

**A Qualitative Evaluation of the CCSD-UGA-Athens
Community Partnership For Community Learning Centers**

Executive Summary Report
Spring-Fall, 2003

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CCSD-UGA-ACC Partnership Qualitative Evaluation Spring 2003 Report Summary

The qualitative component of an evaluation study of the CCSD-UGA-ACC Partnership program continued at two elementary schools during the spring 2003 semester and fall 2003 semester. A team of researchers from the Qualitative Inquiry Program at the University of Georgia conducted the evaluation. In the spring, 2003 report we present findings from our analysis of documents, transcripts of individual interviews, notes of informal interviews and conversations, and field notes of observations at both schools. The following summarizes key Partnership events and activities offered at the Partnership Schools. We also list areas of concern at both schools and include current responses and further responses for Partnership Stakeholders.

Data collection methods during the spring 2003 evaluation included open-ended surveys, which were administered to the school faculty during the spring 2003 semester. Evaluators used these surveys to gain formative insight into school faculty's perspectives of the Partnership reform initiative during the 2002-2003 school year. The surveys focused on five broadly defined categories, including (1) Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, (2) Professional Development, (3) Communication, (4) Decision-Making, and (5) School Learning Environment. Gaines CLC administration, faculty and staff returned twenty-four surveys and Chase Street CLC returned twenty-six surveys.

The Evaluation Committee conducted a thematic analysis of the surveys and generated categories representing the major issues and concerns at Gaines CLC and Chase Street CLC. Dr. Jenny Penney Oliver, Partnership Co-Director, Dr. Jose Boza, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction at CCSD, and Dr. Bob Bluett, Principal at Chase Street CLC, conducted conversations with faculty and staff, using the surveys to guide discussions. The conversations focused on the Partnership's first year of implementation and the school district's school improvement process. The administration, teachers and staff comments were compiled and reported back to the school. Dr. Bluett, Dr. Boza and Dr. Oliver addressed these concerns throughout the remainder of the school year.

Dr. JoBeth Allen, Partnership Co-Director, Dr. Jose Boza, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction at CCSD, and Ms. Phyllis Stewart, Principal at Gaines CLC, used the survey results to structure conversations with school faculty and staff. A few days before these conversations were held, Dr. JoBeth Allen placed a sign up sheet in the office, and several teachers and support staff signed up to talk with Dr. Allen, Dr. Boza and Ms. Stewart. Comments in the conversations focused on reflections about the school's reform efforts during the Partnership's first year of implementation and the district's school improvement process. Sixteen teachers and staff participated in these conversations, and several members offered suggestions, which were compiled and reported to the school. Ms. Stewart and the School Improvement Leadership Team followed through with several of these recommendations throughout the remainder of the school year.

Ethnographers continued collecting data through their observations at Design Team and school faculty meetings and at various times during the school day. During the Spring 2003 semester, the Chase Street CLC ethnographer conducted daily observations, which were between one and three hours in length. Thirty-four observations were conducted from January through July 2003 including three daylong observations (Ruby Payne workshop, conversation day, and four blocks literacy training). Twelve interviews were conducted at Chase Street CLC with faculty, staff and administrators.

At Gaines CLC, the school's ethnographer conducted observations approximately twice each week during the spring 2003 semester, which were between one and three hours in length. Twenty-six observations were conducted from January through April 2003. The Gaines CLC ethnographer conducted several informal interviews with administration, faculty and staff members during the semester.

Ethnographers conducted occasional validity checks by sending drafts of notes and findings to teachers and other faculty at the school for feedback. The survey reports provided to faculty and staff, as well as informal conversations with administrators, teachers and other school support staff, provided another means for checking the validity of findings. The 2002-2003 Partnership Midyear Report provides a thorough explanation of the Evaluation Team's ongoing data collection and analysis methods.

Summary of Key Partnership Events, Spring 2003

1. Spring 2003 Intersession: One-hundred seventy students participated in spring intersession activities, connecting science and recreational activities to enrich children over the two-week period. The Athens Department of Leisure Services worked with several university departments and community organizations to organize and facilitate several science-related activities (e.g., water conservation, ocean life, cell growth, forestry)
2. Spring 2003 Art Enrichment Program: Dr. Pam Taylor, Dr. Richard Siegesmund, and several pre-service art education students worked with teachers at both Partnership Schools to develop and deliver spring courses that integrated science and art across the curriculum. Pre-service teachers visited each class two to three times during the spring, providing students with authentic hands-on enrichment activities and pre-service teachers with practical elementary teaching experience.
3. A Framework for Understanding Poverty: Chase Street and Gaines school faculty attended a workshop to develop a greater sensitivity toward language discourse differences conducted by Dr. Raye Adkins's, *aha! Process, Inc.* School faculties learned strategies for bridging the language and culture gaps, which often prevent close relationships between the home and school.
4. Visit by Congressman Max Burns: The superintendent and other Partnership Design Team members met with Congressman Max Burns to communicate the Partnership's impact on the pilot schools and garner ongoing legislative support. This visit represented a major step toward creating legislation that supports community learning centers.
5. Trip to Family Resource Centers, Ashland, Kentucky: District administrators, university faculty, and select school faculty members traveled to several schools in Ashland, Kentucky to see and experience how family resource centers operate to make stronger connections between schools, families, and the greater community. The Partnership used these visits to begin constructing family resource centers across the district's schools.

6. Improved Communication Between the Partnership and the School: At the May 5, 2003 Design Team meeting, members discussed possible ways to address problems in communicating information about Partnership programs and resources to the pilot schools. Members decided to include a bulleted summary of key decisions and topics in the meeting minutes. Doing this has made it easier for pilot school faculties and other stakeholders to stay up to date with new Partnership programs and changes.

7. School Calendar Revisions: During the spring of 2003, school Design Team representatives provided critical calendar feedback to the Partnership Design Team, influencing positive changes in next year's calendar schedule. The Design Team reorganized intersessions (vacation days) to maximize the number of instructional days before testing and to distribute vacation days more evenly throughout the year. Administration, teachers and staff indicated that these changes improved relations between the Partnership and the school and may enhance engagement levels among teachers and students during the final weeks of the 2002-2003 school year.

CHASE STREET COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER
Spring 2003-Fall 2003

**Specific Activities Initiated,
Areas of Concerns, Current School Responses, and Possible Responses for Consideration
School Outcomes and Successes for Fall 2003**

SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES INITIATED AT CHASE STREET CLC, SPRING 2003

The Development of the School Improvement Plan: Chase Street CLC faculties, families, and UGA partners participated in the development of a three year School Improvement Plan to improve student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Reading, writing and mathematics study groups constructed goals and action steps including parental involvement, professional development and school, teacher and student evaluations. The development of the School Improvement Plan facilitated the alignment of reading, writing and mathematics instruction across grade levels.

Increased curriculum support from UGA faculty and students: The departments of mathematics education, language education, art education and information technology at UGA provided collaborative classroom instruction, professional development and resources for Chase Street CLC teachers, students and administration. The department of mathematics education conducted its fourth semester of the Support and Ideas for Planning and Sharing in Mathematics Education II (SIPsII) Eisenhower Higher Education Grant with grade level teachers at Chase St. CLC with the goal of creating a mathematics community, enhancing instruction, and improving students' mathematics achievement. Faculty in the department of language education continued to work with teachers and students on written language skills and instruction across different languages and different cultures. Faculty and students in the department of art education at UGA collaborated with twenty-two classroom teachers from Pre-K to fifth grade including special education on integrated arts instruction. UGA Partnership Co-Coordinator provided assists in Chase Street CLC access to UGA computer surpluses. These support services allowed teachers and administration access to additional resources and pedagogical training, which enhanced teachers and administrations instructional approaches and improved student learning.

