



Project GATE Gazette

Greetings from:

Denise and Magda...

**Miami-Dade County
Public Schools**

Volume 1, Issue 7

May 2007

**Special points of
Interest:**

- ☉ Websites of Interests
- ☉ Summer HEAT
- ☉ Literacy Strategies to Remember

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A warm hello to the Project GATE teams...

What an incredible year it has been and there are still 18 days left in this school year, so make them count! Thank you for sharing the wonderful FCAT Writing (for information on understanding the writing scores, please visit: <http://fcats.fldoe.org>) and 3rd Grade Reading scores with us—only an affirmation that you continue to shine and thrive in working with your students. Please feel free to email us and share with us the strides that your students have made this school year. We look forward to the celebration of these successes and many more at the Saturday, May 19, 2007 event.

As you begin to wrap up the school year, take the time to reflect on your teaching year: What worked? How can I make it better? What do I need to make it better? If there wasn't anything stopping me from making it better, what would I need? Let us know how we can help to make the closing of the school year a smooth transition for you.

If you have not heard the buzz, Summer HEAT sizzles! Summer HEAT is a wonderful five-day professional development opportunity. Check out the Summer HEAT Institutes/Academies offered during the weeks of June 11-15 & June 18-22, 2007.

All sessions are now up for previewing at:

<http://prodev.dadeschools.net/summerheat/>

This website will "go live" on Monday, May 14th at 5:00 pm

Don't procrastinate—courses will fill up in record time!

"A teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn is hammering on cold iron." ~ Horace Mann

**Project GATE : Getting Assistance for Teaching Effectively
is a joint venture between Miami-Dade County Public
Schools and Florida International University's
Professional Development Partnership.**



**Teaching is a
Master Piece**

You are cordially invited to attend an end
of the year breakfast celebration honor-
ing the
2006-2007 Project *GATE* Partnerships



Date: Saturday, May 19, 2007

Place: Hilton Miami Airport

5101 Blue Lagoon Drive

Time: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

RSVP by May 11, 2007 to Ms. Magda D. Salazar at
786-223-3335 or mssalazar@dadeschools.net.

Project GATE Goes National!

On April 21, 2007 in Louisville, Kentucky, I supported Evelys Ubiera, Project GATE mentor, as she represented Florida as the Council for Exceptional Children Teacher of the Year. Evelys Ubiera opens doors for her students with significant disabilities to high school classes and activities, employment, and the community. Evelys initiated the Focus on Teamwork project, whereby her students worked with general education students to learn all aspects of television video production. She was chosen to open the first Miami-Dade County Public School classroom on a college campus, and she is pioneering a program in which students with disabilities are housed at and participate in non-credit college courses and college activities. Evelys is the only teacher on Florida's State Advisory Committee on the Education of Exceptional Children.

Way to go Evelys! *By Magda Salazar*



What's the Buzz around the State...



Center for Teaching Quality: Teacher-Authored Report on Performance Pay

In the first report of its kind, 18 expert teachers from across the nation have released a report proposing changes in the ways in which teachers have been compensated for years. Susan Bischoff, a fifth grade teacher at Ballard Elementary in Manatee County is one of the teachers credited with authoring the report. The group proposes radical changes to the traditional salary schedule and has made recommendations which, if implemented, could double, even triple, a teacher's income. To access the complete report as well as information about the Merit Award Program, visit <http://www.fldoe.org/justforteachers>.

Teacher Talk: An Inside Look at Florida Education: Show 3

Since the broadcast of the first show on the Florida Education Channel and the Florida Knowledge Network, districts across Florida have been placing the program into regular rotation on their local education channel, and teachers have been contacting me to have their school highlighted on the program. The show celebrates innovations made by Florida teachers, schools, and districts and features teacher interviews, student-produced segments, education news, and interesting stories about education in Florida. The third show, currently being broadcast, focuses on the following: Florida teacher survey results, Florida's online advising and academic planning system (FACTS.org) and the ePEP educational planner currently available in middle schools across Florida, as well as a student-produced interview with Marshall Skinner, director of Career and Technical Education programs in Martin County. Mr. Skinner discusses career academies, SUCCEED Florida! funding, and the variety of innovative programs available to students and teachers in Martin County. To access the Florida Education Channel and Florida Knowledge Network broadcast schedules for "Teacher Talk: An Inside Look at Florida Education" or to view programs online, visit <http://www.fldoe.org/justforteachers>. Be sure to check your local education channel for broadcast times in your area.

