FULFILLING HER OWN PLAN
Born and raised in rural Florence, South Carolina, Glover had her own plan—to become a teacher and an actress.

"My sister and I always played 'school' with our dolls as the students," recalls Glover. "I couldn't wait to get a class of my own with real breathing, thinking, talking students!"

As for acting, "I wanted to be Cecily Tyson!" says Glover. Glover graduated from Fayetteville State University in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where she majored in English and minored in Speech and Theatre. After graduation in 1970, the first stage of her plan came to fruition when she landed a job teaching tenth and eleventh grade English at Langley High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Glover taught for five years at Langley High and enjoyed every day in the classroom; after all, this was a dream come true.

Continuing her education was always a part of her plan. Glover enlisted in the U.S. Army and used her educational GI bill to obtain her graduate degree. In 1980 Glover received a master’s degree in guidance and counseling and then returned to her beloved classroom to teach high school and middle school for another 12 years before joining the staff at Florence-Darlington Technical College in Florence, South Carolina, where she worked for the next 14 years as an instructor and Director of Student Support Services.

While not a part of her original plan, in 1988 Glover was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives where she would serve the people of South Carolina for four years (1988-1992) and then 12 years (1992-2004) by writing and passing the laws that govern the state and annually constructing and passing the Appropriations Bill. She is the first and still only African-American woman to ever serve in the South Carolina State Senate.

Through the years, Glover’s passions have remained the same. Besides her teaching and guidance duties at Morris College, Glover directs a children’s community theatre group: the eBushua Arts Foundation, a non-profit organization funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Florence County Tax Accommodations Committee.

SOAKING IN SELF-REFLECTION
Glover is a big believer in soul-searching and self-reflection.

“I love alone time!” admits Glover. “I don’t have to answer to anybody. I can just be alone with my thoughts.”

Interestingly, Glover has noticed a phenomenon in today’s students with regard to "alone time." Not only do they not crave it, but they also actually seem to avoid it. In class, Glover reminds students that they don’t always have to be with the crowd and that they don’t need someone else’s acceptance in order to feel worthy and fulfilled.

“I ask my students how many of them are looking for someone to make them happy and make them feel good," says Glover. "Every semester a bunch of hands—particularly females—immediately shoot up. I tell them, 'If you do not love you, then how can you expect someone else to love you? Expecting someone else to make you happy is an irresponsible burden to put on anyone. Love and happiness are self-processes.”

“If you’re not happy with yourself, and you do not love you, then how can you expect someone else to love you?”

Personal Responsibility is a concept that Glover thinks is worth repeating time and time again. Accepting personal responsibility
"I’m applying to a graduate program," the student told Glover. "The program I’m interested in has nothing to do with the plan I had as a freshman, but Dr. Glover, I’ve never been so excited about anything in my life!"

It turns out that this student was a big CSI fan. For years she had been watching these crime shows, all the while thinking, "Hey, I could do that! In fact, I’d like to do that!" The student began to research a forensic career by talking to recruiters and counselors and visiting labs and schools; the more she learned, the more excited she became. Ultimately, this student was accepted into a forensic science graduate program and began graduate school last fall.

"That student followed her dream and as a result, her spirit is soaring!" says Glover, beaming with pride.

Glover relishes these happy endings (well, really "beginnings") when a student dives head-first—and heart-first—into her dream... just the way Glover did.

Glover’s life is an example of how a plan continues, if you work it, to evolve all throughout your life.

"I spend my days living my dream," Glover says enthusiastically. "And I couldn’t be happier helping others to do the same!"

Throughout the semester, Glover witnesses an evolution in her students. As students reflect on the inventory, work on their plan, and pursue their dreams, they gain self-confidence and ultimately realize that their dreams are possible.

WHEN IT ALL COMES TOGETHER

One student’s journey stands out in Glover’s mind. A young woman had taken Glover’s class when she was a freshman. At the time she had made up her mind to study biology and pursue a medical career but in her senior year this student approached Glover to ask for a letter of recommendation.

