

School Improvement Through Collaboration

Cooperative and innovative practices between traditional public and charter schools are growing nationally. Below are some examples of the worthwhile synergy that occurs from working together.

Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools (BPE) and the Boston Schoolchildren's Consortium

Consortium members include superintendents and directors of Boston charter, parochial, private, traditional, and pilot schools and METCO. It is the first cross-sector collaboration intended to improve education for all schoolchildren in a major American city. The goal of the Consortium is to explore how, in each sector, the strongest schools achieve a culture of high achievement among students and staff and what lessons from successful schools can be spread to all schools. In announcing the Consortium, BPE Executive Director Ellen Guiney said, "Together, we believe we can make Boston the first city with a new, larger vision for educating its children and lead the way for the rest of the country, as Boston has so often done in the past. It is time to join forces above the political fray and undertake common work for the common good."

The Project for School Innovation (PSI)

PSI is a network of charter and district public schools in Massachusetts that shares and disseminates best practices among teacher and school leaders, partners with leading organizations across New England to facilitate projects that support educators in sharing their strengths and expertise, and publishes teacher-authored guidebooks and trains educators to coach their peers through workshops and consultations in order to share effective practices within and between charter and district schools.

Boston Public Schools and Boston Renaissance Charter Public School

Renaissance students and staff, in partnership with the Wang Center's Arts Can Teach Program, piloted an 8-week lunchtime musical/cultural experience called "Eats and Beats," featured in the Boston Globe and which spread to several Boston school districts.

Teacher YOU Training Institute

What sets the New York institute apart is the close collaboration between entrepreneurial groups and Hunter College, the City University of New York's premier teacher-preparation school. Teacher YOU Training Institute follows other efforts germinated outside universities to boost the power of teacher preparation. Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein has blessed the program. Leaders of Uncommon Schools, KIPP in New York City, and Achievement First envision admitting some 500 students a year in 2011 to the two-year program. In addition to teachers from the three founding charter-management organizations, the students would include teachers in other New York City schools, both charter and non-charter, most of them from the New York Teaching Fellows program run by the district to bring in high-quality beginners.

McAuliffe Elementary School and Prairie Crossing Academy

McAuliffe Elementary in Logan Square teamed with Prairie Crossing, a suburban charter in Grayslake, for "Farm to Table," which brings students, parents, teachers and community members together for its Wellness Council and meals using locally-grown organic foods.

Edward W. Brook Charter School and the Clarence Edwards Middle School

A one-year partnership between the two schools developed formative math assessments and shared best practices in analyzing data from the assessments to target student support.

Five Cape Cod School Districts and the Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School

Established The Write Connection, a student newspaper publication for Cape Cod teens, written for and by teens.

Stoughton & Foxborough School Districts & Foxborough Regional Charter

Stoughton and Foxborough School Districts and Foxborough Regional Charter School exchanged professional development days with Stoughton in hosting sessions on data-driven analyses and in exchange Foxborough charter doing trainings on curriculum mapping.

New England Laborers' Career Academy and Cranston Public Schools

The New England Laborers' Career Academy is a charter-school collaboration between the Laborers' Union and the Cranston Schools. It is an alternative to Cranston's two very traditional high schools, where kids who didn't fit in all too often just dropped out. At Laborers, Cranston academic teachers and instructors who are journeyman laborers themselves jointly craft an academic program geared to the construction trade.

The Oakland Inquiry Project

The Oakland Inquiry Project is a project that engages ten Oakland school leaders from district schools and charter schools in a sustained, facilitated inquiry project for one year. The inquiry focuses on perfecting or initiating an Early College model of providing access to college courses for all students. This inquiry concludes with a published "Field Guide" of recommendations, tips, and strategies for use by other schools and school leaders as a resource when seeking to implement a similar innovative practice.

Rhode Island Charter and District Collaborate to Improve Reading

Reading specialists at a Rhode Island charter school are serving as instructional coaches, providing in-class training to their public-school colleagues as part of a program to help boost reading skills among their students. Despite some resistance to collaboration with the charter school, public-school educators say improved reading scores speak for themselves. "We have excellent teachers, and so do they," said one public-school principal. "It's just that the charter has a reading initiative that really works."