

DIVERSE PATHWAYS IN TEACHER PREPARATION

Summary

The Diverse Pathways in Teacher Preparation Initiative is the primary outcome of a project designed to enhance community engagement and establish a foundation for outreach efforts to pre-K-through-12 schools located in high-poverty communities. Employing a dual-focused approach, this initiative created systems designed to alleviate continuous teacher shortage and teacher quality issues in South Carolina's high-poverty communities while also effectively preparing teacher candidates to work in low-performing pre-K-through-12 schools, a key recommendation of the Carnegie Foundation¹. Key Objectives of Diverse Pathways include increasing non-traditional students' (minority, first-generation college, low income) access to careers in education; effectively preparing teacher candidates to work in low-performing pre-K-through-12 schools; and enhancing instruction in high-poverty urban and rural pre-K-through-12 schools, and create environments that support teacher retention and recruitment.

To increase non-traditional student access to careers in education, two-year technical college and USC College of Education faculty members work to support students who major in education at two-year technical colleges and then transfer to USC to complete their educational studies. Unlike many states, South Carolina does not have a statewide community college system that connects four-year colleges to isolated communities. However, there is a robust two-year technical college system, and many of those colleges are located in the same high-poverty communities most impacted by pre-K-through-12 teacher shortages. Against this backdrop, most post-secondary minority and non-traditional students in South Carolina begin their college careers at a technical college².

Cross-institutional student education organizations at two-year technical colleges and USC provide outside of course activities to enhance the professional growth of project education majors and provide support to increase the likelihood that these non-traditional students will complete their degree programs and successfully move into the teaching profession. Future Educator Association chapters at USC and partner two-year technical colleges engage in collaborative activities across institutions. This past year education majors learned techniques for teaching mathematics concepts through game formats presented by an award winning elementary teacher, strategies for working in poor rural schools presented by a principal from just such a school, and suggestions for a successful job search from a high poverty school district Human Resource Director.

To effectively prepare teacher candidates to work in low-performing pre-K-through-12 schools, University faculty members collaborate with high poverty urban and rural pre-K-through-12 schools to create high quality teaching field experiences beyond those required of teacher education programs. For example, students involved in the Diverse Pathways Initiative take part in the USC Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics Fellows program (USC STEM Fellows). This project provides STEM activities for students enrolled in low-performing K-12 schools as part of focused after-school academic enrichment programs. USC STEM Fellow activities are collaboratively developed and enacted by education majors, University faculty members, and school

1 Carnegie Corporation, (2008), Teachers for a new era. Retrieved January 9, 2012 from, <http://www.teachersforanewera.org/>, Help for Beginning Teachers, Carnegie Reporter (2007).

2 South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, (2006), Head count enrollment report, Retrieved November 13, 2011 from, http://www.che.sc.gov/Finance/CHEMIS/Fall2005/Enrollment/Independents/Enr_1stxFrshmnRaceGenStuLev.pdf.

personnel. Through these experiences pre-K-through-12 student academic achievement is enhanced while education majors gain the confidence, skills, and abilities needed to become effective teachers in high-poverty schools.

Demographics

- *Target Settings:* urban, rural, inner-city
- *Target Groups Served:* underrepresented populations in South Carolina's teacher workforce
- *Districts Served:* Richland SD 1, Charleston County schools

Research and Evaluation

What national or other research was considered during the development of this program/initiative? Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works.

As a measure of the increase in non-traditional student (minority, first-generation college, low income) access to careers in education, the following technical college education major data is provided:

- Technical college students taking education courses increased from 0 in 2004 to over 120 during 2010-2011.
- Technical college students transferring into teacher education programs increased substantially. When articulation agreements and support infrastructures were first implemented during the fall of 2004, 14 education majors transferred from partner technical colleges to USC. In the fall of 2011, over 35 education majors transferred from partner technical colleges to USC.
- Technical college students who matriculated to, and graduated from, teacher education programs increased significantly. Twenty-two (22 technical college transfer students graduated from teacher education programs at USC in 2009-2010.

As a measure of the degree to which Diverse Pathways has enhanced instruction in high-poverty urban and rural pre-K-through-12 schools, data from the original twelve low-income pre-K-through-12 schools near partnering technical colleges that became clinical field experience sites for technical college education majors are reported. This data was collected in 2009, near the end of the federally-funded portion of the project (Reduction in funding has made more recent data collection/analysis unfeasible).

Clinical Field Experience Site Outcomes included:

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

- Only 18% of all South Carolina Schools met AYP criteria (mandated as part of the No Child Left Behind legislation) during 2007-2008. Guinyard Elementary School, a project clinical field experience site where 98% of students received free or reduced lunch, met AYP during this time period. Additionally, student scores on the science portion of the statewide achievement exam increased by 30% during our work in the school.
- Forty-two (42) percent of project schools met AYP in 2007-2008.

Student Achievement

- Five (5) sites increased student performance on statewide achievement exams in all measured subject areas (English, Math, Science, and Social Studies).
- Three (3) sites increased student performance in at least 2 measured subject areas.

Resources

- *Annual Cost:* Varies
- *Funding Sources:* Initially US Department of Education; now various public-private funding sources
- *Staffing Needs:* Support personnel
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* None
- *Partner Organizations:* Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA); US Department of Education; Richland SD 1, Charleston County schools, the University of South Carolina, College of Charleston, Midlands Tech, Orangeburg-Calhoun Tech, Trident Technical College

Contact Information

Steve Thompson, principal investigator

5/8/2012