

October, 2010

Step UP leverages the combined resources of the Boston Public Schools and its five university partners to expand opportunities for BPS students. Learn more about Step UP through this bimonthly newsletter.

Goals:

- **Goal 1-** Increase the capacity of the Step UP principals and school faculty to use data to inform meaningful instruction
- **Goal 2-** Support the Step UP schools' efforts to improve student performance in literacy and math
- **Goal 3-** Support Step UP schools to better address the non-academic barriers to student success and achievement
- **Goal 4-** Strengthen the leadership and collaboration, and organizational capacity of all Step UP stakeholders to effectively implement the initiative

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Step UPdate

A Message from the Executive Director

Greetings!

I am happy to present our fall Step UPdate for the 2010-2011 school year. This bimonthly newsletter should keep you posted of Step UP activities in all of our 10 schools, as well as share stories about our work with teachers, students and their parents.

This year, Northeastern is the chair of Step UP. While we are sad to bid adieu to Brandon at Harvard, we are excited to have the Northeastern team behind us. The diversity of talent on the NU team will only serve to improve our lines of communication. Our web site, our digital newsletter and other electronic modes of communication will help to broaden our Step UP audience.

This year promises to be a great

one. Strategic plan work groups are under way. The literacy work group has laid out plans for professional development for the year. The social and emotional health work group is busy writing grants. Data teams are working fast to create a data profile of our schools as well as discussing how best to support our schools in the work of inquiry.

Of course the foundational relationships and initiatives that Step UP has built in the schools continue, and university students and professors are in the schools (and vice versa). The synergy is strong as all five universities work to make Step UP stronger.

I hope you enjoy this issue and, as always, look forward to your feedback.

Karen Daniels,
Executive Director



Above: Teachers at the Curley K-8 School engaging in professional development discussions at Northeastern University. Right: Tufts University dental students with a BPS student after a dental screening.



Capturing Learning Moments

Harvard Achievement Support Initiative (HASI) Brings Video to SmartTALK

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then what can video do? It's a question the Harvard Achievement Support Initiative and Step UP schools are trying to answer this year.

In August, HASI facilitated a three-day *SmartTALK* Institute for Step UP school teams implementing the *SmartTALK: Homework Support for Kids* program. In preparation for the Institute, HASI's Lisa Moellman and Brandon Due went into the field to capture *SmartTALK* in action: specifically, video footage of distinctive *SmartTALK* structures, routines and practices being implemented skillfully within after-school time.

After gathering and editing the video footage, HASI used the clips to showcase successful practices and programming throughout the three-day institute. Participants responded enthusiastically to seeing afterschool teachers using a *SmartTALK* approach. They commented, "Seeing real life examples ... gives good insight about what works ... (we) learned some good strategies and tech-



HASI SmartTALK after-school teachers learning to use the Flip camcorders.

niques. It was great to see what we are talking about."

Building upon the enthusiastic participant reaction to the use of video at the Institute, HASI has designed a "capturing learning moments" component for the 2010-2011 *SmartTALK* Learning Community meeting series.

In preparation for this unique pilot, HASI provided each participating school-based team with a Flip camcorder and tripod. Step UP participants attended a Flip training session at HASI on Sept. 29 to learn how to use the camcorder and edit footage into customized clips. Participants also discussed alternative methods of documenting learning to share promising practices across programs.

At each of the eight Learning Community meetings this year, Step UP participants will have an opportunity to deepen their *SmartTALK* implementation by sharing visually using the new camcorders and their own still cameras. At the same time the Learning Commu-

nity participants continue to discover new practices together, the HASI team will encourage school-based teams to build their own "Learning Moments" *SmartTALK* video/photo library for future training and professional development on site.

By building capacity to implement quality programming and to document excellent practices for future learning, HASI and Step UP school teams are tackling chronic issues that can impede quality implementation in after-school programs: high staff turnover, lack of time for large group trainings, and the inability to release program staff to see other teachers and programs in action.

