

# Partnerships *update*

In this issue

- P.1 new director
- P.2 faculty as partners
- P.3 the Algebra Project

Our mission is to work collaboratively with higher education, preK-12 public schools, and the community to improve the lives of students

## CPIE welcomes a new director



In August 2011, Dr. Courtney A. Howard took the helm as the new director of the College of Charleston's Center for Partnerships to Improve Education (CPIE). In this position, she is charged with creating viable opportunities to connect the faculty and students in the School of Education, Health, and Human Performance with schools and communities. As a veteran teacher educator who instilled the value of learning the background of children in order to engage them effectively, Dr. Howard is committed to finding out as much as possible about the contextual backdrop of education and educational

partnerships in the Charleston area. In her first several months, she voraciously read past and current news articles, met with many members of the community, and paid attention to the details of the spoken and unspoken. Apparently, her many years of being inspired by the likes of Perry Mason and Columbo have finally paid off! Her investigation, though still ongoing, has proven to be beneficial to her awareness of the decisions and points of view that have influenced the current educational landscape of the Charleston area.

Howard is impressed with past and current efforts to bridge the resource and achievement gaps that split along racial, socioeconomic, and English language proficiency lines. It is clear that the Charleston community has rallied behind its schools and students, and Howard seeks opportunities for CPIE to join forces to address the community's priorities in ways that

engage the primary resources of the College—its faculty and its students. Howard is excited about the partnerships and ideas that have emerged during the course of her first year and she is grateful to the Charleston community for welcoming her with open arms. She looks forward to making contributions that ultimately benefit the community's students.

Prior to joining the College of Charleston, Howard was a tenured faculty member and the interim dean of education at Claflin University in Orangeburg, SC. She earned her undergraduate degree from Florida A&M University in biology. Her master's and doctoral degrees were earned at the University of Florida where she studied curriculum and instruction with a special emphasis in science education. She and her husband are the proud parents of two children, ages 2 and 4.

### Promoting Career Awareness

In partnership with the Trident Regional Education Center, CPIE co-hosted a Connecting Community and Careers brunch on March 31, 2012. The Saturday brunch, intended to be the first in a series, featured two career panels—one representing computer science and the other for hospitality and tourism. Guests were treated to a hearty brunch buffet and received valuable information about each career such as job opportunities, training, common myths, and a “day in the life of”. The panelists also opened up about some of the personal challenges they experienced in their chosen fields. Panelists included Dr. Christopher Starr (College of Charleston) and Mrs. Desiree Wright Marshall (SPAWAR) for computer science and Chef Miles Huff and a student (Culinary Institute of Charleston at Trident Technical College), Dr. Wayne Smith (College of Charleston), and Mrs. Betsay Painter (Holiday Inn Charleston Airport & Convention Center) for hospitality and tourism.



## Books for Classrooms

In February 2012, CPIE partnered with the College of Charleston's Office of Student Services and Certification to promote African American children's literature. This effort was in conjunction with the 23rd annual African American Read-In, an initiative of the National Council of Teachers of English. CPIE provided a list of children's books written by or about African Americans to a group of clinical interns (student teachers) in elementary classrooms. Each intern was invited to select three books from the list. CPIE then purchased a set of the selected books for the classroom and a set for the clinical interns.

The purpose was to assist current teachers to expand and diversify their classroom libraries as well as help prospective teachers to begin collecting books for their future classrooms. In return, each clinical intern was expected to incorporate at least one book into a classroom lesson and submit a written reflection about the experience. Here is what some participants had to say:

*"Thank you for sharing this wonderful resource with [us]. Our understanding of history and events leading to the Civil Rights Movement is much richer [because of] your contribution."*

*"The children really enjoyed the book. I think it connected with many of them who face great challenges in their personal lives and helped them see that despite these challenges it is possible to come out on top."*

*"Thank you very much for this wonderful opportunity."*

## Faculty as Partners

It has been said that a college is only as good as its faculty. In the same vein, college and community partnerships can only be as strong as the links between the professors and the local schools, agencies, and residents. To foster these links, CPIE launched its Faculty as Partners (FaP) mini-grants program in 2011-2012. The FaP program was designed to stimulate faculty involvement with CPIE while supporting faculty research and service-learning initiatives.

Grantees furthered the mission and vision of CPIE by working with community entities in ways that have the potential to result in lasting positive effects for all partners. They also pursued their own research interests. Eligibility for the mini-grants was limited to full time faculty in the College of Charleston's School of Education, Health, and Human Performance, also the home of the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education.

In fall 2011, faculty members were invited to submit their project ideas and proposed budgets to a panel of reviewers consisting of faculty and staff within the School. Faculty had the option to choose from three mini-grant options: *Service-Learning Challenge* to support service-learning experiences involving a specified course; *Faculty Research Support* for new or existing community-based research efforts; and *Course Release Opportunity* to reduce the professor's teaching load so that more time could be devoted to a specific project.

