"Alone we can do so little; together we can do much"

Almost every day I walk past a poster of a teacher and a child with this quote from Helen Keller. Each time I am reminded of the power of human connection. The relationships we participate in have an immeasurable impact on our capacity to learn, love, and elicit the best from ourselves and others.

Raising the quality of relationships in schools is a central tenet of the movement to improve secondary education. Numerous reform practices serve this goal, including small learning communities, interdisciplinary teams and schedules that allow deeper interaction among adults, students and subject matter.

What has received less attention is the importance of networks and partnerships that reach beyond the school walls. Professional networks can provide tremendous support to school leaders and teachers as they face the daily challenges of implementing organizational and instructional reforms. Partnerships with change agents, higher education, community, and industry can expand improvement, and provide the social capital needed to sustain resources and opportunities for students from high-poverty or geographically isolated areas. Networks and partnerships can also be used to celebrate and amplify the positive achievements that result from hard reform work, offering courage and inspiration to others to embark on similar paths.

From the Chicago Exposition to the collaborative professional development opportunities described in this issue of Momentum, many TDHS high schools are building important networks and partnerships to benefit their students and communities.

—Nettie Legters

First Chicago exposition celebrates academy students’ hard work, successes

It was an opportunity to parade knowledge, to celebrate academic successes and to get to know students and teachers in similar situations from schools throughout the city. The first Achievement Academy Exposition brought together about 200 students, as well as teachers and administrators, from The Chicago Public Schools’ nine Achievement Academies.

Held May 3 at Westinghouse Career Academy High School, the day-long exposition featured a Knowledge Competition with 16 teams, and presentation halls full of displays, banners and videos showing off the good work achieved in the ninth- and tenth-grade academies this year.

In addition to the competition, the exposition included a presentation from each academy on the theme “Who We Are, Where We’re Going and How We’re Getting There” and a display of cross-curricular projects that students worked on this semester. In this display were a variety of projects, including those on the Middle East, genocide and drug and alcohol abuse.

“The intent was to highlight student and teacher work that reached beyond the walls of a traditional classroom,” said Gregory Ekey, Talent Development field manager in Chicago. Ekey coordinated the exposition with

(continued on p. 8)

Center for Social Organization of Schools

Patrice Brown, Kiaya Coles and Erica Griffin enjoy their success as winners in the tenth-grade Knowledge Competition. They are from Fenger Achievement Academy.
Talent Development High Schools joined the first contingent of education organizations, schools and school districts to Stand Up for better high schools. Stand Up is a national, grassroots effort that focuses public attention on the nation’s low graduation rates and the quality of education in many American high schools.

Introduced on The Oprah Winfrey Show in mid-April, Stand Up was created by Public Interest, a non-profit public relations organization in New York City, and is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Through organizations such as TDHS, these sponsors aim to mobilize parents, teachers, principals, community leaders, policymakers and philanthropists to demand excellent high schools that prepare all students well for higher education and productive lives.

The Stand Up logo and information about high school improvement will appear in newspaper advertisements, public service announcements and billboards across the country.

The headquarters of Stand Up is its website www.standup.org, which features students and their stories and ways to show support for the effort. The Web site had more than 150,000 visitors in the week it was launched on the syndicated Oprah Winfrey Show. Winfrey had two programs on “American Schools in Crisis,” which featured interviews with Bill and Melinda Gates and the stories of schools and students in various parts of the country.

The Web site offers four ways people can support Stand Up:
- Send an email petition to the nation’s governors urging them to support high schools that educate all students well;
- Download a parent toolkit, which provides information on how to make a difference in a high school student’s education.
- Download a community action toolkit, which helps those interested in joining or organizing community efforts to improve high schools;
- Buy a Stand Up medallion to show support, while contributing to a college scholarship fund.

Coalition members, such as TDHS, are encouraged to call attention to school events and accomplishments that show the public where and how high schools are working, and how those successes can be duplicated. Joining Talent Development in the diverse coalition are the Chicago Public Schools, the New York City Department of Education, the Colorado Children’s Project, the National Council of La Raza and the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), among many others. Stand Up coordinators report that there are about 70 coalition members.

