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October 27, 2011

NEW BPI REPORT SHOWS PROMISING RESULTS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

***Study Reveals How Some Chicago Public Schools Are Successfully
Building Internal Capacity to Improve: Common Instructional Focus
for All Students at All Grade Levels is Key.***

In its new report, *Every Child, Every School: Lessons from Chicago's Partnership for Instructional Leadership*, Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI) documents encouraging results from its three-year school improvement initiative among a group of Chicago elementary schools.

In the midst of a national debate over student achievement and school improvement, *Every Child, Every School* offers an encouraging story. It centers around the Partnership for Instructional Leadership—a three-year initiative catalyzed by BPI, principals, teachers, parents, Chicago Public Schools Area 4, and an educational consultant.

BPI Executive Director Hoy McConnell said, “The Partnership approach is different from most others in that it aims to build a school’s internal capacity to improve achievement for *all* students at *all* grade levels, including areas like Pre-K and English Language Learners. It demonstrates that when the entire faculty and staff of a school are united by a shared goal with a coherent instructional focus—and are engaged with parents and the larger community—student learning increases and can be sustained.”

How schools are building success from within:

Each of the 11 Partnership schools adopted a common “Framework”—a multifaceted, multi-year approach to school improvement, unified by a *single* instructional focus—and acted as its own engine of change. Originally developed by Targeted Leadership Consulting, this approach has led to impressive results in a number of places across the country, including an entire school district in California.

As the report reveals, the key to the Partnership’s success is creating cultural change. Improvement is made possible by developing a collaborative culture of shared leadership within each school—while building the internal capacity to improve. The key resource to accomplishing this is existing faculty and staff, assisted by structured professional development and coaching.

Key steps in the Partnership for Instructional Leadership approach include the following:

- Each school selects a single area of instructional focus for all grade levels—with leadership, discussion, accountability expectations, and data gathering all in support of the focus.
- Schools receive special coaching to help them become learning organizations, equipping faculty and staff to ask difficult questions, while providing mutual support and holding each other collectively accountable for improved student learning.
- As a result, each school is able to build its own internal capacity for professional learning, collaboration, and shared, accountable leadership—with students, parents, and the community all playing important roles.

What we learned:

While very much a work in progress, the Partnership for Instructional Leadership has important lessons to share after its first three years—lessons with the potential to inform and help other schools, groups of schools, districts, educators, policymakers, and advocates.

Every Child, Every School provides a comprehensive overview of such key points as:

- The Partnership Framework provides a system schools can employ to respond to the need to increase student learning in every classroom.
- Selecting a single area of instructional focus for all grades and for multiple years of work helps develop learning and accelerate school-wide change.
- Integration of Pre-K, while challenging, is valuable and achievable—especially with district support.
- Empowering teachers to drive the process in concert with school leadership generates school-wide support and impact while facilitating sustainability.
- School instructional learning initiatives are more effective when done in collaboration with a school district.

BPI is grateful for the generous support of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, which funded publication of this report.

About Business and Professional People for the Public Interest *Founded in 1969, BPI is a Chicago-based public interest law and policy center that seeks out and addresses important issues of social justice and quality of life in the Chicago region. Currently BPI works to preserve and increase affordable housing, transform public housing and strengthen Chicago communities, improve Chicago's public schools, and promote open and honest government in Illinois. Considered one of Chicago's most tenacious and versatile advocates for the public interest, BPI lawyers and policy specialists use legal and policy research, advocacy, litigation, organizing and collaboration with nonprofit, business, community and governmental organizations to accomplish the organization's mission. More information is at www.bpichicago.org.*