Three faculty members were awarded Spring 2012 Faculty as Partners mini-grants. All are housed in the Department of Teacher Education.

### Revising and Extending Student Self-Concept Framework



**Christine Finnan** revised and refined a data collection instrument that measures students' and adults' perceptions of students' sense of their accomplishment, belonging, and engagement. She and her research team then used the instrument to conduct an ethnographic study in a local elementary school. *Dr. Finnan is a full professor with joint appointments in the Department of Teacher Education and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.*

### Learning the Politics of Resistance in Segregated Schools: Student Activism and Protest in Charleston, 1960-1964



**Jon Hale** collected archival and interview data about high school student activism in Charleston during the Civil Rights Movement. He has formed positive relationships with community members and leaders. Additionally, he has presented his work at a major conference and has already submitted a manuscript to a statewide publication. *Dr. Hale is a new faculty member in teacher education with a focus on the foundations of education.*

### Powerful Interactions: Improving Teacher-Child Relationship Quality through Reflection and Discussion in a Professional Book Club



**Kelley Mayer-White** took a three-fold approach to studying teacher-child relationship quality. She established a professional book club with Head Start teachers and studied its impact on the teachers' relationships with their students. She also received advanced training in a classroom quality observation tool. Finally, Dr. Mayer-White explored the use of a new research methodology to study children's expressions of their ideas of teacher-child relationship quality. *Dr. Mayer-White is an assistant professor of education with expertise in early childhood education.*

# Improving Math Instruction



Algebra represents the transition from concrete arithmetic to the abstract and symbolic representations that typify higher level mathematics. The level of thinking required to master algebra integrates quantitative reasoning with problem solving and the formalization of patterns and functions. These skills are necessary for success in both college and many high paying professions. The U.S. has performed poorly on international math (and science) tests. This observation has contributed to the recent push to improve STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education. Collectively, the nation's weaknesses in these areas have been called economic and national defense issues because of the negative impact on the nation's ability to use and advance scientific knowledge. Access to quality algebra instruction is seen as a critical component to improving U.S. education.

Algebra is considered to be the gatekeeper to higher level mathematics courses in both high school and college. Algebra I is a prerequisite for math such as geometry, trigonometry, Algebra II, and calculus, and students who master Algebra I in 8th or 9th grade have more opportunity to take those advanced courses before graduating from high school. Also, they

are more likely to do well in college math. Recognizing that minority and low income students are less likely to take algebra as an eighth or ninth grader, Robert Moses—a Civil Rights activist and math educator—identified access to algebra as a civil rights issue. Hence, the birth of the Algebra Project in the 1980s. This math literacy effort is currently working to promote its unique curricular approach through its Southern Initiative of the Algebra Project, Inc. (SIAP).

The College of Charleston's Department of Teacher Education and Center for Partnerships to Improve Education, in collaboration with SIAP are working to expose teacher education faculty to the philosophies and strategies that characterize this literacy-based, student-centered approach to learning math. So far, the faculty have participated in over 40 hours of workshops designed to help them understand the approach and implement it into their courses. Through sustained partnership, the ultimate plan is to embed the Algebra Project throughout the College of Charleston's teacher education programs, wherever it is appropriate. This will ensure that a cadre of new teachers will enter the workforce already familiar with a proven approach for teaching mathematics in a culturally relevant manner.

## Contact Us

Center for Partnerships to Improve Education (CPIE)  
College of Charleston  
66 George Street  
Charleston, SC 29424  
(843) 953-2742

### Director

Courtney A. Howard, Ph.D.  
[howardca1@cofc.edu](mailto:howardca1@cofc.edu)

### Administrative Assistant

Melanie Hofmann-Mabe  
[hofmannm@cofc.edu](mailto:hofmannm@cofc.edu)

<http://partnerships.cofc.edu>

## COLLEGE of CHARLESTON

CENTER FOR  
PARTNERSHIPS TO  
IMPROVE EDUCATION

## About Us

The Center for Partnerships to Improve Education (CPIE) is housed within the College of Charleston's School of Education, Health, and Human Performance. It was established in 2005 to support the improvement of public preK-12 education through partnerships. Initially, CPIE formed agreements with selected high needs schools to provide teacher professional development and mentoring programs for students. After undergoing a re-envisioning in 2010-2011, CPIE now addresses the following four focus areas:

### Teaching and Learning

Student learning outcomes improve when academic concerns in school, home, and community settings are addressed

### Health and Wellness

This important area fosters the physical and emotional well-being of students and families and promotes healthy environments for work and play

### Community Outreach

It is necessary to cultivate partnerships among stakeholders whose work relates to teaching and learning and health and wellness.

### Research

The development of creative and rigorous research adds to existing bodies of knowledge, informs the work of the other three focus areas, and provides opportunities to study current and emerging best practices.