Teacher wins national prize

Thomas Acampora, a ninth-grade social studies teacher at Baltimore Talent Development High School, is among 25 national winners in the Save Our History program created by The History Channel.

He will receive a $1,000 cash prize for his work in preserving the history of Carroll Park, a landmark in southwest Baltimore. Acampora and his students worked with the Carroll Park Foundation to restore an 18th Century orchard on the property surrounding Mt. Clare, home to Charles Carroll, the Barrister, an early American statesman.

That foundation won a $10,000 Save Our History grant earlier this year, enabling it to work with the school; now that project is a finalist for a continuing grant. Acampora and four students will visit Washington, D.C. and attend award ceremonies in June, as guests of The History Channel. The Baltimore Department of Recreation and Parks, Baltimore Civic Works and Diggins Johnson Middle School also participated in the “The Black Damask Project,” named for the variety of plum the students planted in May.

Acampora and his students also researched the property, measured it, pruned trees and studied plants dating back to the 18th century. The civic engagement project combined local history, archeology, horticulture and geography.

Introducing...

Whether graduation season or not, the mortarboard remains an appropriate symbol of Talent Development High Schools. Now there is a new version of the TDHS logo—a redesigned mortarboard with a breezy tassel. Pictured here are the three different styles: one without a tagline, one emphasizing TDHS’ affiliation with Johns Hopkins University and another with the “changing schools, changing lives since 1994” tagline, highlighting TDHS’ history in school reform. Designed by KSA-Plus Communications, the new logo debuted in the TDHS annual report in March. For copies of the logo, contact Mary Maushard at mmaushard@csos.jhu.edu.
Talent Development High Schools is a dynamic organization. Just take a look at the staff’s accomplishments and its goings. TDHS Organizational Facilitator Tony Gerdes has recently published his first book, Faith, Family and Fishing, a 21-day Devotional Journal. The book grew out of Gerdes’ soul-searching about his role as a father and the time to think afforded by his commutes from his home in Pennsylvania to his work in Baltimore, where he had been a city public school teacher before coming to TDHS. In addition to fishing tips and the story of how Gerdes didn’t really like to fish, the book addresses topics such as successful marriage, conquering fear, enjoying time with children and resisting temptation. Each day includes part of Gerdes’ story, a reflection and a “captain’s log” with an exercise that makes the day’s lesson applicable to daily life. For a copy of the book, contact Tony Gerdes or his web site, www.reelman.org.

Joining Gerdes in publishing a first, faith-based book, is Maria Garriott, a CSOS colleague, who is a curriculum writer for the Talent Development Middle Grades program. Her book, A Thousand Resurrections, was published in March. Subtitled “An Urban Spiritual Journey,” Garriott’s memoir relates the trials and triumphs she and her husband experienced while living in the Pen Lucy neighborhood in Baltimore, where her husband was establishing an urban, multiethnic church. The memoir covers 20 years, five children and many, many experiences—some of them nearly unbelievable. Garriott has books available, or on her web site, www.AThousandResurrections.com. Congratulations to Doug Elmer and Ambriel Renn-Scanion who were married April 29 in Kansas City, where Doug is the TDHS field manager.

In February TDHS bid farewell to its budget guy, Eric Bechtel, who moved to the main budget office at Johns Hopkins University to handle a (much) bigger budget with—we hope—no additional headaches. In mid-April, TDHS hired Eric’s replacement, Franki Raldirz, who moves to TDHS from the Johns Hopkins’ Krieger Mind/Brain Institute where she was a senior budget analyst. CSCS greeted Franki officially on April 19 with a Welcome Breakfast. Be sure to introduce yourself when you’re in Baltimore, or on the telephone.