A Burke High School student receives guidance from his ROTC instructor
MAGGIE GLOVER’S STUDENT PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY INVENTORY

Name Of Student: ___________________________ Date: ______________

In the space provided next to each item, place the number “1” if the answer to the item is “yes” and place the number “0” if the answer to the item is “no”.

1) _____ I attended all Freshman Orientation sessions.

2) _____ I have not missed more than one class in any of my courses.

3) _____ I have not been late to any class in any of my courses.

4) _____ I have obtained all of the designated textbooks for all of my courses.

5) _____ I have completed and turned in all assignments in all of my courses by the designated deadline date.

6) _____ I know the name of my academic advisor.

7) _____ I attended all Freshman Class meetings.

8) _____ To date I have completed all weekly assigned work-study hours. (Students who don’t have a work-study assignment should record “1” for this item.)

9) _____ I have read the policy regarding student conduct as written in the current Morris College Student Handbook.

10) _____ I have read the Academic Policies section of the current Morris College Catalog.

TOTAL SCORE: ___________

RATING SCALE
A rating of 8 to 10 = Responsible
A rating of 5 to 7 = Moderately Irresponsible
A rating of 0 to 4 = Very Irresponsible

Signature of Student: ___________________________
THE ACCELERATED PROGRAM AND BRIDGES TO SUCCESS

BY RENEE MCCASLIN

THe ACCELERATED PROGRAM BEGAN as an extension of the Charleston County School District’s Middle Grade Acceleration Project (MGAP) in South Carolina. The project aimed to provide a small class setting for overage seventh-grade students to complete seventh and eighth grades in one academic school year in hopes of reducing the high school drop-out rate for this population of at-risk youth. The Accelerated Program was formed as a pilot to create a more programmatic approach to the Middle Grade Acceleration Project’s teaching and learning and to solidify acceleration efforts. For this program, the Charleston County School District partnered with the College of Charleston’s Center for Partnership to Improve Education (CPIE).

The original partnership agreement focused on staffing, location, and philosophy. It was determined that the Accelerated Program would operate as a school within a school model at James Island Middle School (JIMS). The College of Charleston assigned a director, and the Charleston County School District provided three classroom teachers and one guidance counselor. The program was charged with creating a learning community by piloting best practices for accelerating learning. Specifically, the program needed to address academic, attendance, and behavioral issues of the overage learner. All information, techniques, and processes developed were to be shared with the teachers and classes of the Middle Grades Acceleration Project throughout the district. If successful, the long-term goal was to replicate the Accelerated Program in several locations throughout the district.

“Over the course of two years, the staff members created admissions criteria, interview protocols, contracts, and general layout of an accelerated program.”

MGAP students at the CPIE Spring conference

Charleston assigned a director, and the Charleston County School District provided three classroom teachers and one guidance counselor. The program was charged with creating a learning community by piloting best practices for accelerating learning. Specifically, the program needed to address academic, attendance, and behavioral issues of the overage learner. All information, techniques, and processes developed were to be shared with the teachers and classes of the Middle Grades Acceleration Project throughout the district. If successful, the long-term goal was to replicate the Accelerated Program in several locations throughout the district.
In July 2006, the Accelerated Program was conceived and operated until July 2008. Over the course of two years, the staff members created admission criteria, interview protocols, contracts, and general layout of an accelerated program. The staff of the program also worked to agree upon a unified vision, establish procedures, develop curriculum, and determine behavioral philosophies. Professional development focused on accelerating the overage student and centered on powerful learning strategies, positive behavior management, counseling, and leadership training. The Accelerated Program was highly successful, yielding much recognition for the students and staff members.

Within the two-year timeframe, 64 students successfully completed two academic grades in one school year within the Accelerated Program. All 64 were promoted to area high schools and entered as freshmen. For the first year of the Accelerated Program, students missed an average of two days of school; the second-year students missed an average of three days of school for the entire year. In two years, only two students earned out-of-school suspensions and zero in-school suspensions. All 64 students showed gains in at least one area of the MAP testing, with the majority of growth shown in reading.

