

EXAMPLES OF ELC COLLABORATIONS WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Fall 2005

Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project (EPOP - Philadelphia) (215) 634-8922

EPOP is working with ELC to ensure that Title I funds, earmarked for low-income schools, are in fact distributed to the neediest Philadelphia schools and students. In 2003, EPOP conducted an investigation and discovered that the Philadelphia School District was giving wealthier schools too much Title I money. EPOP successfully negotiated with the District to correct the distribution scheme; as a result, millions of dollars were sent to the poorest schools in the city. EPOP is continuing to push the District to publicly reveal the formula used to allocate Title I funds and to involve parents in the decision-making process.

Philadelphia Student Union (PSU) (215) 546-3290

PSU is working with ELC to give all Philadelphia students equal access to highly qualified teachers. In 2003, PSU determined that students attending schools in the poorest communities had teachers with the least experience and qualifications. PSU students developed policy proposals to address this problem and took action to bring attention to the issue, including speaking at school board meetings, holding press conferences; and sponsoring a public hearing where students, parents, and community leaders testified about this problem. As a result of these efforts, the school system adopted many of PSU's proposals and promised new programs to help all schools attract and keep highly qualified teachers. PSU is actively monitoring this issue and campaigning for dedicated funding to implement the promised reforms.

Pittsburgh Parent Involvement Coalition

The Coalition is working with ELC to advocate for new parent involvement policies and practices in the Pittsburgh School District. The Coalition first drafted a comprehensive policy for parent involvement in schools. The Coalition engaged parents and community leaders from diverse parts of the Pittsburgh community. Participants include Title I, Parent Educational Resource Center, Southwest Community Providers, Institute for Community Leadership in Education, ACORN, and many individual parents. The Coalition has persuaded the Pittsburgh Board of Education to adopt the parent involvement policy. These changes are needed to bring the district into compliance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and to reduce deep opportunity and achievement gaps between student groups in local schools.

Youth United for Change (YUC – Philadelphia) (215) 423-9588

YUC is working with ELC to create small schools in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. Starting in 2003, YUC first investigated and documented the educational benefits of small school environments. YUC students developed policy proposals to change their schools into small schools. The students recruited parents and community leaders to join them in negotiating with school officials about this issue. Their efforts resulted in new commitments from the school district to rebuild Kensington High School as a small school. YUC continues to advocate for the small school agenda in their communities.

Washington County Community Partnership for NCLB Issues

The Partnership is working to address the achievement gaps in this small urban district with a relatively limited tax base. The Partnership includes parents and community leaders from local churches, universities, the League of Women Voters, University Women, Mental Health, and Multicultural Community Center. These diverse participants work to address a variety of school problems with the goal of increasing the academic achievement of all students. The Partnership conducts regular meetings with local and state elected officials. The Partnership also regularly conducts major outreach to parents, helps parents become aware of the deep gaps in achievement between subgroups of students, monitors local parent involvement policies, and reviews the local curriculum for math and other subjects. Other activities to date have included participating in training programs for teachers and local human services providers, and analyzing local School Improvement Plans under NCLB.