



The Alliance for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning
Summer 2010 Newsletter

Scientifically Connected Communities, SC2 has had a wonderfully busy, enlightening and productive year. SC2 facilitates professional development opportunities for local teachers by bringing content specialists ranging from NASA educators to wildlife experts into direct contact with teachers in order to support their development and provide them with additional resources for the classroom. SC2 assists teachers by providing content knowledge and support through the numerous activities we facilitate in the classroom, during fieldtrips and for special occasions such as science fairs, and field days. SC2 also provides materials, lesson plans, and experiments to teachers and are available for checkout. In addition to SC2's involvement in local school districts and teacher development, we continue to be involvement in organizations within the Las Cruces community, NMSU campus, and regional school districts.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development events facilitated by SC2, such as the 2nd Annual Southwest NM Regional STEM Conference; scientific inquiry workshops held in August, October, November and May; and other workshops that focus on content like the Kepler Mission Workshop held in April, promote scientific inquiry in the classroom, assist in developing content knowledge, and creates strong STEM curriculum across grade level and content area.

*Partial funding for this project provided through Alliance Legislative monies.



TRI-UNITY: FEBRUARY 26-27, 2010
 This year's conference focused on Culturally Responsive Childhood Learning and Literacy. This collaboration between NMSU College of Education, SPED/CD Department, Aprendamos Intervention Team and Direct Therapy Services provided an opportunity for the 350 Participants who attended to earn Continuing Education Units as a Speech Language Pathologist, Social Worker, Occupational Therapist, Day Care Provider and Educator.

J. PAUL TAYLOR SYMPOSIUM: MARCH 18, 2010
 This year's conference focused on Service Learning and it was a great opportunity for collaboration and networking to occur. Over 150 participants attended this year's symposium. The Alliance assisted with coordinating in collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences, the Las Cruces Public Schools and community agencies.

BORDERLANDS EARLY LITERACY DAY (BELD): APRIL 17, 2010
 The third annual BELD conference included a keynote address from the renowned author, Gary Soto. The focus of this year's conference was early childhood language and literacy. Over 125 participants attended and earned professional development training as educators and childcare providers. The Alliance collaborated with NMSU Early Childhood Department, La Vida Institute and Myrna's Childrens Village.

ALLIANCE RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION TRAINING: APRIL 29-30, 2010
 The Alliance Collaborated with NM Public Education Department, The National Center on Response To Intervention from Kansas University and the Regional Education Laboratory SW in San Antonio, Texas. Professional Development for administrators and educators was provided to help the participants move from theory to practice with the Response To Intervention Process. Over 125 participants attended and were provided with the NM Student Assistance Team Manual and quick guide as a tool to use in their respective school districts.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT SUMMER INSTITUTE (APSI): JUNE 7-11, 2010
 The Alliance collaborated with NM Public Education Department and New Mexico Highlands University on the Fourth Annual APSI. Approximately 145 participants attended from across New Mexico, Texas, California and Montana; additionally, our consultants were traveling from across the U.S. Professional development training was offered in the areas of: AP Calculus, AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition, AP Environmental Science, AP Statistics, AP Studio Art and Pre-AP English with Vertical Teaming.

UNIVERSITY-DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP: HATCH VALLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

DEBORAH RHEIN, PH.D.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

NMSU, DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

Literacy Leaps is a program to provide educators with support for struggling readers through the development of a school-wide Response to Intervention (RtI) plan. It consisted of a collaborative effort between a middle school principal in Hatch Valley (Pauline Staski) and a university professor at NMSU (Deborah Rhein). The goal was to develop a school-wide systematic approach to Response to Intervention with targeted support for the educators at each level. The goal at the planning stage was to provide quality instruction at each tier with clear guidelines for entry and exit of each tier.

The primary investigator and the school principal evaluated the Tier 1 program materials for each of the five pillars of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency vocabulary and comprehension.) Given the classroom expectations of middle school, the principal investigator and the principal decided to focus the Tier 1 classroom improvement on the teaching of vocabulary and comprehension strategies. An additional consideration in the planning and implementation was the demographic composition of the school. The student population at Hatch Valley Middle School was listed as 30% English Language Learners, with 90% of the parents reporting speaking a language other than English at home. These second language issues were at the center of the Tier 1 development.