Building community coherence through the Family Resource Center: Family and community involvement increased at Chase Street CLC during the spring 2003 semester. The three main areas of achievement occurred with the Family Fun Night, the Chase Street Neighborhood Coalition Neighborhood Night and Saturday Brunch, and the Family Resource Center activities and programs. The Family Fun Night increased teacher and family discussion and participation in mathematics concepts and instruction. The Chase Street Neighborhood Coalition Neighborhood Night and Saturday Brunch brought neighbors of Chase Street CLC together and clarified misconceptions about the role of partnership and Chase Street CLC. The Family Resource Center responded to family recommendations and held a "beginning computer class for adults,, a workshop on "how to start your own business,, and a workshop on "helping your child,, which addressed ways to be involved in your child's instruction and strategies to help children with reading, mathematics and homework. These workshops provided families with further education and increased Chase Street CLC family involvement.

AREAS OF CONCERN, CURRENT SCHOOL RESPONSES, AND FURTHER RESPONSES FOR CONSIDERATION AT CHASE STREET CLC, SPRING 2003

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Concern # 1

Due to the schools low achievement and approaching standardized test, students, teachers, and administration experienced increased pressure to show gains in the standardized test scores and improve their standing with the state. Teachers experienced intensified pressure by the late planning of the extended day tutoring program.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. We recommend the evaluation team asks teachers and administrators at the beginning school year for suggestions on reducing standardized testing stress. The evaluation team can provide the leadership team and UGA partnership coordinators with the findings. The top three findings can then be used to develop school programs.
2. Chase Street CLC fourth grade CRCT test scores showed improvement, which resulted in the state removing the school from corrective action. Now that improved test scores have resulted in less state scrutiny teachers can focus on the other areas of improvement in addition to the standardized testing.
3. Chase Street CLC administration, faculty, and staff recognize that planning the extended day tutoring program at the beginning of the school year reduces pressure in preparing for the state mandated standardized tests.

Concern #2

Teachers expressed concern about how to align the scope and sequence with the QCC's and meet the specific needs of their students. The administration requested that teachers move through the curriculum. The faculty had diverse views on the pacing of the curriculum and students' need to achieve mastery before introducing a new concept.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. In January 2003, administration asked teachers to turn in their lesson plans weekly. If teachers turn in their lesson plans with the QCC's weekly starting at the beginning of the school year then both teachers and administration will be able to recognize and problem solve issues of scope, sequence and pacing. The continued dialogue between teachers and administration will reduce last minute panic in covering the curriculum.
2. It is suggested that faculty turn in the math portion of the lesson plans to UGA faculty collaborators then partners will have an awareness of what is occurring in the classroom. One goal of the partnership may be assisting with the implementation of the scope and

sequence of the QCC's. The sharing of lesson plans will keep UGA faculty involved in the discussions of scope, sequence, and pacing.

3. It is suggested that quarterly meetings be held with Chase Street CLC principal and/or assistant principal and UGA collaborators. These meetings will allow collaborators to discuss and reflect on curriculum, instruction, and assessment concerns.
4. It is suggested that faculty be provided additional time at grade level meetings to discuss pedagogical and instructional concerns.

Concern #3

Chase Street CLC faculty expressed concern and frustration over the lack of time to plan and implement instruction and assessments strategies learned in their professional development workshops.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. In fall 2003, the Chase Street CLC faculty addressed one aspect of the problem in finding time by developing a master meeting calendar for the school. The calendar provides each committee with a monthly meeting day. The calendar allows faculty to plan ahead for their committee meetings.
2. The new Professional Development Associates program allows for the provision of continued instruction without having the classroom teacher be the only teacher responsible for instruction. This coverage provides faculty the time to meet every other week for curriculum, instruction, and assessment planning and professional development. The CCSD financial support for the professional development associates program provided a solution to faculty concerns around time. During these changing economic times, it remains important for the CCSD to advocate and provide financial support for the professional development associates.
3. Classroom teachers may want to develop a monthly calendar of topics for their grade level meetings. For example, the first week of the month may be assigned to mathematical concerns and the remainder of the weeks assigned to other topics.
4. When the Chase Street CLC administration meets with grade levels during their planning time, they may want to set the next meeting agenda at the end of each meeting. In addition e-mailing the agenda to classroom teachers may help them prepare for a thought provoking and efficient meeting.

Concern #4

In the development of the School Improvement Plan, teachers and administrators became aware of their differing pedagogical beliefs about reading assessments. The pedagogical debate surrounded the need for informal reading assessments in addition to the state mandated standardized testing.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Chase Street CLC teachers and administration resolved these philosophical differences by agreeing to include informal as well as standardized assessments in the School Improvement Plan.

Concern #5

During the 2002 Partnership Retreat, teachers discussed different service learning projects they could do with their students. In the spring 2003 conversations with Dr. Oliver, Dr. Boza and Dr. Bluett some teachers expressed their concern with the limited amount of service learning conducted in the 2002-2003 school year.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Faculty may want to use a faculty meeting to discuss whether service learning remains an interest and priority to the faculty. If a portion of the faculty remained interested in service learning they may find it beneficial to initiate a service learning and action research committee. This research team can share ideas for service learning initiatives in their classrooms as well as assist each other in the development of research designs. In addition, the students may want to participate in a Chase Street Service Learning Club.

Concern #6

UGA faculty from departments of mathematics education, art education, language education and romance languages collaborated with Chase Street CLC. The partnership coordinators, school administration, and teachers expressed a desire for more UGA faculty involvement.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Twice in the spring 2003 semester, Dr. Oliver reminded teachers of the UGA faculty partners' notebook, and provided a one-page document indicating specific people for assistance in determining the appropriate UGA faculty collaborators.
2. The problem of getting UGA faculty involved at Chase Street CLC can be partially resolved by utilizing the faculty recommendation of having a gathering with UGA and Chase Street CLC faculty at Chase Street. Another suggestion from the faculty involved UGA faculty stopping by and observing classrooms to see if they would like to work with that class. The connections are not being made through the notebook and the time limitations of the faculty at Chase Street CLC influenced the lack of initiative in collaboration with UGA faculty. The overall recommendation was to have UGA faculty introduce themselves to the teachers so that there is a face to a name.
3. After meeting UGA faculty, UGA partnership coordinators in collaboration with school administration may want to identify a dozen or so UGA faculty members wanting to work with the school that semester. From the list, a plan may be used to designate a UGA faculty member of the week. The e-mail profile of UGA faculty member of the week may include a brief description of the faculty member's interest and availability for the semester.

4. We recommend the Design Team create an incentive program for teacher collaboration.

Communication

Concern #7

During the development of School Improvement Plan, Chase Street CLC faculty and administration expressed frustration with the lack of communication between the CCSD administrative offices. Initially, one office told them to follow one course of action. After they had worked on this plan, the second office told them to follow another course of action. The lack of communication resulted in the teachers and school administration needing to put in extra time to complete the School Improvement Plan.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Dr. Boza and Dr. Duke, district office representatives, participated in many aspects of the School Improvement Plan. This district level involvement in the spring provided valuable support to the Chase Street community. It is suggested that other CCSD central office administrators show school support by participated in planning processes at Chase Street CLC.
2. The superintendent and other district representatives may want to participate in Dr. Boza, Dr. Oliver and Dr. Bluett's conversations with faculty. A conversation with a number of district level representatives and university representatives may facilitate district office understanding of the pilot schools.
3. We recommend the CCSD central office explore and refine their current communication structures utilized within their organization. The refined structure would provide the principals with assurance in the CCSD central office communication process.

Concern #8

On a number of occasions, the school administration reminded the CCSD central office administrators that Chase Street CLC and Gaines CLC are on a different calendar. These continual reminders left Chase Street CLC faculties concerned about the CCSD administrations understanding of the scheduling needs of the partnership schools.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. District administrators responded to Chase Street CLC scheduling concerns about receiving assessment information in a timely manner. At the May 5, 2003 Design Team meeting, Ginger Davis Beck, Assessment Director for CCSD, announced that every effort would be made to distribute important student decision making information to the pilot schools as soon as possible. Chase Street CLC faculties received assessment information within the needed time period.