Dr. Christine Finnan, the director of the College of Charleston’s Partners for Acceleration, interviewed students who described the success of the Accelerated Program in various ways:

- “Last year I was failing all of my classes: no A, B, C, D–I was failing! At the beginning of this year I got my first quarter report card and I was passing everything. Now [at the end of the year] I am still passing everything.”

- “My behavior has changed a lot this year. I’m much more mature. I’m paying attention in class, doing my homework, and I don’t laugh at somebody making mistakes or other peoples’ problems.”

- “[The staff] talks to us individually to see how things are going. They do this daily. They boost our confidence. Without them, it wouldn’t be the same. [Students] would be out of control. They keep us in check. I’ve seen a difference in behavior.”

During the second year of operation, the Accelerated Program continued and also began to track and provide support for former students, now freshman in high school. Interestingly, while these students were very successful the year before, the success did not appear to transfer to high school. At the end of their freshman year, many students once again lagged behind in credits earned, good attendance, and positive behavior. The students completing the Accelerated Program did average better statistics than students involved in Middle Grade Acceleration Project classrooms, however, the success was minimal in comparison to the year prior.

According to the Charleston County School District’s One Year Follow-Up Report, 159 students completed the MGAP program in 2006–2007 and were promoted to the ninth grade. The charts on the next page summarize the students’ attendance, behavior, and academic credit earnings for their first year of high school.
## Student Outcomes for the Middle Grades Acceleration Project

### Attendance Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance Rate</th>
<th>Overall Cohort (n=152)</th>
<th>JIMS Site (n=33)</th>
<th>Other Sites (n=119)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Students</td>
<td>% Students</td>
<td># Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92% or higher</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-91%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 60%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Credits Earned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count of Suspensions</th>
<th>Overall Cohort (n=152)</th>
<th>JIMS Site (n=33)</th>
<th>Other Sites (n=119)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Students</td>
<td>% Students</td>
<td># Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Partnerships

16

---

PARTNERSHIPS in education
Due to budgetary issues for the Charleston County School District, the Accelerated Program was not continued for the 2008–2009 school year. In an effort to better prepare current MGAP students for the transition to high school, all information gained from working with the ninth-grade students is shared with teachers of the current MGAP classes. Additional supports are in the process of being developed including having freshman students provide informational sessions to the MGAP students and develop a peer mentoring program between current freshman and MGAP students.

Research on the Bridges for Success partnership is currently being conducted and will conclude at the end of the school year. This research hopes to determine outcomes of specific supports along with comparisons of overall achievement between student cohort groups receiving supports and those students not receiving additional supports. It also aims to gain additional information that can be shared with high school and middle school teachers and administrators to address the transitional hardship experienced by many students when they first enter high school.

Based on these statistics, the partnership between the Charleston County School District and the College of Charleston’s Center for Partnerships to Improve Education shifted to focus solely on creating more successful transitions for these students. The new partnership, Bridges to Success, serves ninth-grade former MGAP students enrolled in four high schools within the district. Each of the students receives weekly, biweekly, and monthly support.

In order to continue to address academics, attendance, and behaviors, each student keeps a portfolio that serves as the focus of student meetings and interventions. Students are taught to track grades, count credits, and understand high school attendance issues. Students also work in small groups or individually to create plans of action that are revisited and updated at each grading period. Leadership opportunities continue for these students through enrichment events, community speaking, and mentoring opportunities. Parents are also contacted on an ongoing basis and are educated on high school requirements as well. In addition, each of the four schools has developed additional supports to specifically address this group of students.

Due to budgetary issues for the Charleston County School District, the Accelerated Program was not continued for the 2008–2009 school year. In an effort to better prepare current MGAP students for the transition to high school, all information gained from working with the ninth-grade students is shared with teachers of the current MGAP classes. Additional supports are in the process of being developed including having freshman students provide informational sessions to the MGAP students and develop a peer mentoring program between current freshman and MGAP students.