One participant commented, "More of these would be great... these videos could be excellent for training new staff." Another added, "It's great to see how *SmartTALK* could work in a more natural way, instead of just hearing about it."



Lisa Moellman teaches HASI SmartTALK after-school teachers to record video with Flip camcorders.

Curley's Staff Starts the School Year Right

As leaves start changing colors and the school year kicks into gear, the staff of the newly restructured Curley K-8 School is working together better than ever, with some help from Northeastern University.

In August, Northeastern hosted the staff of the Curley on campus for several days of professional development.

Leadership coach Paula Finklestein is also working closely with Principal Jeffrey Slater.

Finklestein has more than 20 years' experience as a principal and coach.

"Our leadership coach provides direct support to me as the principal, offering strategic feedback based on her successful school leadership experi-

ence," said Slater. "The leadership coach also interacts with our Instructional Leadership Team, providing valuable input around the effective use of data, and key strategies for how to support parents around their children's learning."

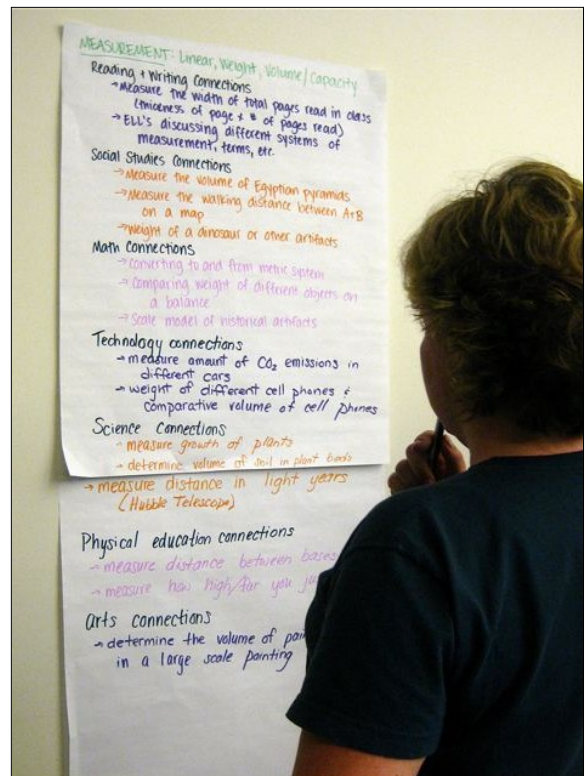
Laurie Speranzo, math coach at MathPower, is hard at work in the Curley, joined this year by a new elementary math coach, Anne Norris. "The school year is going well. We've able to meet with most of the teachers, and it's really wonderful because they are open to working with math coaches and having deep math conversations," said Speranzo. "We're hoping that by having coaches there who can really look at the (MCAS) data we'll be able to close any math achievement gaps."

The Curley met Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in English Language Arts last year, and data shows Curley students headed in the right direction to reach AYP in both English Language Arts and Math this year.

"With the support of our math coaches, we will continue to analyze our students' assessment data and make the necessary adjustments to our teaching to best meet our students' needs," Slater said.



Above and right: Curley teachers and staff participating in professional development sessions at Northeastern University. Below: Math coach Laurie Speranzo advises a group of teachers.



Tufts to Provide Six Step UP Schools With Dental Care

Maybe it's not the first thing that comes to mind when considering a child's classroom performance, but oral health problems can lead to struggles in school. Tooth decay can cause pain severe enough to hamper a child's learning, speech and eating. Although tooth decay is a preventable disease, its prevalence is five times greater than asthma in children.

During the school year, den-

tal professionals from Tufts University School of Dental Medicine (TUSDM) will provide dental care at the Chittick, Marshall, Russell, Agassiz, E. Greenwood and Curley schools at no out-of-pocket cost to parents. Tufts will offer screenings, cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants, the plastic coverings that are placed over molars and that can prevent most cavities.

Students who need additional care will be referred to a dentist.