2. The lack of scheduling awareness remains a problem between the partnership schools and the CCSD administration, but the CCSD central administration acknowledges the difficulty in balancing the partnership schools with the rest of the district calendar. CCSD administration may want to designate a central office employee responsible for the incorporation of pilot school scheduling needs within the district agenda.
3. The daylong conversations at Chase Street CLC continue to serve as an outlet for teachers to express their scheduling concerns. If scheduling concerns continue to arise it may be beneficial for that particular CCSD administration to have a problem-solving meeting with Chase Street CLC leadership team.

Concern #9

Faculty at Chase Street CLC found themselves frustrated when the superintendent informed the principals that there would be no more field trips until May 1, 2003. Teachers believed that field trips were integral part of the partnerships agenda in improving instruction. The decision to eliminate all field trips left the teachers frustrated and concerned. Chase Street CLC wanted to change their instruction, but this decision made at the district level impaired this approach to improved instruction.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Dr. Allen and Dr. Oliver spoke with the superintendent about the impact of his decision on the partnership schools. Dr. Allen and Dr. Oliver shared the partnership philosophy, and how these restrictions would have large implications on the children and the partnership success. The superintendent approved a limited number of previously organized field trips.

Concern #10

Faculty explained that they were unaware of school initiatives. Many times teachers and administrators were informed about their school and district initiatives through the *Athens Banner Herald*.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Faculty at Chase Street CLC found it beneficial to receive an e-mail update of specific partnership activities. UGA partners and community members will help this process by sending quarterly updates on their role in the schools.
2. Faculty emphasized the importance of the partnership newsletter in increasing awareness in the partnership and school initiatives. During difficult economic times, it is important that partnership coordinators advocate the continuation of the newsletter.
3. School-wide awareness of initiatives and collaboration in their school have been profiled in the school newsletter. The developers of the school newsletter and the partnership newsletter may want to collaborate so that they do not duplicate coverage.

4. One possibility for increasing school-wide activity awareness is for the first portion of every faculty meeting to be focused on what has been going on in classrooms in terms of collaboration among themselves, UGA, and the community.
5. The Design Team meeting minutes posted on the partnership website provide faculty with a fast and efficient way to keep up the large number of initiatives in the reform. The school representative serving on the Design Team need to give an update once a month at a staff meeting. Making the partnership a focal point of faculty meetings may increase partnership awareness and enhancement.

Decision Making

Concern #11

In the fall of 2002 Chase Street CLC community placed renewed hope in their new principal. For the first time in 3 years, Chase Street CLC faculty participated in school level decisions (i.e. hiring new faculty, school discipline etc.). When the former assistant principal started in January 2003 teachers expressed concerns that the leadership style was changing and they were no longer part of the decision-making process.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Chase Street CLC administration, staff, teachers, and UGA partners held a meeting to voice school-wide leadership concerns. This meeting provided teachers and administration with the opportunity to discuss concerns and improve school climate.
2. The Leadership Team can facilitate discussions around school leadership by sending out surveys or conducting annual focus groups. With this provision, faculty leadership concerns can be addressed before it becomes a big problem.

Concern #12

At the beginning of fall 2002 Chase Street CLC leadership team developed a shared governance plan and presented the plan to the whole faculty. The leadership team members documented the recommendations. Teachers expressed concern with not being able to finalize the plan and implement the plan in Spring 2003.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. At the end of June 2003 Chase Street CLC leadership team met to discuss the completion and implementation of the shared governance plan. It will be crucial that as each new employee joins the staff they receive clear guidelines in this structure. Twice a year Chase St. CLC needs to discuss the shared governance and review the plan.
2. During the implementation of the shared governance plan, school administration and faculty may want to clarify which decisions are administrative decisions and which decisions belong to faculty. The divisions of these areas may facilitate school communication.

Learning Environment

Concern #13

In the first year of the Family Resource Center, Chase Street CLC faculty, staff and administration expressed concern about the referral process and meeting the differing perceptions regarding the role of the Family Resource Center.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Chase Street CLC improved the referral process by developing and implementing a form which teachers to complete. Teachers reported that the revised process improved the referral process.
2. The CCSD School Improvement Process provided Chase Street CLC with the opportunity to discuss more effective ways to increase family participation and their expectations of the Family Resource Center.
3. Chase Street CLC developed an effective approach in increasing family involvement through their Fact sessions and curriculum nights. It will be important to document any increased parental involvement in conjunction with the date, time, and topic.

Concern #14

When Chase Street CLC teachers and administration described the learning environment for all children they indicated progress in the learning environment for some students, but not for other students. The learning environment for students with English as a second language improved. However, there was still the need to improve the learning environment for high and low-achieving students.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. The participation of faculty in the UGA study abroad program to Xalapo, Mexico may have increased these teachers' awareness and understanding of the needs of the improved cohort. The learning environment for students learning English as a second language might be further enhanced if additional faculty participate in this program.
2. Faculty may want to leave a segment of every professional development workshop to discuss if the needs of all students are being met. If areas of improvement are indicated this time would provide faculty with a brainstorming session.
3. Chase Street CLC faculty, staff and administration may want to discuss further professional development in differentiated instruction. Further training in differentiated instruction may refine classroom teachers' delivery of instruction for all students.

Concern #15

During the summer of 2002, the discipline team met with faculty from UGA Department of Special Education about revising their discipline plan. The discipline team did not meet after that initial meeting due to the heavy demands of School Improvement Plan and CRCT preparation. As the discipline problems increased at the end of the school year, teachers expressed the need for a discipline plan.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. The problems pertaining to discipline can be addressed through the development and implementation of a discipline plan. The discipline committee arranged to meet before the 2003-2004 school year to re-initiate the process. Similar to the shared governance plan, it remains important that the team meet a minimum of once a quarter to discuss strengths and concerns regarding behavior management at Chase Street CLC. When new faculty and staff are hired they need to receive orientation to this school wide discipline plan.
2. Further collaboration with UGA department of special education will help Chase Street CLC administration, faculty and staff gain an outside perspective on their plan. The collaborators may benefit from conducting a yearly needs assessment/evaluation.
3. School behavioral issue may decrease with a buddy/mentoring program. Middle school and elementary school students succeeding in dealing with their behavior problems will serve as mentors for struggling students. A mentoring program will benefit the learning environment of Chase Street CLC.

Professional Development

Concern #16

The Support and Ideas for Planning and Sharing in Mathematics Education II (SIPsII) professional development program facilitated the enhancement of mathematics education at Chase Street CLC. The goal of developing a mathematics community has brought faculty together to share and discuss their interest in mathematics education. The cancellation and lack of time for SIPsII meeting signaled a change in commitment to the SIPsII grant. Both SIPsII coordinators and Chase Street CLC found themselves frustrated with the lack of time given to the project and their perceived lack of administrative support due to the school improvement plan.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. SIPsII coordinators and Chase Street CLC administrators meeting to discuss the role of SIPsII at Chase Street CLC. This meeting cleared up concerns and provided additional support for the initiative.
2. Quarterly discussions between Chase Street CLC and UGA departmental partners will provide an on-going outlet to reduce and resolve concerns.

Concern #17

Fall 2002 Chase Street CLC faculty, staff, and administration implemented a modified version of Cunningham's four blocks literacy model. The modified four blocks literacy model consists of instruction in guided reading, self-selected reading, working with words, and writing. Chase Street CLC faculty expressed concern that they received little training in the effective implementation of these blocks.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Faculty members increased their knowledge during the four blocks literacy model professional development workshop. In addition, the on-going consultation from Peggy Terrell, Literacy Consultant, has allowed faculty to receive feedback on their implementation of four blocks.
2. The Chase Street CLC community requested a full time literacy coach in their School Improvement Plan. The literacy coach will assist in professional development as well as provide assistance in the implementation of a consistent literacy program.