Based on the initial planning discussions, it became clear that there would be a need for re-teaching some students in Tier 1. The idea was to create a time in the schedule that would be very fluid, and may change in student composition on a daily basis. That way, if the teacher felt that a particular concept was not grasped by a particular student on any given day, she/he could request to have that student assigned to for this extra period. The principal created a block in the schedule for teachers to conduct that re-teaching. During the same block, students who had mastered the concept being re-taught participated in enrichment activities related to the concepts that were addressed. This extra block was labeled Tier 1.5, because it remained in the control of the classroom teacher's hands and was very fluid, in that every day there might be different students with different teachers.

In order for this model to function, the teachers needed to work more collaboratively than is common. The entire Tier 1 re-organization was planned and implemented by the teachers. The principal began by having staff development dates in the summer, where the teachers developed a detailed plan for addressing key state standards for the content areas in each grade. The discussions that occurred in these staff development sessions formed the framework for the level of collaboration that occurred during the year. Recognizing that the lack of opportunity to communicate is a major roadblock to collaboration, the principal created opportunities for communication to occur. She addressed this issue by scheduling the teachers planning hour by grade level. The grade level teachers met daily during their planning hour to address concerns about students and to coordinate schedules. In addition, content area teachers met once a week.

The principal provided the leadership by emphasizing what needed to occur, but the teachers were the ones who were actively engaged in the daily monitoring of student performance and modification of instruction to meet individual student needs. It involved on-going assessment and classroom-based intervention on a weekly, and in some cases, daily, basis.

The plan also called for a Tier 2 intervention to be the Title 1 reading program. The plan was for the university professor to assist in problem solving and resource provision to the Title 1 teacher. Because the Title 1 teacher was extremely proficient, the support provided by the NMSU collaborator was for a few students who had reading disabilities who were also in the Title 1 reading program. Students in the Tier 2 intervention were assigned to the intervention by each quarter and some were exited after the first quarter. In Tier 2, all students' reading/writing skills were evaluated in-depth on the five pillars of reading and instruction was addressed individually based on the assessments. Based on the systematic and individualized program provided to students in Tier 2, a few students with reading disabilities were accurately identified and recommended for Tier 3, the special education program. It was possible for a student to be in all tiers.

While final analysis of the project will not be possible until the results of the state-mandated assessments are available in the fall, the preliminary results of the program are promising. When students were assessed in the third quarter, the mean score for grades seven and eight was one year above the mean scores in August. The sixth grade reported a mean reading score to two grades above the initial scores in August. In addition, a breakdown on the scores of the English Language Learners indicated that, while they were still behind the mean scores for their grade level, they were showing greater overall gains than the rest of the students in the school.

This project demonstrates how continuous monitoring of student reading/writing performance with corresponding modifications in instructional level resulted in increased student performance.

*Funding for this project provided through Alliance Legislative monies.

STRONG KIDS PROJECT

IVELISSE TORRES FERNANDEZ, PH.D.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

NMSU, DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

The Strong Kids Project started at Hermosa Heights Elementary in the fall of 2008 as a project in collaboration with the Counseling and Educational Psychology Department at NMSU. During the two years that we have implemented the program we have impacted over 100 students ranging from grades K-5. The project follows a group counseling model. The groups are lead by Masters' level counseling students and supervised by a school psychologist and a counselor. The groups meet for 40 minutes each week for a total of 12 weeks. The group follows the Strong Kids: A social and Emotional Learning Curriculum for Students in Grades 3-5 (Merrell, Carrizales, Feuerborn, Gueldner & Tran, 2004). During the initial group session, all participants complete two pretest measures included in the Strong Kids curriculum. The first measure asked participants to rate how they had been feeling over the past month. The second measure asked participants to answer questions to determine the extent of their knowledge about healthy and unhealthy ways to express feelings, thoughts and behaviors. At the end of the 12th session, each participant again completed the measures described above. These were utilized as post-test measures.

While the groups are in session the teachers received additional training in the implementation of the curriculum and how they could incorporate their skills in their daily teaching. Teachers are encouraged to set aside a space in the class, where they could post visual reminders of the skill of the week and prepare students for the next lesson. Teachers are also asked to provide feedback on student's behaviors and progress at the beginning and end of the program. They are also encouraged to be active in the group, if they wish to, but most have opted to observe first and then implement on their own.

To date, results have indicated that by the end of the 12th session, students demonstrate significant increases in knowledge about healthy and unhealthy ways to express feelings, thoughts and behaviors. We also have seen reductions in the self-report of externalizing and internalizing symptoms, although not all of them have been significant. Lastly, teachers' reports indicate that by the end of week 12, students are better behaved in the classroom and have a more positive view of themselves and how they interact with their peers.