Florida Middle School Student Asking Spielberg to Remake the Diary of Anne Frank

Inspired by her sister, Stephanie Russo, the 2006 winner of Chancellor Yecke's "Middle School Summer Reading Book Challenge" administered by the Just Read, Florida! office, 7th grader Linda Russo decided to grab a good book and start reading. She chose, The Diary of Anne Frank and was so inspired by Anne's story, and the history of the Holocaust, that she decided to learn as much as she could about this period in history. She was lead to the movie, produced in 1959, and decided that she would ask film director, Steven Spielberg, to remake the film to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the release of the original film. Linda is asking that Mr. Spielberg remake the film for release in 2009, and in her letter to the well-known director, she says "I am not Jewish, I am Catholic, but I think that is not what is important. Her diary shows that we are all the same and what happened to her and all the Jewish people in the Holocaust was very awful."

Source: Just for Teachers—<http://www.fldoe.org/justforteachers/>

Recognizing the Wealth that Parents Bring to Urban Schools

by Dr. Louie F. Rodríguez, Florida International University

Introductions

Earlier this year, a troubling story broke out of one of this nation's public schools. According to numerous media reports, a parent was called and demanded to come to school and pick up her disruptive child. During an apparently heated discussion with the teacher, some books were knocked on the floor whereby the teacher hit the panic button in her classroom. The parent and child proceeded to the office. There, the parent allegedly threatened the principal where upon the police were called and the parent was arrested.

While the "facts" remain unclear, I immediately took a race and class analysis of the situation. I resorted to this analysis because the research shows that lower-class parents are more likely to be disregarded and treated indifferently by schools (Kozol, 1991). My hunch was that the parent was Black or Latina and probably of lower-class status while school officials (administrator and teacher) probably were not. I soon learned that the parent was Latina. However, what struck me even more than the incident itself was the public's outcry in response to it.

In today's age of the internet with immediate distribution and accessibility of information for anyone who has the means to do so, I began to search web blogs about the incident. Sure enough, in my estimation, about 95% of the public's outcry was laced with racist and classist responses about the mother and child. One person framed an opinion as a multiple choice question and it went something like this: "So, do you think the parent was: A) Cuban, B) Puerto Rican, or C) Dominican?" Other public opinions revolved around the "apple doesn't fall far from the tree" analogy, which implicated the mother's direct role in her child's "disruptiveness" and concentrated blame on the family. Across the numerous opinions that I read, there was little critique about the structural or cultural realities of schools and how those mediate the ways children and parents are treated, particularly those from historically marginalized communities of color. Aside from the blog opinions, many media stories reported that the parent needed a "timeout," a common term that parents or educators use to discipline children. The use of "timeout" to characterize the parent immediately infantilized this mother. This is particularly problematic when middle-class parents frequently advocate for the rights of their children and sometimes resort to threats such as a visit downtown. Yet, how many times are these parents characterized as needing a "timeout"? My guess is never.

Snapshot of the Research on Parent-School Dynamics

What is troubling about this situation and the ensuing public responses is the glaring normalization of the deficit-oriented perspectives that were used to characterize the mother and child. Deficit-oriented perspectives typically characterize communities of color as deficient often because of their cultural beliefs, parenting styles, language practices, and value systems (Valencia & Solorzano, 1997). Such deficit views typically clash with the white middle class norms and values of schools and since the cultures of these communities are different from that of schools and the people that work within them, communities of color are often characterized as deficient (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Research also shows that schools typically subtract the knowledge, experiences and expertise that communities of color bring (Ladson-Billings, 2000), often assuming that the knowledge is something that derives from textbooks and cannot possibly be drawn from the "funds of knowledge" of the people themselves—knowledge that is created by and with the school and community (Moll et al., 1992). Yet, not all educators harbor these views and there do exist examples of hope. The challenge to schools and the people within them is apparent and can be viewed in at least two ways--either capitalize on the strengths that parents bring and view schools as sources of encouragement, support, and hope, or perpetuate social inequality by harboring deficit-oriented perspectives and deny the need for parent engagement because it has always been that way (Noguera, 2001). I would like to focus on the former as a way to illuminate hope and argue the need for meaningful parent engagement, particularly in communities that have historically been neglected by larger society. In doing so, I will focus on two initiatives, outside of the Miami-area, to demonstrate what is possible.