Another new face is that of Wendy Gonzalez, senior Organizational Facilitator in the Northeast. With the addition of three schools in New York City, Wendy has had a busy start to her TDHS career. She worked for 20 years in the Montgomery County (Md.) Public Schools, where she held a variety of positions—choral music teacher, eighth-grade administrator, coordinator for alternative students and coordinating the opening of that county’s only school with block scheduling. Wendy, a graduate of “Fame” High School in New York, still teaches voice, piano and guitar. She is now assigned to Franklin K. Lane High School in Queens.

The new English Language Arts instructional facilitator in Los Angeles is Danielle Leon, who relocated from New Orleans after Katrina. She was an English Language Arts coach in New Orleans, though she was employed by the public schools. Danielle is a graduate of the University of New Orleans with a master’s degree from Southern University there; she taught for five years before becoming a coach.

Toia Beans is a new organizational facilitator in Los Angeles, working mainly at Jordan High School. Toia is a lifelong Californian, earning her bachelor’s degree from the University of California-Berkeley and her masters from Stanford. She has worked as a mathematics teacher in middle and high schools and more recently on research methods at Wested, one of the country’s regional education laboratories. She was at Wested when it partnered with Talent Development about seven years ago. Toia reconnected with Talent Development in January.

Also new to the staff are two “casual” coaches in North Carolina, Charles Blanchard and Phillis Ostheim. Blanchard is the former principal of Wallace-Rose Hill High School, where he was also a teacher and a student. Since retirement, he has continued to work with that school; this year he is an observer for the TD Adolescent Literacy Study and now an organizational consultant assigned to Westover (NC) High School. Blanchard received his bachelor’s degree in biology from Wake Forest University and a masters in education administration from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington…Ostheim who recently retired from Duplin County Schools in North Carolina, is also an Adolescent Literacy observer and now organizational consultant at Kinston (N.C.) High School. She is building a new business, True Vine Associates Inc., specializing in staff development, school consulting and grant evaluations. “I am delighted to be a part of the TDHS network because I believe in the philosophy that it promotes,” she says. “It is wonderful to visit a school and be a part of the solution in helping them achieve excellence.”
BRIDGETON, N.J. —

Karen Horwitz wants Bridgeton High School to be a wonderful place—full of happy, high-achieving students; satisfied, respected teachers; and involved parents who take pride in their children’s accomplishments. Perhaps this desire to make everything “wonderful” is what motivates Horwitz to be the kind of organizational facilitator she is—dynamic, creative, effective and very busy.

As Bridgeton winds up its first full year as a Talent Development High School, it has concrete improvements to show and challenges still to meet. The moving—literally—force behind this fast-paced improvement is Horwitz, a long-time art teacher who became organizational facilitator last spring.

From painting the school mascot’s bulldog paw prints in the parking lot to fostering school pride by escorting dozens of guests around the school throughout the year, Horwitz takes on multiple tasks with seeming ease and a desire to get things done NOW.

“She is Miss TDHS,” says David Price, a 20-year teacher and TD coach for English Language Arts. “She is very good at what she does.”

Horwitz says her organizational abilities got her the facilitator job. “I was perceived as organized because I was in charge of the yearbook. I have always been very involved in, and supportive of, reform.” Horwitz started teaching in Bridgeton schools in 1980, and has taught in all grades from kindergarten to 12th grade and in many of the district’s schools.

“We were very, very, very fortunate to have Karen apply and be selected as organizational facilitator,” says Patricia Montgomery, assistant superintendent of Bridgeton Public Schools. “She is very professional, dedicated to the model and innovative . . . .”

But a great deal has already been accomplished at the school of 1,000 students in southern New Jersey, where previous reforms had little effect and student performance languished.

The Ninth-Grade Success Academy is living up to its name, Horwitz says, with academic and behavioral changes to brag about. A new program for 60 ninth-graders slated to repeat that grade is thriving in its own wing with its own principal and a hearty promotion rate; serious discipline referrals throughout the school dropped 45 percent this year and parents are more involved.