Research on the Bridges for Success partnership is currently being conducted and will conclude at the end of the school year. This research hopes to determine outcomes of specific supports along with comparisons of overall achievement between student cohort groups receiving supports and those students not receiving additional supports. It also aims to gain additional information that can be shared with high school and middle school teachers and administrators to address the transitional hardship experienced by many students when they first enter high school.
IN LATE 2005, WHEN CPIE WAS DESIGNING ITS PARTNERSHIP approach, the Center patterned itself after the UPenn Partnership, one of the most extensive and successful school/community partnerships in history. Though some folks believe that these types of partnerships are relatively new, in actuality, universities and colleges across the nation have been partnering with their community schools for years, providing support, professional development, and even financial resources. The idea is that if universities can provide the resources and services for an improved education, one could, in turn, revive the community.

The University of Pennsylvania’s first foray into university-assisted schools was its 1962 partnership with the Lea School of West Philadelphia. Due to administration changes, the partnership was ended after just five years. Influenced by Harlem’s “I Have a Dream” foundation, Penn alumnus George Weiss founded the “Say Yes to Education” program in 1987. In the beginning, Penn provided assistance to this program. These partnerships involved faculty and students in many of the schools at Penn, but especially of the Graduate School of Education. Education services included tutoring and mentoring programs and academic and service-learning projects all sponsored by Penn in 12 schools. Penn’s own neighborhood, University City, once a center of cultural diversity, was in despair in the early 1990s. With deep ties to its declining neighborhood, Penn sought partnerships for civic-reform to refurbish West Philadelphia and decided to branch out on their own.

In June 1998, Penn’s then-President Judith Rodin took a route similar to the Lea School initiatives and committed to the School District of Philadelphia the establishment of a PreK-8 school that would help stabilize University City by enabling inhabitants to feel comfortable sending their children to the area schools. The Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander University of Pennsylvania Partnership School, or Penn Alexander School for short, was named for the first African-American woman to earn a doctorate in economics not just at Penn, but also in the nation. Penn Alexander opened for kindergarten and first grade in the fall 2001. The new Penn Alexander building was completed in time for the 2002-2003 school year. Second, fifth- and sixth-graders were matriculated that year, and by the fall 2004, all grades were open.

Classes are small at Penn Alexander (under 20 students). This is due, in part, to Penn leasing the land to the School District of Philadelphia for $1 per year and contributing $1,000 per student. The state-of-the-art technology at the school is open to all children living in the defined area of University City, which provides a rich classroom diversity.

To further the community-school ties, the five-acre school campus is specifically designed to be open to the public and can be used for a variety of things—both for the school and the community. The music and art rooms, the library, and the gym are open after school hours and on the weekends. Many community activities are held there, including adult education workshops and recreational, social, and artistic programs.

The school boasts a three-story atrium, an outdoor amphitheater, a rain garden, a science garden, and a full-sized soccer field. Penn contributes to the school’s strong literacy, math and science features; supplies student teachers; and provides professional development for staff members. The University faculty also provides curriculum development and new teacher training. Each grade level at Penn-Alexander has a partnership with a different department or organization at Penn, which further cements the university-school bond.

This joint collaboration between the School District of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, and Penn has been quite a success, as the Penn Alexander School was voted a gold-standard school by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and was honored by the KnowledgeWorks Foundation’s “Schools as Centers of Community” Honor Society.
PUBLIC BOARDING SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN OF POVERTY:
A Growing Trend

“Boarding schools can nurture a shared commitment to disciplined study and achievement.”

- Bruce Fuller, University of California-Berkeley professor of education and public policy (Mathews, 2004)
Generally, boarding schools are thought of as elite, preparatory schools for the children of the privileged, but a new trend in urban education is apparent as almost 30 public boarding schools have opened across the nation—serving various demographics.

Located in Hartsville, South Carolina, and established in 1988, the South Carolina Governor’s School for Science and Mathematics is a public boarding school serving 128 high-performing juniors and seniors interested in pursuing careers in science and mathematics. Small classes, extended labs, field trips, and hands-on activities regularly challenge the students. In addition, juniors participate in a summer research project on a college level and present their findings at a yearly scientific conference.