Additionally, all kindergarten and second graders will participate in dental education classes.

TUSDM staff is currently working in the Chittick School, where new students are signing up for the program every day. The next school is the Russell. In order for their children to participate, parents will need to sign and return a consent form that will be distributed at school.

For Step UP School, Improvement Doesn't Take a Vacation

Preparing for the 2010-2011 school year meant that teachers and principals at Step UP schools cut short summer vacations and went back to school themselves.

Boston College served as host for a number of professional development and staff-building events prior to the school year.

Principal Walter Henderson of the Winthrop Elementary School, a BC Step UP partner school, brought his staff to BC for their summer professional development.

English High School leaders and staff were on campus for four days of professional development designed to prepare for the challenges ahead at the Jamaica Plain high school.

Boston College Professor Maria Brisk hosted more than 100 teachers from numerous Boston Public Schools sites for two days of training in her Genres in Writing program.

Brisk initiated the writing curriculum – which focuses on preparing students for language acquisition and knowledge-

gathering in order to write reports and essays using specific literary genres – just about five years ago. She started in two schools. Today, there are nine Boston Public Schools learning to use Brisk's program to improve writing instruction and subject mastery.

Last year, Brisk was thrilled when two students at the Winthrop prepared winning essays for the Red Sox Foundation's Red Sox Scholars program. Both students had prepared their essays working with their teacher, who Brisk had trained in the Genres methodology thanks to a grant from the Lynch School of Education.

This year, Genres in Writing will be used in classrooms at the Russell

Elementary School, another BC Step UP partner school.

In all, more than 150 teachers worked with Brisk and her graduate students to learn the Genres in Writing curriculum and they will spend the rest of the year implementing it in their classes, both within and beyond the Step UP initiative.

"Principals and teachers are finding that what Maria is doing is getting students not only ready for the writing on the MCAS exams, but also helps to support the development of their writing potential in all subjects," said Catherine Wong, the director of Urban Outreach Initiatives at the Lynch School.



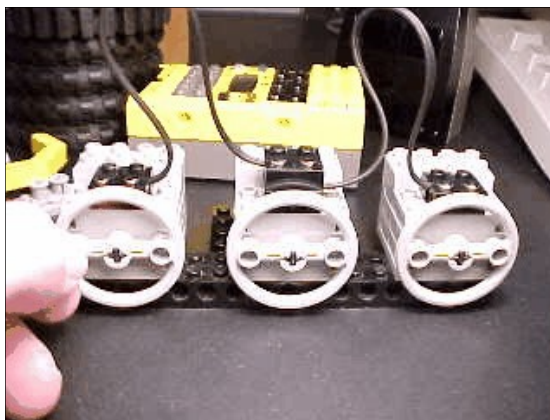
The staff of English High poses during professional development days at Boston College.

Inquiry-Based Science and Elementary Education from BU

A common problem elementary science teachers face is they are expected to teach inquiry-based science having never learned it themselves in grade school. This past summer, the School of Education and Department of Physics at Boston University teamed with Wheelock College and Northeastern University to offer immersive science courses for K-8 teachers in engineering design and scientific experimentation.

The goal of the Immersion in Green Energy course, taught by Boston University Professor Don Derosa, was to introduce the educators to inquiry-based science and related project experiments in the hope that they will conduct the science lessons in their classrooms in a similar fashion.

The interactive group experiments the teachers participated in gave them content background and exposure to the inquiry process. Experiments included building a generator from wire and batteries, and working in teams to build a Lego wind generator and a solar powered car.



Holly Rosa, elementary science teacher at the William Russell Elementary in Dorchester, attended the Green Energy Immersion Program to learn more about sustainable energy and how to incorporate it into her classroom.

For Rosa, the most valuable take away from the program was working with other teachers to build a hydro-generator. She was able to experience the process that engineers use to design different things as well as experience the difficulty and successes that come along with these kinds of projects.