Concern #18

During the first year of the extended calendar, 2002-2003, Chase Street CLC welcomed two new administrators, four new homeroom teachers, one special areas teacher, a few teaching assistants and a new family resource coordinator. In the hiring process all of these potential employees were introduced to the partnership. However, new faculty and administrators shared that when they started they received very little, if any, orientation to the history and workings of the partnership. For example, faculty discussed the importance of the partnership retreat, but the new faculty never heard the specific details of such a critical event. This lack of orientation led to confusion and communication issues in the school.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. In the pre-planning period and throughout the school year, it would be beneficial for the new faculties to see the partnership video and discuss the role of the partnership in the school.
2. We recommend the Design Team develop a short document giving a historical overview of the partnership activities to be included with their orientation paperwork. This document will provide new faculty with update information on the partnership reform initiative and contact information for questions.

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES AND SUCCESSES AT CHASE STREET CLC, FALL 2003

A Greater Sense of School Unity to Begin the 2003-2004 School Year

Chase faculty and staff worked during the 2002-2003 school year to develop a consistent and coherent school plan. The plan addresses curriculum and instruction, professional development, parent involvement, and evaluation of goals. District and school administration, community members and University faculty participated in the process by 1) consulting with faculty members, 2) providing insight and support to the reading and writing committee and the mathematics committee, 3) advising on funding, and 4) facilitating conversations pertaining to the schools vision. During the fall of 2003-2004 school year, faculty members observed the implementation of their ideas in the School Improvement Plan.

A Coherent School Wide Instructional Plan

The construction of the School Improvement Plan brought teachers, staff, administrators, community members, and UGA faculty together. Reading, Writing and Math committees met to develop a detailed plan to improve learning in reading/writing/language arts and mathematics. For example, the Reading and Writing Committee advocated for a full-time literacy coach to mentor and coach teachers in the instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency instruction and content area reading. Instead of hiring a Mathematics Coach, the Mathematics Committee in conjunction with the SIPSII (Support and Ideas for Planning and Sharing) Eisenhower Grant personnel decided to train designated teachers in their mathematics skills and knowledge to become math leaders in the school. Mathematics leaders meet monthly, read research in mathematics education and discuss instructional approaches. The detailed School Improvement Plan provides the Chase Street CLC administration and teachers with coherent comprehensive instruction plan that guides instruction, improves parental involvement and provides ongoing assessments.

Building Community Coherence through the Family Resource Center

Chase Street CLC family resource coordinator organized and facilitated programs with community members and families. Chase Street CLC collaborated with Athens Housing Authority to hold a "Hero's,, day on Nov. 7, 2003. The designated role models read their favorite children's book to Chase Street CLC students. In addition, UGA's starting quarterback spoke to families at Chase Street CLC heritage night. These programs provided community support for teachers and the students.

The family resource coordinator, literacy coach, math leadership team and teachers initiated monthly FACT (Families and Children Together) meetings to promote family understanding in literacy and mathematics. These sessions increase family understanding of curricular goals and improve school and family connections.

Renovations of the “Girl Scout Hut”

On Chase Street CLC property is a log cabin that is dangerous and unoccupied. After a number of discussions on where to house the Family Resource Center, Chase Street CLC family resource coordinator, school administration and design team members inquired into the renovations of the log cabin, “Girl Scout Hut., In spring of 2003, community representatives worked with Mrs. Mary Kelly, Family Resource Coordinator, to develop an architectural plan to renovate the “Girl Scout Hut., The “girl scout hut., renovations committee determined that the old log cabin would need substantial renovations to bring it up to code. Community members offered free labor and the funds needed for supplies. The expenses for the renovations and addition estimated at \$100,000. In fall of 2003, Ms. Phyllis Childs, Family Resource Coordinator, Dr. Bluett, principal and Dr. Oliver, co-director of partnership lobbied partners in education and community businesses for funding assistance. At the end of the fall 2003, Gold Kist Foundation donated \$5,000 dollars and Athens First Bank & Trust agreed to a minimum of \$5,000. The Girl Scouts held a carwash at Chase Street CLC to raise funds for the renovations of the “girl scout hut., This renovation project brought school, university and community members together to preserve this historic site and meet the family and community needs of Chase Street CLC.

Resources Targeted to Enhance Professional Learning

Chase Street CLC Professional Development Associates Program

In the School Improvement Plan teachers and administration discussed ways to provide teachers with more time for planning and professional development. The teachers and administration decided to replicate Gaines CLC idea for professional development associates (PDA). These four substitute teachers (PDAs) work with the same teachers to provide consistent instruction when the teachers are out of the classroom. In fall 2003, professional development associates were interviewed and selected. This select group of professionals split their time between Chase Street CLC and Gaines CLC. PDAs worked every other week from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm Monday through Friday at Chase Street CLC. The associates provided teachers with the time to participate in professional development and grade level meetings to discuss curriculum, instruction, and assessment resulting in enhanced student learning.

Literacy Coach

Teachers and administration identified literacy as a critical need area in their School Improvement Plan. The Chase Street CLC community decided to allocate funds for a full-time literacy coach who has a doctorate in reading or language education providing expertise in reading, writing and language arts. In August of 2003 the literacy coach began providing ongoing mentoring and coaching in modified four blocks and literacy development in the school. The literacy coach conducted an overview of reading at Chase Street CLC and met weekly with grade levels in the implementation of four blocks and literacy improvement in the school. The efforts of the literacy coach, teachers and professional development associates enabled implementation and sustained instructional and assessment improvements.

Greater Understanding of the Modified Cunningham’s Four Blocks

The school administration and leadership team organized professional development workshops and on-going professional development in Cunningham’s modified four blocks

literacy model. Dr. Peggy Terrell, Literacy Consultant, conducted Four Blocks literacy training for the primary grades and the upper grades. The four blocks training target instruction in guided reading, self-selected reading, working with words, and writing. After discussing and illustrating the components of Four Blocks, Dr. Terrell modeled lessons in various classrooms. In August 2003, Dr. Terrell returned to Chase Street CLC to provide four blocks training for paraprofessionals and new teachers. Later in the semester, Dr. Terrell modeled four blocks lessons and provided teachers feedback on their instruction. This on-going professional development training provided a more coherent reading program, consistent teacher instruction, and the development of teacher skills.

Improved School Communication and Decision Making

Implementation of Shared Governance Plan

At the end of the 2003 school year and the beginning of 2003-2004 academic school year, the leadership committee revisited their shared governance plan. The leadership committee finalized and implemented the school's shared governance plan. The implementation of the shared governance plan provides a vehicle for teachers, staff, and administration to participate in school wide decision-making and resolve school concerns.

Developed and Implemented Discipline Plan

The beginning of the 2003-2004 school served as a time for the discipline committee to reconvene and discuss the revision of their school wide positive discipline plan. The committee decided to refine the positive discipline plan by incorporating the schools core values. The core values included "being responsible for our learning, behavior and environment,,", "making good choices,,", "respect ourselves and others,,", and "understand and value our differences.,", The school wide discipline plan provided administration, teachers and staff with guidelines for responding to student misconduct in a manner consistent with the goal of improving the learning environment for all students.

A monthly schedule of meetings calendar

The school developed a monthly schedule of meetings for 2003-2004 school year to reduce conflicting meeting times. For example, faculty members are scheduled for the first and third Wednesday of the month. This schedule has significantly reduced the number of conflicting meetings times.

Improved Communication in the Delivery of Information to Partnership Schools

Members at the May 5, 2003 Design Team meeting discussed possible ways to improve the communication of partnership programs and resources to the partnership schools. Members decided to include a bulleted summary of decisions and topics mentioned in the meeting minutes. The changed format allows faculty members at the partnership schools to remain aware of Partnership changes and programs.

In Dr. Oliver's discussions with Chase Street Leadership Team, they decided that each grade level should have its own copy of the notebook of UGA faculty willing to collaborate with Chase Street CLC. These additional notebooks provide teachers with immediate access to UGA faculty information thus addressing their desire to have more UGA faculty involvement.

