

Professional Development  
in  
Literacy



Dr. Nancy Breard  
Converse College

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*I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive.*

Malcolm X

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In the beginning,  
Summer 2003

Spartanburg District #5  
hosted a meeting to discuss writing  
a grant proposal to submit to the  
Commission on Higher Education

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Converse College  
Spartanburg School Districts  
4, 5 and 7  
Newberry School District  
collaborated to write the proposal

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All agreed

LITERACY



had to be the focus

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"...I am often asked why so many middle and high school students are struggling to read well. I sense that the people who pose this question want a concise answer, a simple solution to a complex problem. There isn't one. In general, the public's perception of reading is simplistic. They don't stop to consider what sophisticated thought processes are involved and that reading becomes more demanding as students get older."

Cris Tovani  
from  
*I Read it, but I Don't Get It*

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How could we get teachers excited about reading professional literature and trying new strategies and approaches in literacy?



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Our model

Graduate courses in literacy in each district



Followed by Book Study



With Summer Workshops featuring the authors of the books teachers studied

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The purpose of our project has two parts:

1. To increase teacher quality
2. To eventually increase student achievement

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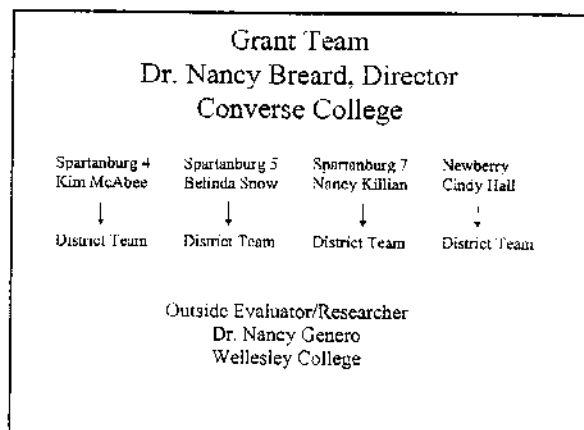
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**Our Accomplishments**  
**2004**

- April    158 teachers recruited for grant
  
- May     Laura Robb author of *Redefining Staff Development* worked with Grant and District Leadership Teams
  
- June    Three day Institute with Janet Allen author of many books on literacy, attended by 200 teachers and administrators

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- June    One day workshop with Ellin Keene attended by 120 teachers and administration
  
- July     Laura Robb worked with Grant and District Leadership Teams on coaching teachers
  
- July    Two day institute with Sharon Taberski for 180 teachers and administrators

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[Students] "lack of knowledge about reading - what reading entails, how they could become readers, or what they could do to improve their reading - had left them disenfranchised. They had sat for so long waiting for someone to give them 'work', then doing the work and still not being any better at reading, that they had lost (if they had ever had) control of their learning."

Janet Allen  
*It's Never Too Late*

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- Two graduate courses with follow-up Book Study offered in each district.
- Grant Team meets each month to plan and assess what we have achieved, where we are and where we are going.

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#### Teacher quotes from Reflective Journals

"I have loved the professional reading and am so grateful for the books. (Although I don't think I've fully digested any of them, and I just pray that Ellin Keene's new book won't come out anytime soon!)"

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"The Janet Allen and Ellin Keene institutes were tantamount to a religious experience for me. The insights that I received from reading their books, and the strategies from the workshops were the most powerful educational (and to some extent personal) experience I've had."

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"Wow! I am impressed! I know I am very pleased with my class results this year. The improvements that I made in my instruction and literacy strategies were mainly a result of the literacy grant class and the professional books I studied this year. I learned so much from Sharon Taberski, Debbie Miller, Ellin Keene, Richard Gentry, etc. Thanks for providing such high quality professional development."

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How has your teaching or thinking been affected?

"Allowing students more time to talk with partners."

"More independent reading."

"More active involvement."

"Attempt to increase collaboration among my grade level peers to share ideas."

"Knowledge to make better decisions about teaching."

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"Looking at all my reflections, I've noticed a willingness to take more risks. I'm no longer the center of attention. Children are expected to become responsible for their learning. So I would say my success is the willingness to try new things and willing to monitor and adjust as necessary. I've learned that some of my best teaching comes from student centered learning."

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"During the reading conferences with the students, I was able to clarify strategies for students, get to know my students better, and see the growth that was taking place within students."



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- Lost - original outside evaluator
- Found - Dr. Nancy Genero
- March      Two day session with Nancy creating our research design.



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## Research Design

Focus:

Grades 3 - 5 Spartanburg 4, 5 and Newberry  
3 - 6 Spartanburg 7

Data collection: CHEQ, Reading Profile,  
observations, PACT scores

Three groups: A (2005) B (2006) C (2007)

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### 2005

- January - May Planned our four day June conference.
- June 6 - 9 Summer Literacy Conference at Marriott Hotel featuring:  
Anne Goudvis  
Carol Jago  
Ellin Keen  
Diane Sweeney  
Debbie Miller

Attendance: 450+ teachers from other states  
including Hawaii!!

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Sixty four (64) teachers work in  
schools where 50% - 80% of the  
students are eligible for free or  
reduced-price lunches.



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87.3% of the teachers reported that the professional development addressed their most pressing needs.

98.4% of the teachers said they shared what they had learned with their colleagues.

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88.2% of the teachers noticed that the quality of student work had increased.

89.2% of the teachers reported that students were more attentive and actively involved in classroom activities.

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92.7% of the teachers were more excited about teaching their subject area.

91.5% of the teachers reported an enhanced understanding of state curriculum standards.

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We are looking for  
The Missing Link!



Through our research we hope to show the connection between sustained professional development and student achievement.

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- Conference call with Nancy Genero during our Grant Team monthly meetings.



- Assessment course for observers during 2005-2006 school year.

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- Planning our five day conference for June 5-9, 2006.

Authors are:

- Chryse Hutchins
- Carol Jago
- Ellin Keene
- Diane Sweeney
- Cris Tovani
- Gretchen Owaki



- 163 teachers participating for 2005-2006.

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The grant has provided



Books  
Graduate courses  
Author Conferences

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But also two intangibles that are  
priceless



INCALCULABLE  
TEACHER MOTIVATION  
and  
TEACHER REFLECTION TIME

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*In the process of the ongoing  
education of teachers, the  
essential moment is that of  
critical reflection on one's  
practice.*

Paolo Freire (1921-1997) Author

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**THANK YOU**

Commission members and

Dr. Kramer

for making this project possible

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PS We have an idea for a  
new grant when this  
one ends!



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