Sometimes a public boarding school is born out of demographic necessity. For example, Crane Union High School in Crane, Oregon, is fed by eight public elementary schools in Harney County. The few students in this rural county would have too long a commute to attend school each day (up to 150 miles) if they were not offered residential facilities. Students spend the week at school, in dormitory-living with teachers and other adult supervisors, and travel home on the weekends to be with their families.

“With a high attendance and re-enrollment rate, the school has experienced 100% graduation rates.”

Serving underprivileged, at-risk students
In the past, many of these residential schools have been for blind and deaf students or Native-American students living on reservations. Some of these schools still exist, as do public boarding schools for emotionally disturbed students; some are even drug rehabilitation centers.

Today, public boarding schools are being established in the neighborhoods of underprivileged, at-risk students. Currently, “one in five American children has lived in families in which cash income failed to exceed official poverty thresholds” (Brooks-Gunn, 1997). Research has shown that the rates of grade repetition, suspension, or expulsion and the drop-out rate is almost double for children of poverty, compared to non-poor children. Public boarding school enrollment has risen as people recognize that poor children can succeed in a supportive school environment.

The Seed School’s Success
One of the most well-known public boarding schools for high-poverty students is the School for Educational Evolution and Development (SEED) Public Charter School in Washington, D.C. The SEED School believes that the main hindrance to student success is family and community conditions, correlating to: high housing mobility, poor nutrition, parent mental health problems, and other complications of poverty associated with lower student achievement (Lam, 2008). Available seats in this school are coveted, and students are selected by a lottery system.

Open since 1998, the SEED school serves 320 students; 99% of whom are African-American and 73% of whom are low-income. Most of the students come from the southeast section of the District of Columbia where the school was built. Students, who are usually at least two grades behind in math and reading, take seven classes a day and “study under the supervision of school
staff members who tutor them and help with homework” (Maxwell, 2006). With a high attendance and re-enrollment rate, the school has experienced 100% graduation rates, with every single graduate being accepted into a college or university, including 2008 graduates attending Stanford, Duke, and the University of Pennsylvania.

It is the goal of the SEED School to work with students’ families as well as the surrounding communities to provide each student with the best academic opportunities in a secure and stable environment. Efforts to open public boarding schools are also underway in Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. The apparent link between poverty and student failure—combined with the measured high performance of poor, at-risk students in urban, residential schools—is precisely why the SEED Foundation aims to one day offer public boarding schools in every major U.S. city.

SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS
Success has been so great that a second school opened in Baltimore, Maryland. This school is open to students from all around Maryland. With the SEED School’s current success in making school “come alive” for students in poverty, the foundation is looking to open schools in other locations, such as Los Angeles and Oakland, California, as well as another school in the District of Columbia.

The Maya Angelou Public Charter School, also in Washington, D.C., opened student housing after witnessing the student success in the SEED School. An interview with one of the students revealed that after moving into student housing, the student stopped being tardy, “her grades rose and she began to shed a crippling shyness” (Mathews, 2004). This is possible because the founders of the SEED School, Eric Adler and Rajiv Vinnakota, aided in getting Congress to add a boarding school stipend to a school funding law in the District of Columbia. Essentially, any school in the District could offer student housing and receive this extra stipend per student.

After observing such progress with the SEED School in the District of Columbia, a coalition formed to open such a school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Approximately 80% of all students in Milwaukee qualify for free or reduced lunch; while “2,300 Milwaukee public school students a day are considered homeless” (Dennis, 2008). The Wisconsin Coalition for a Public Boarding School wants to prevent the effects of problems outside their control by providing students safe homes, study space, and constant support from adults, all of which they have seen offered by the SEED School.