Improved School Wide Communication in the Delivery of Information

All school committees draft meeting minutes and provide a hardcopy for the front office no later than one week after the meeting. The front office copies the minutes for the principal and assistant principal as well as places the updated minutes in the meeting binder. This process of compiling information allows the school administration, teachers, and staff to access current information on all school committees.

School Calendar Revisions

Faculty Design Team representatives facilitated communication between the school and the Design Team on proposed calendar changes. Through the advice of school faculties, the Design Team reorganized intersession (vacation days) to maximize the number of instructional days before standardized testing and to distribute vacation days throughout the year. Teachers and staff indicated that these changes enhanced attendance and engagement levels of students during the final weeks of the 2003-2004 school year.

GAINES COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER
Spring 2003-Fall 2003

**Specific Activities Initiated,
Areas of Concerns, Current School Responses, and Possible Responses for Consideration
School Outcomes and Successes for Fall 2003**

SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES INITIATED AT GAINES CLC, SPRING 2003

Development of the Gaines School Improvement Plan: The university, school, and community members collaborated to develop coherent and comprehensive school plan, which addressed curriculum, instruction, and assessment, professional development, and parent involvement.

Language Arts Classroom Support and Professional Development: Dr. JoBeth Allen, a professor in language education, worked with teachers in their classrooms to integrate writing workshop and will continue her role as a consultant to school faculty as it continues its transformation into a community learning center. Dr. Joanne Ratliff, a university professor in reading education, continued offering a reading course to Gaines teachers and staff. Teachers received either professional development or college credit for taking the reading course, which developed as a result of specific requirements mandated by a Georgia READS grant. Ms. Teri Holbrook, a published writer and doctoral student at UGA, also volunteered five hours per week to help with teachers' writing workshop.

Mathematics Classroom Support and Professional Development: Dr. Denise Mewborn, a professor in mathematics education, provided professional development seminars in math curriculum and instruction for teachers once a month. Zelha Tunc Pekkan, a UGA graduate student in math education, assisted with these workshops and provided other support services as requested by faculty and staff. University faculty also assisted in writing a grant proposal, which now supports a part-time math coordinator in the school. The math coordinator currently assists grade-level teachers by modeling interactive and hands-on classroom activities, providing useful resources and materials, and offering ongoing professional development.

New Program offered through the family literacy center: Janet Martin, Gaines CLC Counselor, and Denise Rivera, Gaines CLC Family Literacy Coordinator, launched the People Empowering People (PEP) Program, which is designed to provide training and support to Gaines parents and family members, resulting in changes in their lives and in the Gaines community. Through this program, the school and parents are working to establish a parent-led committee through which Gaines CLC parents' can generate ideas and communicate concerns to the school. Committee members will be trained with the necessary skills to meet with and address concerns that parents have for their children. The group plans to recruit students from the UGA College of Education's Counseling Clinic to provide counseling training for parents.

Psychological and counseling services offered by UGA faculty and students:

A program to help students and teachers with students who have emotional and behavioral issues was funded through a one-year partnership grant. Dr. Michelle Lease, a professor in the department of school psychology at UGA, supervised the program, which was designed to offer parent workshops, student consultations, and teacher consultations throughout the year. During the first semester, school psychology doctoral students conducted individual interventions with children in need of individual therapy and consultation. Students also volunteered to come and speak with teachers, students, and parents about problem solving and classroom management issues that may be impacting instruction.

Classroom assistance offered through non-traditional certification program: Pre-service teachers continued working extensively with interns and student teachers through UGA's ECCO (Early Childhood Certification Option) Program, which is a new early childhood education program offered to non-traditional students. The program provides classroom practicum and student teaching experience for students enrolled in the program. Students observe and work in multiple classrooms and participate in professional development activities at the school.

AREAS OF CONCERN, CURRENT SCHOOL RESPONSES, AND FURTHER RESPONSES FOR CONSIDERATION AT GAINES CLC, SPRING 2003

Curriculum and Instruction

Concern #1

Multiple programs have been implemented at Gaines CLC over the past several years to improve instruction and students' overall reading achievement. Such programs complement specific classroom instructional strategies that represent Gaines teachers' very diverse pedagogical views; however, they also sustained curriculum and program inconsistencies across the school, which contributed to inefficiencies in the learning process and adversely affected students' achievement.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Continue to use the School Improvement Process as the vehicle for evaluating program effectiveness and developing a consistent and coherent plan in math, reading, and language arts. Throughout next year, consider setting aside time to visit other teachers' classrooms and provide time for classroom and support teachers to publicly share creative lessons and effective instructional strategies to the school.
2. Special area teachers and support staff may become a more integrated piece in the overall school curriculum by rotating through grade level meetings on a regular basis (i.e.- once a month, meet with 1st grade, etc.). Grade level teachers, support staff and special area teachers together can structure lessons and coordinate efforts that will generate a more integrated curriculum and provide more effective services to students.
3. Use the School Improvement Process to discuss how the school can streamline multiple literacy teams (Governance committee, literacy committee, reading study group, writing study group) to improve communication between teachers, support staff, literacy coaches, and school leadership. Streamlining these committees should also free up time for the assistant principal to support and assist individual teachers and grade level teams in utilizing assessment information more effectively.
4. Continue using the School Improvement Plan to find ways to utilize parents more effectively in the school. Also consider writing in specific plans to involve UGA students and faculty to assist with reading instruction, tutoring, small group instruction, and working with high and low achievers. Work with Partnership resources to collectively plan for and verify plans to be put in place beginning next year.
5. Teachers may consider inviting parents to their rooms frequently and providing opportunities for them to become more involved in the classroom. For instance, primary grades can keep a basket of books at the door for parents to pull and read with children. Continuing PACT activities, making frequent calls home to acknowledge students' positive progress at school, and sending letters home during holidays/special breaks are all ways to encourage more

parent involvement. Including these specific procedures in the School Improvement Plan will help to ensure that parents are regularly invited into the school.

6. Teachers and paraprofessionals may consider attending training to learn how to create parallel literacy and math structures in the school. An example of this may include training that assists teachers in establishing reading, writing, and math workshops, which may be more conducive for differentiating classroom instruction.
7. The School Improvement Process is providing structure and clear directions for faculty and staff, as they develop consistent literacy and math programs that will build from one grade level to the next. The district committee that oversees the implementation of these plans will help to ensure that faculty and staff are held accountable for implementing and sustaining these plans, particularly if it is made up of members representing the university, community, and district.
8. We suggest that Gaines CLC utilizes the expertise and consulting services provided through the League of Professional Schools. The League's involvement with several schools around the country represents a valuable support network for Gaines CLC. Faculty and staff can use these networks to share interests and concerns about innovative programs and practices, which may encourage faculty members' to be more open and committed to whole-school change and enhance practical knowledge about applying programs and practices in the classroom.

Concern #2

Different pedagogical philosophies created a great deal of tension among faculty during the 2002-2003 school year. Most of these tensions emerged when grant components and subsequent state-mandated changes to Gaines' original grant proposal required that teachers change their classroom practices. The state also mandated several changes to the original GA READS Grant Proposal, which contributed to program inconsistencies throughout the year.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. The school is currently discussing plans to apply for more federal grant funding that may potentially be awarded to the state of Georgia through a Reading First Grant. The Reading First Grant will be similar to the GA READS grant, and may provide funding for the school to continue building its family resource center and provide programs to encourage children and families to read together. The school should take great caution when considering application for another federally funded grant, as experiences working with state evaluators through the GA READS program may indicate that this type of federal grant does not currently address many of the school's fundamental needs. Several changes to the originally proposed grant by state evaluators created divisions among the faculty this year and, in some ways, made it more difficult for the school to implement a stable curriculum for its students.
2. A top priority for Gaines CLC over the next three years will be to develop and sustain a consistent and stable literacy program across grade levels. While large federal grants such as these may provide a great deal of funding to enhance programs at the school, federal and

state mandates may be enforced upon the school that could disrupt its attempt at providing consistent and stable literacy curriculum and programs. In addition, federal funding from grants such as these could potentially prompt changes that create more division and reduce buy-in from teachers and staff. The School Improvement Process has provided the structure for the school to develop a comprehensive plan for literacy and math, which teachers who decide to stay at the school must agree to follow. Furthermore, the School Improvement Process contains steps to ensure that curriculum and programs written into the School Improvement Plan will be monetarily feasible. Any grant or program that could disrupt this original plan is not advised, as the faculty and staff at Gaines CLC, more than anything, need to be confident that their plans for change will eventually be realized. Carrying through the originally proposed plan will go far in creating the consistency necessary to improve student achievement and instill confidence in teachers and staff that programs will remain stable over time.

