



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. As a result, BPI became an early and ardent proponent for the creation of small schools as places where such students could “beat the odds”. Subsequent BPI efforts addressed challenges faced by small and innovative schools. This early work indubitably raised the bar for public expectations of CPS schools, as well as fueled the emerging charter movement, which drew on educators and lessons learned from small schools.

However, as accountability for CPS schools escalated dramatically -- evidenced by 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation, successively more stringent CPS probation policies, school closings, and most recently Performance Management-- CPS lacks systemic, “scalable” models to build “traditional” schools’ internal organization and capacity to meet the increased expectations for student achievement.

Thus, in 2008-09 BPI initiated the Partnership for Instructional Leadership with CPS Area 4 (Logan Square/Hermosa) and a cohort of seven Area 4 neighborhood elementary schools, as a demonstration of such a systemic, “scalable” model--an approach developed by Targeted Leadership Consulting and used successfully by schools and districts in Boston, New Jersey, and Chula Vista, California, which is the largest and highest performing elementary school district in California.

Current Initiatives:

Partnership for Instructional Leadership. The Partnership’s framework links together proven and familiar school improvement components into a well-paced, user-friendly school-wide effort organized around addressing a “Targeted Instructional Area” (e.g. reading comprehension, writing) in 4-8 week “Cycles of Professional Learning”. Each school organizes a representative Instructional Leadership Team of teachers and administrators; establishes student achievement goals, including multiple ways of measuring student progress; and identifies powerful instructional practices that will be utilized for every student across the school through successive Cycles of Learning.

BPI provides leadership, project management, and coaching support to the Partnerships schools and the Area. Targeted Leadership Consulting provides the framework, curriculum and training for Partnership Instructional Leadership teams, BPI coaches, and Area staff.

Expected outcomes of this three-year phased project are:

- Significantly increased student learning in each school's targeted instructional area
- Full implementation of the BPI/TLC "framework" components, thus building each school's capacity for rigorous, evidence-based professional collaboration and learning
- Institutionalization of the "framework" within the schools by Year Three so that the work is largely self-sustaining within the schools
- Expansion of the Partnership model to additional cohorts of schools either within or outside Area 4

Schools in CHA Transformation Plan Communities. BPI's Public Housing and Education staff have begun a joint effort to examine what might be done to improve the educational options of families in Transformation Plan communities. This exploration is now collecting key school and community data for a subset of mixed-income and traditional public housing developments.

Practice-Based Inquiry School (PBI) Visits. BPI piloted the use of PBI School Visits at 12 schools as a rigorous, peer-based, whole-school assessment tool, involving 100 educators as team members. (PBI has been used for 10 years in the Rhode Island public school system.) Continued PBI work will be in partnership with the University of Chicago's Network for College Success.

Chicago Schools Policy Luncheon Series. For more than a decade, BPI has co-sponsored an annual Chicago Schools Policy Luncheon Series, which offers a forum for policymakers, educators, the business community and advocates to grapple with cutting edge, challenging education reform issues of the day.

School Funding Research. Research conducted by the BPI Education Funding Task Force (board and staff) determined that the Illinois Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB), the five-member board responsible for recommending the amount of per-pupil funding necessary to deliver a high-quality education to Illinois school children had not met since 2005.

In January, 2009, BPI filed a lawsuit requesting that the court order then-Governor Blagojevich to fill all vacancies on the Illinois Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB). On May 5, 2009 in response to the lawsuit, Governor Pat Quinn appointed five new members to EFAB. The new EFAB board met on several occasions in 2009.

Milestones:

2009 BPI files EFAB lawsuit, prompting newly-installed Governor Quinn to appoint new EFAB members. BPI begins the second year of the Partnership for Instructional Leadership; the 12th PBI Visit is conducted at Kenwood Academy High School.

2008 BPI launches a new Partnership for Instructional Leadership program together with seven traditional schools and CPS' Area 4, as an outgrowth of its Chicago Schools Alliance schools. A PBI Visit is conducted at CPS' first "turn-around" school, Harper High School.

2005 BPI and the Alliance successfully pilot the first two PBI Visits in Chicago, at Perspectives Charter School and Al Raby High School for Community and the Environment.

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.

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.

Current BPI Staffing:

Kim Zalent, Director

Anoa Changa, Polikoff-Gautreaux Fellow

Hannah Birnbaum, Saks Public Interest Intern