

Chicago Annenberg Challenge
322 S. Green St., Suite 108
Chicago, IL 60607
Phone: 312-413-5869
Fax: 312-355-0856

1999 MID-YEAR REPORT

TO

THE ANNENBERG FOUNDATION

MEMO

To: Gail Levin and Meridyth Senes
The Annenberg Foundation
From: Ken Rolling *Ken R.*
Subject: 1999 Mid-Year Report to The Annenberg Foundation
Date: August 2, 1999

The following memo along with the enclosed materials constitute The Chicago Annenberg Challenge's 1999 Mid-Year Report. An important part of our report is the binder containing standardized test scores in Reading and Mathematics for schools supported by Annenberg funds.

Since filing our 1998 year-end report, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge has been busy with several aspects of our work. The following attempts to outline highlights of that work.

Board of Directors:

At the beginning of 1999 three new board members formally joined The Chicago Annenberg Challenge: John W. McCarter, Jr., President of The Field Museum; Victoria Chou, Dean, College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago; Jim Reynolds, President and CEO, Loop Capital Markets. The three additions brought the CAC board to twelve. However, the number was reduced to eleven following the June board meeting with the resignation of Ray Romero who was named CEO of an expanding international telecommunications company. His new position demands extensive international travel and Mr. Romero felt he couldn't keep up with CAC board responsibilities.

The Board of Directors met in March and June 1999, in their regular meetings. In addition an Executive Committee meeting was held in May 1999 for the purposes of awarding an Implementation grant to one of the last Planning Networks sponsored by the Challenge. At their June Board meeting, the Board of Directors Annual Meeting, members were re-elected and board officers were re-elected. Barack Obama was elected President of the Board; Patricia Albjerg Graham was elected Vice-President; and Edward Bottom was elected Secretary-Treasurer.

It is likely there will be a change in the Presidency of the Board of Directors as Barack Obama is seriously contemplating running for a U.S. Representative seat and will step aside as President of the Board, but remain on the board.

Chicago School Reform Collaborative:

The Collaborative, an advisory committee which also has taken responsibility for assisting CAC staff and the board in implementing the Challenge, has met a few times in 1999. While attendance at regular Collaborative meetings remains sporadic, individual Collaborative

Gail Levin and Meridyth Senes, The Annenberg Foundation

Page 2

August 2, 1999

members -- at least ten -- are actively involved as volunteers in working with networks, reviewing progress of networks and their schools, reviewing proposals and plans, and assisting Leadership Development Initiatives in their planning. The Challenge continues to enjoy assistance from a range of individuals and organizations represented on the Collaborative.

Chicago Public Education Fund:

A separate, enclosed memo provides an update on the development of the Chicago Public Education Fund (CPEF) which has been the centerpiece of the Challenge's commitment to develop broader funder and civic support for Chicago school reform as well as provide a fitting legacy for the Challenge in Chicago. The CPEF is focused on the critical issue of school leadership -- principals and teachers -- for Chicago's public schools. Considerable amount of organizing work from the Challenge board and staff has gone into the building of the new organization to develop it as a solidly supported civic institution in Chicago. Not the least of the work has been to assure good working relations with the leadership of the Chicago Public Schools: CEO Paul Vallas and President of the Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees, Gery Chico.

CAC Grant Program:

CAC began 1999 with a goal of committing all final grant funds by the end of the calendar year. Steps toward that end were taken at both the March and June board meetings. It was determined at the beginning of the year to focus Annenberg funds on networks and individual schools which are showing achievement and promise of significant reform. At the same time we are dropping some networks as it becomes apparent they are not progressing on their reform plans. We are also reviewing each network to determine which ones will receive an additional year of funding for the 2000--2001 school year. All grants to schools, networks and/or organizations are scheduled to end June 30, 2001. That leaves the Challenge with two complete school years to go.

A particular aspect of CAC's grant program is the Leadership Development Initiative. At their June 1999 meeting the CAC Board of Directors approved commitments to fully use the amount budgeted for Leadership Development efforts at the beginning of the Challenge. Close to two million dollars was budgeted and is now fully committed. Those funds have supported efforts to recruit candidates and build turnout for the Local School Council elections in both 1996 and 1998 and provide support for seven collaboratives around the city working to develop an informed parent and community resident constituency for improving the academic life of local schools. Some of those networks, which are separate from the regular CAC Implementation networks, will have been organizing and training for five years by June 30, 2001 while others will have been working for at least two years by then.

Gail Levin and Meridyth Senes, The Annenberg Foundation

Page 4

August 2, 1999

The CAC website is up and running now. It is vehicle through which we plan to communicate the findings of our evaluation and the lessons learned from succeeding programs CAC is funding.

Our communications and program efforts worked together to carry off a successful Spring conference -- *Planting Roots: Cultivating Change*. The day-long conference drew over 300 school and network participants to The Field Museum on May 8, 1999. The focus of the day was to share evidence of change between CAC networks and to provide a forum for CAC participants to learn about and discuss the Challenge's evaluation report "*The Quality of Intellectual Work in Chicago Schools*." As follow up to the conference we commissioned an edition of the *Reporter*, another Challenge publication series which will interpret and communicate evaluation reports for teachers, parents, principals and the general public. The first *Reporter* issue, on the "*Quality of Intellectual Work*" study has been well-received.

Evaluation:

One of the biggest challenges CAC faces is adequate use of the massive evaluation program -- The Chicago Annenberg Research Project -- we have underway. The evaluation completed its third year of work (out of the an originally projected five-year program) on June 30, 1999. A number of critical reports have been published. Several more are due in the latter half of 1999.

