

BPI PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PUBLIC EDUCATION INITIATIVE

BPI's focus on education reform began in the early 1990s as an effort to improve the quality of public education for low-income children of color throughout the City of Chicago. In the process, BPI became an early and ardent proponent of small schools. Currently, through its leadership of the Chicago Schools Alliance – a unique association of in-district and charter schools – BPI is working to strengthen and sustain innovative public schools of all types. Through its co-sponsorship of the annual Chicago Schools Policy Luncheon Series, BPI offers a forum for policymakers, educators and advocates to consider challenging education reform issues of the day.

Current Initiatives:

- **Chicago Schools Alliance.** Strategically, the Alliance underpins and informs much of BPI's school policy and advocacy work. At the same time, it is a means for innovative educators and schools to explore new strategies and identify best practices, which can be disseminated to all Alliance schools and eventually transferred to other schools throughout the Chicago Public Schools system.

In 2007-08, our work with the Alliance will focus on three areas, each of which is a key factor to long-term school sustainability.

- Supporting each school's annual In-Depth Project, a hands-on approach by which each Alliance school can strengthen its practice.
 - Continuing to deepen the use of Practice-Based Inquiry School Visits within the Alliance and more broadly throughout the district (see below).
 - Sharing best practices for teacher leadership while supporting member schools in developing effective and sustainable teacher leadership structures.
- **Expanded Use of Practice-Based Inquiry School (PBI) Visits.** The Alliance has been piloting the use of PBI School Visits which have been used as a rigorous, qualitative assessment tool in the Rhode Island public school system for the past ten years. PBI Visits provide individual schools with peer-based whole-school performance assessments as well as practical feedback for improvement. In 2006-07 two additional school networks --- the Autonomous Management Performance Schools of CPS and the University of Chicago- affiliated Network for College Success hosted PBI visits. During 2007-08 five PBI visits are planned for Chicago schools.
 - **Chicago Schools Policy Luncheon Series.** BPI organizes an annual School Policy Luncheon Series for policymakers, advocates, educators, and funders, providing an opportunity for participants to exchange information on a range of pressing education reform issues. "Making School Autonomy Work for Children" was the series theme in 2007.

- **School Funding Research.** BPI has convened an Education Funding Task Force, comprised of BPI staff and Board members to explore the equity and adequacy of Illinois' school finance system.

Milestones:

- 2007** BPI introduces Practice-Based Inquiry School Visits to schools belonging to two external networks: CPS' Autonomous Management Performance Schools (AMPS) and the Network for College Success.
- 2006** With BPI advocacy, CPS expands selection criteria beyond test results for its Autonomous Management Performance Schools.
- 2005** BPI and the Alliance successfully pilot their first two Practice-Based Inquiry School Visits in Chicago, at Perspectives Charter School and North Lawndale College Prep.
- 2004** BPI, in partnership with Leadership for Quality Education, creates the Chicago Schools Alliance --- a diverse network of innovative charter, contract, small, and traditional CPS schools.
- 2003** BPI releases *Voices from the Field: Small Schools, Next Steps*, based on in-depth interviews with small schools educators containing a set of recommended strategies for strengthening and supporting small schools in Chicago.
- 2002** The Chicago Board of Education passes a new small schools policy resolution, a BPI priority. The Chicago High School Redesign Initiative begins converting three large high schools into small schools.
- 2001** BPI and its partners conduct a national Chicago Public School Design Competition to advance innovative design approaches for small schools and publish *Architecture for Education*, with innovative designs and best practices inspired by the Design Competition.
- 2000** With BPI leadership, Young Women's Leadership Charter School of Chicago opens its doors, among the first in a new wave of Chicago charter schools.
- 1995-96** CPS issues a Request for Proposals to form small schools. Nineteen new small schools are established, largely as an outgrowth of BPI's advocacy and leadership.
- 1992** John Falco, Deputy Superintendent of NYC District 4, meets with Chicago educators as BPI launches an initiative to form small schools in Chicago.

Current BPI Staffing:

Kim Zalent, Director
Katie Hill, Staff Counsel