Professional Development

Concern #3

Although teachers found specific professional development to be both informative and helpful, they expressed a need for more time to work in their classrooms and with grade level teams to implement the big ideas and specific strategies they learned last year. The excessive number of school, district, and Partnership-related meetings left little time to focus on actively applying strategies in the classroom. In addition, teachers communicated a need for more time to look at the various assessments they administer to students, in order to focus and individualize instruction. Teachers need time to administer individual assessments to children and to use the results in meaningful ways.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Faculty and staff considered ways to make more time available for team planning, integrating professional development into classroom instruction, and making better use of assessment information. The Professional Development Associate (PDA) Program provides the structure and resources for ensuring that teachers will have the time necessary for accomplishing these and other objectives written into the School Improvement Plan. The faculty used the school improvement process to allocate resources to implement this program, providing the school with adequate time to develop alternative plans for accomplishing these objectives.

Concern #4

Assessment requirements written into the GA READS grant prompted several teachers to change the way they utilize assessment information in the classroom. Teachers at Gaines CLC used running records to help them differentiate instruction and to provide focused assistance for students with diverse instructional needs. While all teachers recognized the value of these instruments for targeting individual student needs, some structured their classroom environments in ways that make administering individual assessments a challenge. Compounding these challenges was the excessive number of assessments that teachers were required to administer (e.g., district benchmarks), which influenced a few teachers' perceptions of assessments as a

detriment to their teaching. Many teachers struggled to find time to understand and implement strategies for integrating assessment administration and analysis into their normal daily routines.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Professional development training focused on classroom strategies for administering formative assessments and integrating these tools into teachers' daily work with students may be particularly helpful for teachers. Also consider making more use of representatives from companies such as Rigby and others, who may be available to provide regular assistance in answering teachers' assessment questions and supporting individual and grade-level needs. Through the school improvement process, the faculty has identified the need for more assessment training. Continue to make this a priority during subsequent School Improvement Plan drafts. The GA READS Governance Board may also consider reducing the number of assessments required for teachers to administer to their students. While the assessments currently being used are helpful in providing depth and breadth of evidence in student work, choosing from a few of these instruments may give teachers enough evidence for making confident decisions about students individual needs. For instance, the GA READS grant currently requires that teachers administer both the Rigby Test and the Dibel test to their students. As both instruments provide similar data, choosing to use one of these two assessments may provide enough data for making sound decisions about student strengths and areas in need of improvement.
2. Move the administration of state standardized assessments from the spring semester to early in the fall semester. Doing this will assist teachers in determining student needs, as they can use the test data formatively to differentiate and provide targeted instruction for students with diverse needs. While administering tests during the spring semester may encourage teachers to take more ownership in test results, the critical information these tests provide teachers in making instructional decisions becomes obsolete.

Concern #5

Several faculty members and support personnel expressed a need for teachers, special area teachers and support staff to learn how to collaboratively implement thematic units across the curriculum.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. All teachers and staff may find it helpful to attend workshops and seminars that offer instructional integration training throughout all areas of the curriculum. Training should provide time for teachers and support staff to collectively develop their instructional plans. Coaches and school leadership can provide the ongoing support that will be needed to successfully implement integrated instruction in the classroom.

Concern #6

The faculty discussed the need for more training in how to implement and support a family resource center (FRC) in the school. As part of the GA READS grant, the school cleared out a large classroom early in the school year to be used as a family literacy center (FLC). The FLC is

similar to an FRC in that it serves to support parents and families in the school. However, the FLC focuses only on promoting literacy and literacy-related activities for children and families in grades k through three, as this center is entirely funded through the GA READS grant. The targeted k through three literacy support contributed to the fourth and fifth grade teams feeling divided, unsupported, and isolated from the rest of the school.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Communicate new and ongoing information to faculty when only a few representatives attend programs and professional development trips. Faculty and staff struggle to conceptualize programs offered through a family resource center or other school programs if they haven't visited schools to see how these programs can work effectively. After select faculty and staff visit family resource centers and schools of excellence, consider presenting this information to the entire school faculty. While this is happening at Design Team meetings, information and new knowledge gained from visiting various school sites is often not communicated directly to the school. Presentations about specific site visits and these will help all faculty and staff conceptualize program plans for Gaines CLC and strengthen the connections between programs at other sites and programs that could be implemented to improve Gaines CLC.
2. Although Even Start came to Gaines during a faculty meeting and presented their services, more needs to be done in terms of communicating the support they offer the school. Consider giving brochures to teachers before conferences so they can hand them out to parents. Also, many teachers aren't aware of the multiple services that are available to parents and families through the FLC and district. Communication about these programs must be channeled more often and with more clarity to the school. Provide more opportunities for teachers to become involved in helping promote and share these programs with families, as they are the ones at school who have the most direct contact with these families and their children.

Concern #7

Teachers suggested that more professional development options be made available for special area teachers and support personnel, as well as teachers in upper grades.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Workshops and seminars that are more aligned with faculty's diverse professional development needs will promote more meaningful learning experiences for both faculty and students. Consider allowing support staff autonomy in planning for and attending training that is both aligned with the school's goals and more relevant to their individual responsibilities to the school. Leadership may also support faculty in identifying specific workshops and programs that will help teachers align professional development activities to both their individual goals and the school's overall vision for improvement.

Partnership-School Communication

Concern #8

Despite a number of Partnership implementations during the year and a frequent and high level of presence among a few university faculty and students at the school, many teachers did not perceive the CCSD-UGA-ACC Partnership having much impact this year. In the survey administered during the spring of 2003, almost half of the 24 faculty and staff members who responded indicated that they weren't clear about the types of programs and assistance offered through the Partnership.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. At the May 5, 2003 Design Team meeting, members discussed possible ways to address problems in communicating information about Partnership programs and resources to the pilot schools. Members decided to write into the minutes bulleted summary of key decisions and topics discussed at meetings. Doing this will make it easier for pilot school faculties to stay up to date with new Partnership programs and changes, as many faculty do not read lengthy minutes of Design Team meetings. The Design Team also recommended adding Partnership news and information as part of every faculty meeting and placing a box and paper in the main office for teachers to document their Partnership-related questions or concerns.
2. Use faculty meetings and the School Improvement Process to prioritize both school curriculum and programs and Partnership initiatives to be implemented in the school. Currently, several teachers and staff are confused about where to focus their time and efforts. In addition, they are overwhelmed with the number of initiatives that many feel pressure to implement. Once specific program and Partnership initiatives are prioritized and integrated into the School Improvement Plan, school leadership can clarify and coordinate the support that is necessary to implement these actions.

Concern #9

Teachers expressed concerns about the 2002-2003 year-round calendar structure. Teachers expressed a need for more instructional days before testing to improve student achievement on standardized tests.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. During the spring of 2003, school Design Team representatives provided critical calendar feedback to the Partnership Design Team, influencing positive changes in next year's calendar schedule. The Design Team reorganized intersessions (vacation days) to maximize the number of instructional days before testing and to distribute vacation days more evenly throughout the year. Teachers and staff indicated that these changes improved relations between the Partnership and the school and may enhance engagement levels among teachers and students during the final weeks of the 2002-2003 school year.

2. Consider setting aside more of the extra calendar days for teachers and support staff to discuss and integrate professional development programs and strategies into their classrooms. Also, use these days to discuss areas of concern among faculty and provide regular and open dialogue to address what's working and what needs to be improved to better serve students.