Horwitz is quick to talk about the enthusiasm and hard work of her colleagues. “So many of the staff have really come forward. It’s not only my enthusiasm, but the teachers who have taken on new roles. They have been working so hard,” she says. The school motto, “Making a Difference,” is evident throughout the sprawling school. Horwitz created the motto when the school undertook Talent Development. “Teamwork and shared decision-making will help us to support each other and solve our problems together,” she wrote in letter to the faculty and staff early in the year.

English coach Price says the biggest change has been the block scheduling. Despite the misgivings of some teachers, the 84-minute classes seem to be winning approval. The school is more orderly because students move about less often, and teachers have learned to use the time effectively. “It has turned out to be a wonderful thing,” he says. Students, too, seem to like the fact that teachers can cover more material each day.

“I wouldn’t go back for anything,” adds Success Academy principal Stephen Lynch. Neither would Horwitz. “I think we were ready for change. We were frustrated. It was time for something new.”

—Mary Maushard
Professional Development tailored for teachers

During his classroom management session "When Good Classrooms Go Bad," Bridgeton's Jim Crilley asked participants to introduce themselves by sharing a "success" and a "failure," an activity that benefited first-year teachers and veteran educators alike. Then he discussed some practical ways to prepare for the first day of school (or the first day of the new semester). Finally, teachers took an interactive assessment to determine which of the three major discipline methods best fit their personal preferences.

After the session, Crilley reflected positively about the day. "The variety of professional development opportunities offered allowed all staff, regardless of subject area or years of experience, to gain from the professional development. This would not have been possible without the participation of our great 'in house' people and the involvement of the knowledgeable staff from TDHS."

In the Cooperative Learning workshop led by Bridgeton's Meredith Fiori and Guy Lucas of the TDHS staff, groups had to find a common theme, develop a team name and logo based on shared interests or talents. The teams then talked about the process they used to work together, leading to a more formal discussion of the philosophy and strategies behind successful cooperative learning.

Lucas also participated in the "Building Business Partnerships" session where he identified ways to improve the interaction of small learning communities with the larger community. Lucas recommended "teacher externships, curriculum development partnerships for interdisciplinary projects and subject enrichment, as well as partnerships with local universities for early earned college credit programs." These suggestions were well received and complement the efforts of Bridgeton's School to Work coordinator, Bill Waterman.

David Price, Bridgeton's language arts curriculum coach, called the event refreshingly different. "This was the first time in BHS history—or at least in my 20 years here—where we were able to set up the workshop sessions we thought were needed and then select the presenters we believed could best deliver the desired outcome," he said.

"The true judges of the day were our teachers and most of them seemed to indicate that this method was much better than our previous efforts. I think this is a pattern of performance we should continue."

— Tony Gerdes
TDHS receives Gates grants in two cities

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation increased its support for Talent Development High Schools through big-city partnerships in Los Angeles and New York City.

In November, the Gates Foundation announced that TDHS would receive more than $3 million to work with two schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District. TDHS is one of three organizations named in that grant, which totaled $7.4 million. Also receiving Gates support was the Institute for Research and Reform, which will implement First Things First in two schools, and the Architects of Achievements.

Soon after this announcement, the New York City Board of Education announced a partnership with the Gates Foundation, which earmarked money for Talent Development in four schools.

The original plans have changed somewhat.

TDHS is working with only Jordan High School in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, though another partner school is expected to be chosen soon. Teachers at Carson High School, designated for TD and Gates money in the original grant, rejected the model because of the block schedule.

In New York, TD is working with three schools, Franklin K. Lane, George Westinghouse and Abraham Lincoln high schools. The initial grant of $464,000 is supporting planning for small learning communities in these schools. Northeast Regional Manager Paul Smith reports that all three schools are in the final stages of putting their programs together for next school year. “Each school will look different, but will have a ninth-grade academy, pure teams, team leaders and extended instructional periods ranging from 71 to 90 minutes,” he said.

An organizational facilitator is assigned to each school: Wendy Gonzales at Westinghouse, Matt Wemdsorfer at Lincoln, and Michele Jones at Lane.

