

Bronx

CC9 (the Community Collaborative to Improve District 9 Schools), a community-led collaborative for school reform in the South Bronx, has successfully combined community organizing with the development of collaborative relationships with the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). When the Department of Education divided the city’s schools into regions and networks, the ten CC9 schools were made into a network – the only network formed on the basis of the schools’ relationship with a community-based organization. In September 2004, CC9 was able to launch its flagship program, the Lead Teacher Project, in its ten schools.

This session will focus on the implementation of the Lead Teacher Project, the broader goals of the Collaborative, and the questions this work raises about the role of community organizing and reform support organizations in the systemic reform of education.

The Lead Teacher Program

CC9 collaborated with the NYC Department of Education and the UFT to design the Lead Teacher program. The purpose of the program is to upgrade the capacity of the teaching force in the ten CC9 network schools by

- providing peer support to strengthen and stabilize the teaching force;
- attracting highly skilled teachers from other parts of New York City; and
- providing opportunities to highly qualified teachers for professional advancement while remaining in the teaching profession.

Two Lead Teachers share a classroom. Each Lead Teacher spends half of his/her time in the classroom as a laboratory for other teachers to visit and learn from best practices; the other half is spent leading professional development activities to support other teachers.

Total Enrollment	10,429
Hispanic	65.9%
Black	32.1%
Asian	1.5%
White	0.5%
ELL	21.9%
Special education	4.5%
Free and reduced-price lunch	94.3%

Demographic Information

The campaign developed quickly during the 2003–2004 school year. Armed with thousands of signatures collected on a petition drive, letters of support from elected officials, and over a quarter of a million dollars in pledged funds from foundations, CC9 leaders, along with their partners from the UFT and local NYC Department of Education representatives, met with Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, who embraced the idea of Lead Teachers. After negotiating details of how teachers’ salaries would be paid (an especially tricky task, as the UFT contract had expired and no new contract has even yet been finalized), the NYC Department of Education pledged \$1.6 million to support the program. After an intensive interview process involving

representatives from the Bronx Region, the union, and CC9, thirty-six Lead Teachers were selected from over 200 candidates.

All of the new lead teachers came for a week of training before the school year began. Both Randi Weingarten, president of the UFT, and Chancellor Joel Klein came to part of the training, both using the word *historic* to characterize the program. Additionally, the UFT Teacher Center is providing all the Lead Teachers with four hours per month of professional development as well as limited field supervision. A Coordinating Committee – including two UFT Teacher Center representatives, the local (network) superintendent, the CC9 coordinator, and two parents – meets every other week to monitor implementation, plan professional development, and do troubleshooting for the program. One task of the Coordinating Committee has been to develop a Lead Teacher manual.

Challenges

The Lead Teacher program seems to be working well. Classroom teachers are very appreciative of the support, and the lead teachers are working hard. But, like any new program, the Lead Teacher project has faced challenges.

One issue has been establishing relationships between the Lead Teachers and their principals. Principals were not adequately involved in the conception of the project, the planning, or the interviewing, which has resulted in CC9 having to play catch-up to establish school-based structures. Half of the lead teachers don't come from the schools they are working in.

Lead teachers have also had some difficulty in clarifying their role. They have questions such as: How long do I work with a particular teacher? How many teachers should I be working with? Should I be going to curriculum meetings?

Impact and Next Steps

The implementation of the lead teacher project has been a tremendous psychological boost to CC9's identity. The group's base has been strengthened and it now has more legitimacy with principals, superintendents, the union, the chancellor, and foundations.

While it has not been possible to assess the impact on students yet, the Academy for Educational Development has been hired to conduct an independent evaluation of the program.

The work of CC9 will not stop with the implementation of the Lead Teacher project. The group continues to work to consolidate its relationships in the ten CC9 schools by, for example, developing family-school partnership committees in each school. CC9 is also trying to expand into all of the 126 schools in the Bronx Region with a school traffic safety campaign. This is the beginning of what the group sees as a larger, citywide movement for educational justice.

CC9's work has also inspired the formation of the Brooklyn Education Collaborative, as well as a new collaborative of youth organizing groups. NYU's Institute for Education and Social

Policy, which has provided intensive reform support to this effort, hopes to create six collaboratives over the next several years that will form the basis for a citywide constituency for improving public education.

The Presenters

- Herb Katz** District 9 Representative for the United Federation of Teachers and the union's liaison to the CC9 work
- Ocynthia Williams** CC9 leader and a long-time community activist (education, housing, and open-space issues) involved in the Highbridge Community Life Center
- Yvonne Torres** New York City Department of Education's Community Superintendent overseeing the CC9 network of schools
- Eric Zachary** Senior Project Director at the Institute for Education and Social Policy at New York University and coordinator/lead organizer for CC9 since its inception

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