District-School Communication

Concern #10

During the fall 2002-2003 semester, questions arose about the district's role in the Partnership and their commitment to partnership schools. The district invested close to \$500,000 in both schools to cover expenses associated with keeping school in session an extra 15 days. However, faculty questioned the value of having extra school days when the district office delayed delivery of critical assessment information, materials, and resources to the schools for several weeks.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. District administrators addressed Gaines CLC's concerns about receiving critical assessment information in a timely manner. At the May 5, 2003 Design Team meeting, Ginger Davis Beck, Assessment Director for CCSD, announced that every effort would be made to distribute important student decision making information to the pilot schools as soon as possible. However, due to the state's policy mandating when schools can take these tests' and the subsequent time it takes testing companies to score tests and analyze test data, the earliest the district will be able to distribute the information is at the end of July. Although the pilot schools begin next year's school year at the end of July, faculty at the meeting understood the district's limitations in getting these results out faster. District administrators did distribute materials that overlooked last year to the pilot schools, resulting in Gaines operating much more smoothly and efficiently at the beginning of the school year.

Concern #11

The school faculty expressed concerns that the district has not given them the independence necessary to develop a shared governance process. This year, several teachers expressed that they did not see the value in investing a great deal of energy in curricular and instructional decisions that they believed would ultimately be made by an administrator at the district's central office. Various district mandates left the faculty feeling constrained in their efforts to develop a community learning center. Teachers expressed a need for more clarity from the district in regard to their roles and responsibilities in the decision making process and the freedoms and limits that Partnership Schools have, independent of other schools in the district.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. The district may consider clarifying the freedoms that Partnership schools have in regard to the various mandates given to all schools in the district. Teachers and staff must understand their rights and responsibilities as employees in the Partnership schools, above and beyond schools in the district, before they can work to meaningfully develop ground-roots processes for making program and curricular decisions that affect the school and their students. By clearly stating how the Partnership Schools are treated differently, in terms of resources and

freedom from present and future district mandates, the school can begin developing improvement plans that maximize the opportunities given to them.

2. The majority of faculty and staff at Gaines became excited and energized about the coming school year during the 2002 summer Partnership Retreat. This retreat provided the faculty with a vision for school improvement and change that was lost during the year. Consider scheduling another Partnership retreat this summer. At best, another Partnership retreat can serve to reenergize faculty and solidify their focus on the Partnership's vision for Gaines CLC. In addition, a retreat just before school begins can facilitate discussions about the coming year and solidify plans with Partnership stakeholders about programs to be implemented over the following school year.

School Communication

Concern #12

School-wide miscommunications contributed to the school's difficulties in offering timely support services to students through the Student Support Team (SST) and Educational Intervention Program (EIP). The SST often provides critical assistance to a child and/or the child's family to ensure that the child has a better opportunity to achieve success in school. However, referring a child to SST was often so filled with questions and extra paperwork that many teachers and staff did not follow through with the procedures necessary to take their child through the process. Many teachers perceived those in charge of taking children through the SST process at Gaines CLC were not clear about their individual responsibilities and were not following through with these responsibilities in a timely manner. The ambiguities and subsequent delays in the SST process prevented students' from getting the support and assistance they need.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Leadership may improve EIP and SST services by communicating meeting dates for specific students to all teachers and support staff who work a particular child. In addition, the principal should clarify each person's role through the EIP and SST process to decrease delays in processing paperwork and meeting students' needs. Consider presenting the steps to take a child through the EIP and SST process during a faculty meeting. Allow the faculty to discuss and clarify different roles and responsibilities required of the school faculty when leading a child through this process.

Concern #13

In the surveys, faculty indicated that leadership needed to send out notices and reminders in a more timely manner. Often, important dates about student activities and school convocations were not communicated until the last minute, making it difficult for teachers to plan for and around these events. Also, teachers recommended that leadership give advanced notice about important grant, school improvement, and other administrative deadlines.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. School leadership may consider providing more notice to teachers about programs, meetings, and other school-related activities well in advance. Often, faculty and staff must rearrange their schedules to accommodate for programs and meetings that were not effectively communicated ahead of time. When meetings and program times are changed, provide immediate feedback to teachers through email, paper notices to be placed in faculty's mailboxes, announcements over intercom, or other ways.

Decision Making

Concern #14

A few who have been at the school for several years discussed reasons for not participating in discussions and playing more of an active role in decisions that are made. One reason has to do with the multiple changes that are imposed with new district leadership. Past experience has taught some veteran teachers that changes come from the top-down, and active involvement in trying to influence central office decisions is a waste of time. In addition, many faculty choose not to be vocal participants in the decision-making process because they are afraid that retribution from the central office administration or school principal may proceed potential disagreements. Those with several years experience in the district reflect on past administrative decisions to justify this fear.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Finding time for dialogue centered on understanding different theories of action. While clear roles may have been established early on, conflicts involving how such roles are carried out in the school are constraining relationships among those who must work closely to ensure successful reform implementation. Although the Partnership vision requires a shift to occur in the school faculty's decision-making roles and responsibilities, actions must be taken to ensure that shared leadership responsibilities do not undermine the authority or creativity of any school, district, or university leaders.

Hatch (1998; 2000) points out that conflict is very likely inevitable among diverse stakeholders who attempt educational reform. Such conflict occurs when diverse stakeholders represent multiple organizations, each of which address many different aspects of schooling in a variety of ways. Thus, rather than trying to agree on a single answer to problems that arise during the implementation phase, stakeholders may be better off trying to gain a deep, respectful, understanding of when and why they are likely to disagree (Hatch, 1998, p. 25). Building these kinds of understandings takes time and requires a great deal of reflection and effort. We suggest that school faculty schedule a retreat to begin these discussions. An external facilitator who has experience dealing with the complex issues of comprehensive school reform can facilitate dialogue among diverse stakeholders and prompt questions that generate solutions to such problems in a non-threatening way.

Concern #15

Although most in the school would agree that the School Improvement Process facilitated more shared decision-making, they also see much room for improvement in how decisions are made

and carried out. Some teachers believed that multiple committees, formed out of programs of the past, took decision-making power from the faculty and placed it the hands of a select few.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. The School Improvement Process has helped to ensure that decisions are collectively shared among the faculty and staff. However, faculty and staff still perceive that some decisions are being made by a select few and that the decision making process often moves in circles. The principal can reduce the faculty and staff's uncertainties about decisions by restating them at full faculty meetings. This can happen by structuring faculty meetings so that old and new business is regularly discussed and consistently communicating meeting agendas well ahead of time. The principal may also consider more consistent follow through with major decisions to ensure that they are fully implemented in the school. This means providing appropriate assistance and breaking down barriers for those in charge of seeing school-wide initiatives through.
2. To promote the school's shared governance policy, consider developing clear procedures to make SILC a more representative committee of both new and veteran faculty. This can be accomplished through structured voting procedures, where everyone has the opportunity to nominate and vote on members of this leadership committee. Ensure that all faculty and staff have an opportunity to participate by making elections to the leadership committee an annual process.

Concern #16

The inordinate number of committees created confusion among faculty about how decisions are made in the school. Because of overlapping responsibilities within different committees, conversations tended to move in circles and important issues were often left undecided. Teachers expressed uncertainty about they types of programs and practices they were accountable for implementing in their classrooms.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. Reserve only the important decisions for whole school faculty meetings. The faculty and staff indicated that they would like to see the principal take the lead in making smaller decisions that don't impact the entire school. The principal may work more closely with SILC to ensure that big decisions involving curriculum and instruction, professional development, and whole school programs are reserved for whole school faculty meetings, while minor decisions that may only affect specific grade levels and programs can be made without the entire faculty's input. As stated above, the principal can communicate all decisions that are made more effectively, through email and other sources.
2. School leadership may consider facilitating regular meeting times with the principal, assistant principal, university graduate student mathematics assistants and the Gaines CLC math coach to coordinate support and assistance throughout the school. The principal should work with classroom teachers to uncover strengths and areas in need of improvement, while the math

coach and assistants follow up to provide consistent and planned support for teachers in these area.