Reference

Merrell, K.W., Carrizales, D., Feuerborn, L., Gueldner, B.A., & Tran, O.K. (2004). Strong Kids: A social and emotional learning curriculum for students in grades 3-8. Retrieved from <http://orp.uoregon.edu>.

For more information on the Strong Kids Project please contact us at:

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NMCSA/NMPED SUMMER CONFERENCE JULY 26-28, 2010

BY: DR. GLORIA RENDON

LEADERSHIP IN CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

The New Mexico Coalition of School Administrators in partnership with the NM Public Education Department hosts the annual statewide administrators' conference in Albuquerque. Each year the conference draws 500 or more attendees and is the only statewide conference specifically for administrators. The conference offers three keynote presentations and 42 breakout sessions whose topics address pertinent leadership issues, ideas and suggestions for public school administrators. The conference includes a golf tournament which will be held this year at the UNM South Golf Course. On Tuesday evening, attendees are invited to a reception hosted by one of our sponsors. The conference concludes on Wednesday with an Awards luncheon included in the Registration fee. At the luncheon, awards are presented to the Administrators of the Year for the major professional organizations in the state, the Hall of Fame and NMCSA scholarship recipients and the Superintendent of the Year. The conference provides the opportunity to gather the latest information from the NMPED, professional organizations and colleagues as well as a great opportunity to network with colleagues from around the state. The attached flyer gives additional information about the conference and directions for registering. All information and registration materials are available on the NMCSA website at www.unm.edu/~nmcsa.



The Alliance for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning

“COLLABORATIVELY CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF NEW MEXICO’S CHILDREN”

MISSION:

The mission of the Alliance for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning is to collaboratively contribute to the success of children throughout New Mexico and to the educators who serve them.

VISION:

The vision of the Alliance is to serve as a catalyst for improved education for teachers as well as children and families, particularly for those in rural and border areas in New Mexico and to collaborate with appropriate partners to meet the diverse needs of our children.

GOALS:

- To be the principal academic entity providing comprehensive training and educational consulting services to New Mexico schools, particularly rural schools.
- To be the catalyst and inspiration for all schools to meet and exceed the expectations consistent with the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, evolving New Mexico Statutory requirements, strategic planning and the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS).

OBJECTIVES:

- To provide teachers, administrators, parents, and children access to materials that will improve academic progress and success.
- To collaborate with the Public Education Department (PED) and Regional Educational Cooperative Centers (REC) to provide training and consulting services to schools, particularly rural schools.
- To work with identified schools to assist them in achieving alignment between the Educational Plan for Student Success, Instruction, and Student Outcomes
- To provide additional resources for identified areas (*e.g. reading, science, math, special education, and bilingual education*).
- To conduct formative and summative evaluation of collaborative initiatives implemented to address the goals of the Alliance and to statistically evaluate best practices for improving the education of children in schools.
- To disseminate information and research about best practices in meeting the challenges of schools.
- To advise and assist school districts and schools in the development of family involvement policies and procedures that facilitate and sustain family involvement that is consistent with the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, evolving New Mexico Statutory requirements, strategic planning and the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS).

ALLIANCE MEMBERS

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- ALAMOGORDO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- ANIMAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- COBRE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS
- DEMING PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- DEXTER CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS
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- HAGERMAN MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS
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- LAS CRUCES PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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- PECOS INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
- RESERVE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- SILVER CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS
- TATUM MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS
- TULAROSA MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

OTHER AGENCIES

- APRENDAMOS INTERVENTION TEAM
- MVEDA
- MECA THERAPIES, LLC
- NM EDUCATION NETWORK CENTER
- NM HIGHLANDS UNIVERSITY
- NM HIGHER EDUCATION
- NM NORTHERN NETWORK
- NM PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
- NM RESEARCH AND STUDY COUNCIL
- PARENTS REACHING OUT
- REGIONAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVES #2
- REGIONAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVES #9
- REGIONAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVES #10
- RE-LEARNING NEW MEXICO
- WESTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY

NMSU AFFILIATES

- American Indian Programs
- College of Agriculture & Home Economics
- College of Arts & Sciences
- College of Business & Economics
- NMSU Carlsbad Location
- College of Engineering
- College of Extended Learning
- College of Health & Social Services
- Engaging Latino Communities in Education (ENLACE)
- International & Border Programs
- University Outreach & Extension Programs

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