Holly Stein of the Center for Applied Linguistics

School reformers from across the country will visit Baltimore Talent Development High School in June as part of the Coalition for Community Schools 4th National Forum; BTDHS was chosen for this site visit in recognition of its work in bringing together four schools and many partners in its Harlem Park community to serve the families of that area. . . . Mid-year ninth-grade student conferences at Andrews High School in High Point, N.C., were deemed positive, encouraging and supportive by Guilford County superintendent Terry Grier in one of his Friday memos. With 14 staff members participating and help from TDHS staff, the students met one-on-one with an adult to reflect on where they have been, where they are and where they need to be by the end of the quarter. Successful students won congratulations and all students were encouraged to set goals for the next grading period and beyond . . . . Coaches, facilitators and managers have been back in the classroom as students this year, as the winter and spring All-Teams Meetings in Baltimore included significant time for training. In January, the TDHS staff spent one day learning about teaching English Language Learners. Holly Stein, a speech therapist, college professor and consultant for the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C., modeled good communication strategies and teaching practices for non-native speakers. TDHS staff worked in groups to increase their understanding of the challenges of English Language Learners and to evaluate the needs of TDHS staff and partners. In April, the staff had more ELL training and tackled “teaching in the extended period.” Leslie Jones, director of reading/English Language Arts for the Talent Development Middle Grades program at the Johns Hopkins Center for Social Organization of Schools, did presentations and training on how to use an 80- or 90-minute class period effectively, and how to coach others to do so. . . . About 40 ninth-graders and their chaperones from Baltimore Talent Development High School became radio personalities during a fall field trip to XM Satellite Radio headquarters in Prince Georges County, Md. Planned in connection with the Careers Unit of the TDHS Freshman Seminar course, the visit included a tour of XM radio, chief broadcaster to the Armed Forces overseas. As a special treat, radio personalities conducted on-air interviews with group members. Guidance counselor John Snowdey gave a brief history and description of the TDHS program and its relationship to the school. A few students were allowed to send “shout-outs” to relatives stationed in Iraq.

Was the winter All-Teams’ Meeting a piece of cake? You bet.
The Fifth Biennial Talent Development High Schools National Conference promises three days of training, inspiration, practical ideas and fun in Baltimore. The conference, “Talent Development High Schools: Building on Lessons Learned,” will be held July 13 to 15 at the Radisson Plaza Lord Baltimore Hotel, just a few blocks from the Inner Harbor.

Martin Haberman, professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and expert on curriculum and instruction, will be the keynote speaker, topping off the conference with a Saturday morning presentation. In his latest book, Star Teachers of Children in Poverty, Haberman explores theories and practices that support effective teaching in schools that serve students who are at the greatest risk for academic failure and dropping out. He is also well-known for a 1991 essay, “The Pedagogy of Poverty Versus Good Teaching.”

Haberman’s keynote address will cap three days of programs and presentations that will focus on three topic areas: Restructuring the American High School; Improving Student Achievement, and Understanding Our Students. Among the sessions within each of these topics are some recommended specifically for teachers and administrators who are new to Talent Development.

Back by popular demand are two categories of sessions, Voices from the Field and Living Classroom, during which teachers and administrators share their experiences and best practices.

The national conference will be preceded by the one-day National Leadership Institute for principals, assistant principals, academy leaders, and teacher team leaders. The institute, on July 12, will provide information essential to the successful leadership of schools, academies, and teacher teams that are implementing or planning to implement Talent Development. Participants will meet leaders of schools that use the model.

On-line registration and the full conference program are available at www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs. For more information on registration details, contact Reggie Anthony at (410) 516-3962, or at ranthony@hd.jhu.edu.