3. School leadership may consider establishing regularly scheduled meetings with individual teachers, school leadership and literacy coaches. After talking with individual teachers to establish strengths and goals in literacy, the principal can help structure the literacy coaches work in classrooms. This group can use information (observations, self evaluations, student assessments, etc.) to collectively develop a plan for improving classroom instruction. Coaches will better meet both the individual teacher's and the school's needs when following up with targeted support for the teacher. Regular discussions with school leadership, subject-area coaches, and individual teachers will clarify communications between levels of support, help to ensure curricular consistency, and make clear the role that coaches are intended to serve in teachers' classrooms.
4. Leadership may consider clarifying both the literacy and math coordinator's role in the school and in teachers' classrooms. Consider including teachers and support staff on the committee for hiring reading and/or math specialists.

Learning Environment

Concern #17

Some faculty members were uncomfortable with the way in which some teachers disciplined their students, causing "friction and frustration,, among those with conflicting teacher-student communication styles. Teachers and staff increasingly isolated themselves from most others in the school community during the 2002-2003 school year. Factors such as teacher-student communication conflicts; pedagogical differences; pressures to implement reform initiatives and increase student achievement scores; and a perceived lack of time to accomplish what has been required of faculty this year; created pressure and division among faculty members that prevented collaboration and group cohesion from taking hold during the 2002-2003 school year.

Current school responses and further responses for consideration:

1. The school responded to this concern at the end of last year, when they brought in an outside facilitator to conduct mediation and get concerns and points of alienation in the open. The school mediator helped the school develop specific action plans for building relationships among faculty and staff and becoming a more cohesive community. We encourage the faculty to continue these discussions with one another and remain accountable to the collective plans they developed over the summer. Much was accomplished at this end of year meeting, and much work is still needed to continue building and sustaining strong relationships within the school.
2. Develop a task force to establish a clear and supportive mentoring program for new teachers at the school. Create specific responsibilities for veteran teachers who serve as mentors so that veteran teachers and staff make this role a regular part of their day. Responsibilities may include such things as communicating relevant and confusing information about past programs to new teachers. For instance, they might be responsible for explaining programs

such as Success for All, America's Choice, and other grant related programs of the past, which impact the school's current decision-making in regard to instruction. They might also be responsible for organizing efforts to acknowledge new teachers on special occasions. Through regular contact, mentors will also represent the school's appreciation for new faculty and staff's contributions to the school.

3. Use the covenant and other resources (Second Step, books videos, etc) to develop a "Gaines Pledge,, for what the school believes is important in regard to how faculty and staff talk with children and each other. Also use the pledge to develop a consistent discipline plan across grade levels.
4. Use partnership and university resources to strengthen the school community and deepen a collective vision. For instance, courses and instructors are available at UGA that may be used to conduct team-building activities. Informal parties and get-togethers outside the school building may also help in building deeper relationships among school faculty.

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES AND SUCCESSES AT GAINES CLC, FALL 2003

A Greater Sense of School Unity to Begin the 2003-2004 School Year

Gaines faculty and staff worked countless extra hours during the 2002-2003 school year to develop a consistent and coherent school plan, which addresses curriculum and instructional programs, parent involvement, and staff professional development. University faculty, district and school administration shared responsibility throughout this process by (1) consulting with faculty members, (2) providing insight and support to each of three subject-area committees, and (3) facilitating conversations to draw out issues and concerns that fueled teacher isolation, divided the school faculty, and sustained a tense and distrustful school climate. The year culminated with a day-long meeting, where an outside facilitator worked with school faculty to address challenges that beset the school. During the first semester of the 2003-2004 school year, several faculty members expressed a renewed sense of unity and common purpose across the school, which provides evidence that the Partnership is moving closer to its vision for school improvement.

A Coherent Schoolwide Instructional Plan

The School Improvement Process facilitated a more coherent instructional plan at Gaines, which was implemented at the start of the 2003-2004 school year. School Improvement Study Groups wrote a comprehensive plan for teachers to use when they teach reading, writing, and math. For instance, the reading improvement plan states that teachers will include direct phonics instruction, as well as guided and shared reading strategies into their instructional plans. The Math Study Group incorporated the use of manipulatives and active learning strategies in math instruction, among other approaches. The Writing Study Group included the writer's workshop approach to teaching writing, where students share their work with others and cycle through the all steps of the writing process. Direct instruction is fused into a ten minute mini-lesson, where teachers' focus on teaching grammar and other skills for students' to incorporate into their writing. School Improvement Study Groups also incorporated field trips into the overall plan, representing a component that Gaines teachers believe is critical for enhancing the curriculum and facilitating in-depth learning opportunities for students. This plan has resulted in more consistent curricular programs across grade levels, which may ultimately lead to significant improvements in student learning outcomes.

A Streamlined Assessment Program

School administration worked with school faculty and district administration to streamline the overwhelming number of assessments that teachers were required to administer last year. This year for instance, teachers administer tests such as the Rigby Running Record to determine students' reading level, reserving the GOLD test (phonemic awareness) as an assessment to be used with students on an individual basis. Literacy coaches administer additional tests required by the GA READS grant (Dibels), which may not provide critical information above and beyond the Rigby running records. The district also contributed to the school's increased efficiency in testing when they revised the Benchmark Assessments, which are now only administered three times during the school year.

In addition, the school used the School Improvement Process to establish assessment procedures and clarify how tests would be administered and utilized during the 2003-2004 school year. Gaines' Assistant Principal also handed out an assessment chart, which clarified test requirements at each grade level at the beginning of this year. Clarifications in the school's testing procedures and district benchmark revisions have both contributed to a more streamlined assessment process, enabling teachers to minimize time for testing, increase testing efficiency and utility, and maximize instructional time.

Resources Targeted to Enhance Professional Learning

Gaines Professional Development Associate (PDA) Program

A school task force developed plans to create more time for teacher planning, professional development, and utilizing student assessment information to inform instruction. One task force member wrote a proposal to hire seven PDA's to work 16 hours per week, from 11:30 am –2:40 pm Monday through Friday. The PDA Program enables outside professionals to assume classroom responsibilities on a regular basis and to make significant contributions to the education of Gaines CLC children. This gives teachers more time to engage in professional learning experiences and conduct grade level meetings to discuss issues pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Math and Literacy Coaches

Through the School Improvement Process, the school appropriated funds to support two classroom literacy coaches and a half-time math coach. These coaches support teachers' instruction and the school improvement implementation process by offering classroom and professional learning support. Several teachers indicated that this support has helped them implement and sustain instructional improvements in the 2003-2004 school year.

Improved School Communication

Faculty flowchart of responsibilities

To address concerns about the overall flow of communication throughout the school, a Time and Communication Task Force created a flowchart of responsibilities for faculty and staff to reference when they had questions about various issues. The flowchart listed topics requiring the faculty and staff's frequent attention, followed by the faculty member in charge of answering questions about specific topics. This list has prevented teachers and support staff from wasting valuable time finding answers to their questions, which sometimes led them to give up their search for answers to important questions.

A monthly schedule of meetings calendar

The school implemented a monthly schedule of meetings to reduce faculty members' missing meetings as a result of not being informed or having to attend a different meeting scheduled at the same time. A schedule was developed to establish and clarify meeting times for various teams and committees. For instance, team meetings were scheduled to occur on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, faculty meetings on the first and third Wednesday of each month, and so on. This calendar has significantly reduced the number of conflicting meeting dates during 2003-2004 and has influenced improvements in the overall school climate.

A school-wide event calendar

A school-wide event calendar has also increased school-wide communication and improved school climate. This calendar is posted on a large bulletin board outside the main office, which is located at the center of the school. This bulletin board provides information about grade-level events, school-wide meetings, and other critical information for the school community. Several teachers indicated that the calendar has improved school-wide and parent communication during the 2003-2004 school year.