The most notable report to date is "*The Quality of Intellectual Work in Chicago Schools*." It is notable for its uniqueness of the approach and study but more so for how it has begun to inform the debate about academic improvement and professional development of teachers to affect academic achievement in Chicago. The study has been picked up in other cities with the Boston Challenge not only re-printing it newspaper-style for all of professionals involved in Boston Public Schools, but also excerpting it for insert in the *Boston Globe*. In addition, the study has been distributed and used in Atlanta. The Consortium on Chicago School Research which is doing the evaluation project for the Challenge is completing an update on the report, based on a second year's research, for Fall 1999.

A revised and corrected edition of "*The Chicago Annenberg Challenge: The First Three Years*" is enclosed as one of the attachments for this report. In addition two issue briefs -- on full research reports to be published later this year are enclosed.

Important and critical evaluation reports expected in the months ahead, before the end of 1999 include:

1. *Social Support, Academic Press and Student Achievement;*
2. *Teacher Professional Development;*
3. *Quality of Intellectual Work--Update;*

4. *School Program Coherence and Student Achievement*;
5. *Annenberg Networks and External Partners*;
6. *Year Three School Development Report* (major mid-project report).

An extension and expansion of the evaluation is being planned for since the Challenge has been extended through the year 2001 and because the evaluation began "late." The original grants to networks were not fully approved and paid out until early 1996, half-way through the school year. The Consortium proposed a one-year extension to take note of the time line for the Challenge and included in their proposal (which is initially a no-cost extension) is a recommendation to expand some of their work especially continued research on student tasks and work products (the "Intellectual Quality" report) and on the elements of reform that are working at the school level. The Challenge's board of directors accepted both the extension of the time line as well as expansion of the research and data gathering in the areas most useful and informative for school reform, if sufficient funding can be found to underwrite the work. The search for funds is underway.

The evaluation project completed another citywide survey of all Chicago public schools and is analyzing the data this summer. The evaluation team will prepare individual survey results on a number of topics affecting students, teachers, principals and school communities for up to 400 different Chicago public schools, each of whom assisted in the survey by returning substantial numbers (over 50%) of the surveys requested of its student body and teachers. The survey was done in collaboration with the Chicago Public Schools who also provided additional printing funds so that schools could receive their own data if they responded in adequate numbers.

Through the generosity of Chicago foundations we have raised almost \$1.3 million of the \$1.6 million needed to complete the local portion of the contract for the original five-year evaluation program. One major funder, The Joyce Foundation is considering a renewal grant for two more years to help with the additional funding still needed. In addition we are seeking to raise an additional \$300,000 to \$350,000 to extend and expand the evaluation through the life time of the Challenge as described above. A sixth year would be added to the original time line to allow for a final evaluation report to be completed in the summer 2002. A few local foundations are considering requests and hope to help us with most of the extension and expansion costs.

Issues ahead:

The Chicago Annenberg Challenge will complete its work by the end of 2001. While we have two full school years of funding to provide to networks of schools and will be providing extensive program support to those networks and their schools, we are focused on a couple of overall issues with implications for school reform in Chicago. The issues we discuss here permeate all the organizational work, monitoring of grants, raising funds, publishing reports, and

Gail Levin and Meridyth Senes, The Annenberg Foundation
Page 6
August 2, 1999

so forth we are daily engaged in.

First, we are focused on gathering the data and evidence of what works and what hasn't worked at the school and network level. The gathering of evidence, to result in telling the story of effective school reform, is a responsibility that runs throughout our program and evaluation work. Much of our work over the next two years is focused on communicating with an eye toward implementing effective school reform practices to participants in the Challenge as well as to the public.

Second, following on the above effort, we gather the record of effective reform and the record of student work in Chicago with a focus on mounting a campaign to propose and advocate for policies the Chicago Public Schools should address to reform its entire system of public schools. The Chicago Annenberg Challenge has the most extensive and deepest experience and research data in Chicago at this moment in our history. We plan to use that data and experience to address system-wide needs for reform.

The above issues involve a deeper understanding and communicating of findings and lessons from our evaluation and our staff experiences with schools and networks. We are looking forward to deepening our work and completing the responsibilities we have to use wisely the opportunity the Annenberg Foundation funds have provided us.

Thank you.

**The following attachments are part of the 1999 Mid-Year Report to
The Annenberg Foundation:**

1. Chicago Public Education Fund update memo;
2. Brochure on Chicago Public Education Fund;
3. Board of Directors list, Chicago Annenberg Challenge
4. Chicago Annenberg Challenge financial statements, June 30, 1999;
5. Minutes from Board of Directors meeting, March 18, 1999;
6. Minutes from Board of Directors meeting, June 17, 1999;
7. Evaluation -- Internal Research Memos:
 - A. Teacher Professional Development;
 - B. School Program Coherence and Student Achievement;
 - C. Addendum to School Program Coherence and Student Achievement;
8. *The Chicago Annenberg Challenge: The First Three Years* -- revised;
9. The Chicago Annenberg Challenge *REPORTER*;
10. *FOCUS* -- produced by Boston Annenberg Challenge;
11. *GREAT EXPECTATIONS* -- produced by Boston Annenberg Challenge;
12. CAC -- *1999 Summer Institute on Authentic Intellectual Work* -- workbook;
13. *SchoolWorks* -- Winter 1999;
14. Map locating Annenberg Schools throughout Chicago;
15. Directory of Grants -- updated through June 30, 1999;
16. Articles -- "dialogue" between Paul Vallas and *Catalyst* magazine;
17. Binder containing test score data on Annenberg schools.