Two Possibilities of Hope for Parent Engagement

Sharing a similar demographic profile to Miami, a multi-institutional partnership in Chicago between the State of Illinois, local public schools, community-based organizations, and local universities, created the Grow Your Own (GYO) Teachers Initiative. Contrary to the traditional parental involvement that revolves around attending parent conferences, an occasional fundraiser and sometimes workshops where educational experts tell parents what they need to be doing, the GYO Initiative targets parents, paraprofessionals, and other leaders in the community to become teachers and lead school-community collaboration. The GYO program believes in several core principles that shape their work with communities of color: 1) they bring assets that directly benefit schools, 2) they truly believe in the power of respectful relationships, 3) invest in school-community organizing to secure resources for parents, 4) provide the most neglected children with the best teachers, and 5) train highly competent classroom educators who can become teachers and community leaders. Outcomes show that GYO teachers are more likely to remain in critical shortage areas over time as opposed to teachers who come from the outside. The GYO initiative demonstrates what is possible when schools view and capitalize on the assets that parents bring to the school and wider community.

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The second initiative has become a national program. The Parent School Partnership (PSP) Program is an effort born out of the Mexican American Legal and Defense Fund (MALDEF), an organization committed to protecting and enforcing the rights of Latinos across the nation. The PSP program believes in training parents, school-level personnel, and community-based citizens to take a leadership role in advocating for underserved children. Parents are taught about their rights and responsibilities, the structure and function of schools, how to navigate the parent/teacher conference, leadership development, and college access issues (The MALDEFian, 2007). In early 2007, a group of parents went to the California state legislature and advocated for a series of issues including financial aid for undocumented students, better communication to parents about college requirements, and support for parents of English Language Learners. The PSP Program models a direct challenge to any deficit perspectives of parents and communities and is committed to building true partnerships *with* parents for the purposes of advocating for an equitable education for all children. Both examples pose a challenge to educators to invest in the social, human, and cultural forms of capital that are salient within historically marginalized communities.

Critical Questioning

These examples pose a challenge to educators, particularly within systems that serve the most socially marginalized communities. Thus, a series of questions are worth posing, both for teachers and administrators, as an exercise to reflect on their individual and school-level practices. These questions revolve around the notion of community cultural wealth—that is, capitalizing on the strengths, assets, and skills that parents bring to the school (Yosso, 2005). That is, how have parents navigated these institutions in the past and what skills do they bring to the dialogue? What storytelling traditions do these communities bring and how can we legitimize these traditions, particularly as a way to get parents connected to schools? How can schools build a culture within them that values and invests in relationships with parents? What are the aspirations, hopes, and dreams of these communities? How can schools capitalize on the knowledge, experiences, and expertise of parents and use this as a pedagogical resource?

The opening situation that I discussed above is avoidable and should not be considered a normal occurrence in struggling schools. My belief is that until we get beyond deficit-notions of parents and communities and begin to recognize and invest in the wealth that parents bring to schools, educators will continue to struggle to engage parents with purpose, dignity, and justice. I close with a quote by Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator and philosopher:

“...the starting point for a political-pedagogical process must be precisely at the level of the people’s aspirations and dreams, their understanding of reality and their forms of action and struggle” —Paulo Freire, *Learning to Question*

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Teachers as Heroes, Dade Reading Council, Honors 2 GATE Teachers

On Saturday, April 28, 2007, two of our very own Project GATE teachers were recognized as Teachers as Heroes by Dade Reading Council. Magda was honored to be there supporting both of these stellar teachers.

Maria Estevan, Project GATE mentee at Gulfstream Elementary, was recognized for her innovative and caring way of working with her students with disabilities. She creatively infuses hands-on activities and literature into a picture perfect instructional lesson.

Tan Melton, Project GATE mentor at Kendale Elementary, was recognized for coaching her mentee, and many more during the 2006-2007 school year. She has not only impacted her students, but the students of teachers who have continuously visited her classroom as an "exemplary" inclusion classroom.