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Research and Reports

A Government Accounting Office (GAO) report on graduation rates and interventions that improve those rates cited Talent Development High Schools among programs that have the potential to raise graduation rates. No Child Left Behind Act: Education Could Do More to Help States Better Define Graduation Rates and Improve Knowledge about Intervention Strategies, issued in September, based its assessment of TDHS on the MDRC evaluation of its effects in Philadelphia Schools. . . . University of Chicago researcher Melissa Roderick includes an extensive discussion of Talent Development and the MDRC evaluation in her report, What Should Be the Value Added of High School and What Does that Mean for High School Reform? A View from Chicago. “New data from MDRC’s evaluation of Talent Development High Schools are demonstrating, however, that changes in the curriculum and structure of freshman year can get students on track and that such efforts lead to decreases in dropout rates,” she writes. . . . The Silent Epidemic, Perspectives

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On the summer schedule

Talent Development High Schools 2006 Coaches’ Institute
June 12-16
Johns Hopkins University Campus
Theme: “Making Connections” Registration Deadline: May 24

Adolescent Literacy Study Coaches’ Orientation
June 26-28
For coaches at new sites for 2006-2007 Radisson Hotel, Cross Keys, Baltimore

Regional trainings
June 26-30 and August 1-4: Guilford County, N.C. sites
July 31 – Aug. 4: New York City summer institute
August 7-11: Consortium of North Carolina sites curriculum training Westover High School, Cumberland County

Of High School Dropouts, published this spring, asserts that “most dropouts are students who could have, and believe they could have, succeeded in school.” Their reasons for dropping out include: lack of motivation, lack of a connection to school, boring classes, academic challenges and the weight of real world events. Three out of ten respondents said they could not keep up with their school work, according to the report by Civic Enterprises of Washington, D.C. in conjunction with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
Grace DeShazer, achievement academy manager for the Chicago schools.

Also showing off their talents were culinary arts students from the host school, Westinghouse, who prepared and served lunch for the crowd of students, teachers, administrators and guests.

"This was an opportunity to showcase the powerful and important work that goes on at every Achievement Academy and to give a public face to the positive results that we are achieving," added Ekey. The nine academies are: Clemente, Crane, Chicago Vocational Career Academy (CVCA), Englewood, Fenger, Robeson, Senn, Tilden and Westinghouse.

More than 1,800 students attend these small learning communities, housed in neighborhood high schools, and designed to keep students on track for graduation even though they did not pass the high school qualifying tests. In their third year with TDHS, the academies have only ninth and tenth grades. Successful students move back into traditional high schools for their last two years.

Teams from Crane and Fenger won the ninth-grade Knowledge Competition. The top two tenth-grade teams were from Westinghouse and Tilden. Each team had three members, one a student with an "A" average, one with a "B" average and one with a "C" average. In the first round, teams competed to answer 40 questions correctly. Half of the teams were eliminated in this round with the others going on to the finals.

Students generated the questions from what they learned in their mathematics, English and social studies courses; the Talent Development instructional specialists then revised them for the competition. Eight ninth-grade and eight tenth-grade teams competed.

Members of the winning teams received plaques bearing a photograph of the team members during the closing assembly.

This assembly honored not only the winning teams but all of the students who participated. Eight academy students presented original poetry and essays and spoke about the positive impact of the academies on their lives. Some students told how they had set personal goals; others relayed how their apathy had been replaced by hope since attending the academies. Two former CVCA academy students presented a motivational spoken word poem directed to the experiences of the academy students. All nine academy leaders received Johns Hopkins University certificates in recognition of their hard work and accomplishments this year.

Academy administrators hope to make the exposition an annual event, increasing the size and scope of it each year.

—Mary Maushard

From coast to coast, Talent Development High Schools are in the news. Here's a sampling of recent press coverage.


Sun Valley, Calif. — The Daily News of Los Angeles wrote about 700 ninth-graders at Francis Polytechnic High School's "Freshman Centre" awards ceremony in its story, "Students Eased into 2nd Year of High School," on March 10.

Queens, N.Y. — The proposed changes at Franklin K. Lane High School, a New York City High school on the border of Queens, were the subject of a two-part series in the Queens edition of the Times Ledger in early March.


Bridgeton, N.J. — "Bridgeton's New Focus" was the headline on a feature about Bridgeton High School's first year of Talent Development in the April 17 edition of The Press in Atlantic City, N.J.

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