WORKS CITED:


Education is a whole different ballgame than it was 40, 30, or even 20 years ago. With increasing demands placed on schools by federal mandates, such as No Child Left Behind, schools need support from parents, businesses, and community leaders. And this is why educational leaders agree that community involvement is, indeed, a crucial component in the overall success of any school. Locally, teachers and administrators at Charleston’s schools feel some comfort knowing that support from their communities proves beneficial when addressing overall student success.

Establishing Initial Partnerships with Community

Four local Charleston school administrators whose schools were recently awarded “Community-Building School” endorsements by the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education (CPIE) shared methods by which schools can begin to build successful school-community partnerships.

The administrators—Cecelia Rogers, Jacqueline Dinge, LaDene Conroy, and Margaret Lasek—spoke candidly about how to establish initial partnerships with their communities.
Jacqueline Dinge, principal of Springfield Elementary School, suggests that teachers take a proactive approach.

"Connect with the local churches who will then supply connections to local businesses," says Dinge. "Also, use the resources you have inside the school such as PTA, and encourage your teachers to write letters to parents and community organizations."

Being proactive is important, but so is being realistic. Admittedly, establishing school-community partnerships can sometimes be highly frustrating.

"There were so many moments of rejection," recalls Dinge. "I would send out letters for PTA meetings and very few parents would show."

LaDene Conroy, principal of Hursey Elementary School, recalls similar frustrations when she would mail letters to community leaders and get no response. Adds Rogers, "The entire process of getting parents and community members involved in the educational process was a new concept for me, and I had no clue where to start."

**BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY**

Casenex, a professional development agency, noted that establishing community partnerships depends heavily on the creative hands and minds of the school administrators, who must work with teachers to reach out to parents and communities, rather than expecting parents and communities to stumble into the schools. Schools must think beyond the "open-house" concept of school/community one-night interaction and instead create ways to involve community members so that they can develop a real connection to and invest a real interest in their school's academic program.

Finally, school administrators and educational stakeholders should identify the economic, social, ethnic, and language barriers which can impede educational stakeholders from coming together and therefore hinder the progress of establishing successful school-community partnerships.

**SUSTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP**

Once the groundwork for establishing school-community partnerships has been laid, the next task is sustaining the relationship. Schools should continue to engage parents and community members by making them feel like a part of the school family.

Cecelia Rogers, principal of Charleston Development Academy, said that the key to successfully establishing community partnerships was inviting the community to her school via oral and written communication techniques.

"The community wants to be informed," says Rogers. "They want to know what our children are doing."

As for keeping parents engaged, Rogers makes it mandatory. For instance, she requires parents to attend PTA meetings and parent-conference on a regular basis. In addition, teachers contact students' parents on a weekly basis to inform them of their child's academic and behavioral progress.

Epstein et al. (2007) discusses six types of involvement to sustain successful and meaningful school-community partnerships. According to Epstein (2007), schools should consider the establishment of parent support opportunities, develop a strong communication plan for parents and community members, establish volunteer opportunities, constantly involve parents and community members, and encourage them to become more active in school activities.

**"A school’s success lies in the hands of many—all of whom work toward a common goal: student achievement."**

"The community wants to be informed," says Rogers. "They want to know what our children are doing."

As for keeping parents engaged, Rogers makes it mandatory. For instance, she requires parents to attend PTA meetings and parent-conference on a regular basis. In addition, teachers contact students’ parents on a weekly basis to inform them of their child’s academic and behavioral progress.

Epstein et al. (2007) discusses six types of involvement to sustain successful and meaningful school-community partnerships. According to Epstein (2007), schools should consider the establishment of parent support opportunities, develop a strong communication plan for parents and community members, establish volunteer opportunities, constantly involve parents and community members, and encourage them to become more active in school activities.
members in the decision-making process, and connect families to community outreach services.

A COMBINED EFFORT
The National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools (2003) has found that “when schools, families, and communities work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more” (p. 22).

Dinge has witnessed an increase in students’ test scores and improved student behavior as a result of parents’ increased involvement in the education of their children. But she acknowledges that a school’s success lies in the hands of many—all of whom work toward a common goal: student achievement.