"The information I learned will help me teach electricity and magnetism in my classroom," said Rosa. "The course has given me a better understanding of both of these topics. Also, this has helped me to see the importance behind allowing students to undergo inquiry-based projects in science. I am going to incorporate an opportunity to learn for students to choose their own inquiry type projects."

Tufts Students Preparing for Russell Family Arts Night

Graduate students in the art education program of Tufts University/School of Museum of Fine Arts (SMFA) are preparing to host Russell Elementary School students and their families at an arts night on Tuesday, Oct. 26. Tufts students will guide the families through the creation of environmentally-themed art projects.

The planning and execution of Family Arts Night is part of a course taught by Patty Bode, Ed.D., the director of the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Art Education program offered in collaboration with the SMFA. Although a member of Tufts' Medford-based Department of Education, Bode teaches out of an SMFA studio building in Mission Hill a few blocks away from the main SMFA and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston sites.

"We are located so close to Boston schools," said Bode, who taught in public schools in Western Massachusetts for 16 years before coming to Tufts. "We should be of service to schools we share the neighborhood with."

The choice of an environmental theme was

prompted by suggestions from Russell teachers looking to complement lessons being taught in the school's new outdoor classroom.

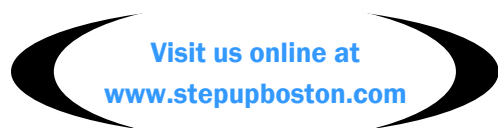
Approximately 20 Tufts students will staff activity stations that may offer projects such as leaf printing for the younger students and nature-themed computer technology experiences for older children. Bode will introduce her students to the Russell the week before when she teaches two of her classes there.

"We will tour the building and the outdoor classroom and do some planning work," Bode said. "There is nothing like teaching my students in an elementary school setting, even if it's for one morning."

Family Arts Night is the start of Bode's relationship with Step UP schools. She has placed a student teacher at the Curley K-8 School and is offering student teachers to schools with art teachers for the 2011-2012 school year. Bode's research centers on multiculturalism in art education, with instruction in urban schools as one of her focuses.



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An unprecedented collaboration among five private universities, the City of Boston, and the Boston Public Schools.

University Partners:

Boston College
Boston University
Harvard University
Northeastern University
Tufts University

School Partners:

Curley K-8 School
Elihu Greenwood Elementary School
English High School
James J. Chittick Elementary School
John Marshall Elementary School
John Winthrop Elementary School
Louis Agassiz Elementary School
Orchard Gardens K-8 School
William E. Russell Elementary School
William Monroe Trotter Elementary School

BC Team to Assess Teaching With Technology

A Lynch School of Education team will take the first steps this year to assess the uses and needs for technology to enhance teaching and learning in the classrooms of Step UP schools.

Boston College Assistant Professor of Education Mike Barnett and Director of Urban Outreach Initiatives Catherine Wong have received a grant from Lynch School of Education Dean Joseph M. O'Keefe, SJ, to begin the assessment.

Principals Tamara Blake-Canty at the Russell Elementary School and Walter Henderson at the Winthrop Elementary School will select two teacher leaders to assist Barnett and Wong as they look at school needs for software, hardware and professional development in order to enhance the educational technology available in Winthrop and Russell classrooms.

"The goal is to have teachers become more confident in their use of technology and to have an easier time integrating educational technology into their instruction," said Wong.

The study is being undertaken because principals and teachers requested it, said Wong.

"There is a need for resources and there is a need to address these rapidly changing technologies and the knowledge required to be able to use them."

- Catherine Wong

"There are a combination of needs teachers and principals have," she said. "There is a need for resources and there is a need to address these rapidly changing technologies and the knowledge required to be able to use them."

While there is no funding in the grant for technology purchases, Wong hopes she and Barnett and the study teams will be able to have a framework in place by the end of the year in order to begin providing professional development sessions for teachers.

Wong said she hopes to be able to expand the technology and training needs assessment to other Step UP schools the following school year.