Literacy Strategies: Alternatives to Worksheets— Ideas From our April Literacy PD

Hula Hoop Venn Diagrams

Venn diagrams are useful as a graphics organization tool when comparing two things (and particularly for use with younger children). Simple Venn diagrams are used, in which no more than two curves intersect at a common point. Shared characteristics are listed in the overlapping section allowing for easy identification of which characteristics are shared and which aren't. String or colored yarn can be used to make circles on the floor and manipulatives and pictures are strongly encouraged, or as demonstrated by Dr. Gudwin in April's Literacy Professional Development, Hula Hoops work wonderfully!



Sequencing Ladder

Most stories have a very definite sequence of events. Students gain a deeper understanding of the story by exploring this sequence. Use the Sequencing Ladder to help your students understand the concept of story development by analyzing events of the story (written, pictorial) and arranging them in logical sequential order. It can also be a “vocabulary ladder,” a “retelling ladder,” a “spelling ladder,” and a “math ladder.” Just use painters’ tape... it will not harm the floor or carpeting.



Education Fund's Great American Teach-A-Thon Application—Due June 1

What is it?

The Great American Teach-A-Thon is a messaging awareness campaign which educates the public about the importance of teaching and teaching quality. The Ed Fund's goal is to raise the public's awareness and support for teaching so that student achievement is increased. This can only be achieved with an educated public.

The program matches the teacher up with a business team (of 2). This team goes to several meetings, which is planned by the teacher, and where they learn about the teaching profession and its challenges. They also begin developing a lesson plan for their day (102 hours) in your classroom. During this 8 week process, **you are their** mentor teacher.

What is required?

- Communicate with the Ed Fund staff by phone
- Connect & communicate with your assigned business partners and guide them through their lesson
- Attend up to 3 events along with the business partner including:
 - Kick-off party in late August/Early September (after school).
 - 1-2 training session in September-October (after school).
 - Victory Party in early November (after school).
- Host up to 2 business partners in your classroom the day of the Great American Teach-A-Thon, tentatively scheduled for early November (note that you are to remain in your classrooms during their instruction).

Yes, I want to apply to be a part of the Education Fund's Great American Teach-A-Thon. If chosen to participate, I will agree to do the above checked duties of a teacher mentor.

Name: _____ School: _____

Grade: _____ Subject: _____ Employee #: _____

Work phone: _____ Cell: _____ Home: _____

Personal e-mail: _____ Work e-mail: _____

Which e-mail do you prefer using during summer? Personal Work

Which e-mail do you prefer using during the school year? Personal Work

Number of years teaching _____ Have you participated in any of the Ed Fund's Activities? Yes No

National Board Certified*? Yes No *not a requirement to participate.

Donor:

- designated donor through United way
- Education License Plate
- Direct Donor

Grantee/Participant:

- Citibank Success Fund
- Citigroup Team Mentor Grant
- IMPACT II Adaptor
- IMPACT II Disseminator
- Ocean Bank Center for Edu. Mat.
- Citibank Family Tech
- Teacher Mini-Grants
- IMPACT II Idea Expo
- Great American Teach-A-Thon
- Citibank Success Fund

I am aware of this application: _____ Date: _____
Principal's Signature

Please send this form via fax to 305-892-5096 or, if you would like a Word document version of this form, please send an e-mail request to cyugler@educationfund.org. Participating teachers will be notified of their acceptance

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Mathematical Reasoning by Valerie Morris Math Coach, Edison Senior High

Mathematical reasoning ability means thinking logically, being able to see similarities and differences in objects or problems, making choices based on those differences and thinking about relationships among things. You can encourage your child's mathematical reasoning ability by talking frequently with him about these thought processes.

Some Important Things Your Students Need to Know About Mathematics

You can help your students learn math by offering him/her insights into how to approach math. She will develop more confidence in her math ability if she understands the following points:

1. Problems can be solved in different ways.
2. Wrong answers sometimes can be useful.
3. Take risks!
4. Being able to complete mathematics in your head is important.
5. It's sometimes OK to use a calculator to solve mathematics problems.

Teacher Tools on the Internet

Teacher-Sites

Mathematic Interactive Websites

K-8 Website: www.aaamath.com

K-8 Website: www.aplusmath.com

K-6 Website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/numbers/wholenumbers/>

K-12 Website: www.coolmath.com

K-8 Website: www.funbrain.com

Secondary Website: <http://highschoolace.com/ace/math.cfm>

K-12 Website: <http://illuminations.nctm.org/swr/index.asp>