“PTA, School Improvement Councils, and business partners have to all be a part of the school community to bring about essential changes within a school,” says Dinge. “They are all equally beneficial resources.”

In addition, Rogers notes that a strong school-community partnership enables the school to surmount a lot of financial and academic obstacles.

“It’s great when community partners donate new laptops and [desktop] computers to support our academic programs,” says Rogers. “And it’s nice to see parents sitting inside the classroom [helping] their child [live] up to his or her full academic potential.”

THE STEPS TO BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

The idea of creating and sustaining positive school-community partnerships may initially seem overwhelming, but it can be done. The key is doing the things that are necessary in order to build, encourage, and reinforce the partnership.

The first step is developing a philosophical mission which includes parents, teachers, and community members. The mission is important because it is the driving force of any successful program.

The second step is creating a school-community partnership committee within your school. The committee (consisting of school staff members, parents, community members, and School Improvement Councils) should meet regularly and carry out the mission as outlined for community building. The third step is establishing a plan of action that outlines the role each school-community member plays and initiating school and community-building strategies that are relevant to your community. The plan of action should be revised as needed.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Every year that administrators, teachers, parents, and students fail to create school-community partnerships signifies another year lost in getting all educational stakeholders involved in the educational process of children. As a result, an unfortunate gap remains between the school and the community. It is every stakeholder’s responsibility to bring all parties together to ensure that every child has the chance to acquire the educational opportunities he or she deserves.

Nathaniel Bryan, Ed.D., is the assistant principal of Buist Academy for Advanced Studies, located in Charleston, South Carolina.
THE ANNENBERG INSTITUTE FOR SCHOOL REFORM

“I believe in social responsibility. A man’s service to others must be at least in ratio to the character of his own success in life. When one is fortunate enough to gain a measure of material well-being, however small, service to others should be uppermost in his mind.”

-Walter H. Annenberg (1951)

BY JORDAN EDWARDS

THE ANNENBERG INSTITUTE FOR SCHOOL REFORM is one of the many programs for social improvement developed by the Annenberg Foundation. The Foundation, established in 1989 by U.S. ambassador and publishing giant Walter H. Annenberg, offers support and helps procure funding for non-profit organizations both in the United States and worldwide. With offices in Radnor, Pennsylvania, and Los Angeles, California, the Foundation’s major programs focus on the areas of education and youth development; arts, culture and humanities; civic and community; health and human services; animal services; and the environment.1

The Institute has recognized a lack in public education that does not facilitate success in all its students and is working to level the playing field by a) helping schools find and allocate money, b) working with the district offices to assess the efficiency and productivity of their schools, and c) helping the district offices find and connect with community partners. By identifying challenges and then creating action plans to turn those challenges into strengths, the Annenberg Institute is providing premium educational opportunities to students who would not normally receive them.

“We provide technical assistance and conduct research around questions that examine the critical elements, conditions, and policies at the district level that support teaching and learning in schools,” notes Michael Grady, the deputy director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

By reorganizing districts to improve school management, the Institute works to identify unseen educational opportunities and make them accessible. The Institute seeks to move from traditional schools that do not help all students succeed to schools with community partnerships and advantages for all students.

The Annenberg Institute developed the Central Office Review for Results and Equity (CORRE) to work with school districts to ascertain how the performance, capacity, and effectiveness—specifically of the district office—can provide equity and increased academic performance for all of its children. This self-analysis is achieved through a five-step process to assess how the districts’ central office functions and supports both teaching and learning.

Hamilton County Schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee, participated in the CORRE’s study. CORRE found that while the district focuses on academic performance and service, they need to improve “communications, constituency building and community engagement, and building on the district’s service orientation” (Hamilton County Department of Education, 2005). Oregon’s Portland Public Schools have also enlisted the help of CORRE to appraise their district. In doing so, CORRE found weaknesses in communication among the district office personnel and between the district and its schools. As a result, CORRE created action plans with the district to enhance effective communication.

“The Institute works work with community organizations, parent organizations, and youth organizations to build their capacity to become genuine partners in the reform process,” says Grady. “This, in turn, strengthens urban districts.”

An interview with Andrew Lewis-College of Charleston, associate professor, Department of Health and Human Performance; coordinator for the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education’s Community Outreach Team

INTERVIEW BY PAULA EGELSON

EGELSON: Describe your background.

LEWIS: I grew up in a large family in the small town of Winter Haven, Florida. My parents were professionals; my father owned and operated a funeral home, and my mother wrote insurance. I was very close to my grandparents. Although my grandparents did not graduate from high school, they valued the promise of education as an opportunity to improve your quality of life. My relatives promoted the concept that education was a way to grow and make life better for all.

I enjoyed school and liked the environment, even though it was a segregated school system during my K-12 years. I graduated high school and wanted to be an Industrial Arts teacher because my teacher role model was the Industrial Arts teacher. He was a supporter of education and a strong advocate for the community involvement in the school system. He eventually became the town’s first African-American mayor. I wanted to become a teacher so that I could impact young lives like he did.

By the time I entered Albany State University in Georgia, my desire to be an Industrial Arts teacher had changed to wanting to be a physical education teacher. While doing my education field experiences in the first quarter of my sophomore year, I fell in love
with working with young people and, more specifically, those with disabilities. The second quarter of my junior year, I volunteered to work with Special Olympics and have worked with the Special Olympics program in five different states. After completing these experiences, I realized that I wanted to dedicate my life to educating students about leading healthy, activity lifestyles.

E: What led you to the College of Charleston?

L: After graduating from college, I taught in the public schools for two years in Polk County, Florida. The principal of the school told me I would make a good school administrator. Honestly, I had no desire to become an administrator. After that I became a physical educator instructor at the College of Charleston from 1974–1978. I then returned to graduate school to further my education. After receiving my doctorate, I came back to the College of Charleston as an assistant professor of physical education. Besides being a professor at the College, over the years I have served as a department chair, interim dean for undergraduate studies, director of the MAT program, and director of Professional Development. In short, I guess my principal was right about my administrative abilities. I have a B.S. from Albany State University, a master’s degree from University of Tennessee, and a Ph.D. from the Ohio State University. My areas of concentration are Adaptive Physical Education and Sports Pedagogy.

E: What was it like growing up in your neighborhood?

L: It was a rural community and the statement, “It takes a village to raise a child” really fit. Our immediate neighborhood was small and close-knit; people owned their own homes and took pride in their homes and surroundings. You could find everything in my neighborhood. The doctor, dentist, and schools were all close by, so you could walk everywhere. It was a very supportive place. Older citizens showed an interest in us, and our teachers lived in the community. There was even a bartering system in place. There was not lots of money, but there was lots of love…we didn’t know what poor meant. It was a wonderful place to raise a family. Many of my generation left the community as young adults but have come back to build a life there.

E: What keeps you motivated professionally?

L: The opportunity to work with pre-service teachers is very important to me. These future professionals have the potential to positively impact the lives of many children. I feel very deeply about teaching for what it does; it is the foundation of what we make of ourselves in life. What teachers do for students beyond the intellectual is often overlooked. We develop students in a positive way through teaching and mentoring.

E: What are your reflections about urban education?

L: Urban schools are unique; they have different needs by virtue of their environment and its many influences. The concerns found in urban schools on a daily basis—the way decisions are made, how problems are solved, the cultural expectations that are held by the community within the school and the community outside the school—are not always the same as in other schools. The expectations are different in urban schools, and the stakes for success and/or failing are based on high risk assessments. As director of the Office of Professional Development in Education at the College, we offer targeted professional development courses for teachers at Burke High School in an urban location.
The Center for Partnerships’ model is being implemented in the Charleston County School District and will eventually be disseminated for use in low-performing rural and urban schools across South Carolina.

We welcome your inquiries. For more information on the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education, call us or visit our website.

General Inquiries: 843.953.2742
Website: http://partnerships.cofc.edu/