

# *Comprehensive Study Circle*

## **A Collaborative Approach to Defining Accountability**

**Fall 2001**

A collaboration of the *Education Policy & Issues Center* in Allegheny County and *Operation Public Education*, a project of the Center for Greater Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania



## **A Collaborative Approach to Accountability for Education**

Educator accountability is becoming more and more common – and important – as states and local school districts work to improve public education. This increasing nationwide focus signifies an extraordinary opportunity. It is the catalyst for an indispensable dialogue about a new quid-pro-quo: “If we educators are to be held accountable for what students learn, then our school systems must be organized in certain ways and equipped with the funds and tools we need to do our jobs well.”

We predict that the Pennsylvania General Assembly will take up the issue of accountability no later than January 2003, as part of an important major overhaul of school funding. The central question before us is who will define accountability? Our challenge is to bring together all the key parties – teachers and their unions, school board members, principals, superintendents, parents and members of the business community – to collaboratively create an accountability system that improves education, is fair to educators, and is credible to the general public. Accountability must be systemic and symmetrical and place responsibility in appropriate places, focusing on each party’s role as an instructional leader. We expect accountability systems to be rich and complex – including student achievement data as one of the multiple measures of success. It should provide a template for districts to implement standards-based reform, provide supports for educators, monitor results, reward excellence and directly address weaknesses.

***Operation Public Education*** (formerly known as the Program in Educator Accountability) launched this design effort last year with a series of collaborative study groups, a teachers study circle and two design teams. During a 10-month period, more than 70 educators in Southeastern Pennsylvania – teachers and their union leaders, school board members, principals, superintendents and other administrators – came together to study educator quality, professional development, compensation and student assessment. Together, the participants heard from experts and practitioners across the country and had the opportunity to begin crucial conversations on educational reform, and in some cases, to actually design a system of accountability. ***Operation Public Education and the Education Policy & Issues Center are pleased to offer a limited number of educators in Southwestern Pennsylvania the opportunity to participate in a Comprehensive Study Circle this fall.***

### **Comprehensive Study Circle**

School board members, teachers and their union leaders, principals, superintendents, curriculum directors and other administrators, parents and members of the business community will collaboratively learn about and discuss the major topics relevant to school improvement and accountability. Sessions will focus on professional development, student assessment, compensation and educator quality.

All eligible participants will receive Act 48 and graduate credit from the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education. Sessions are to be held every other week

beginning in October, with two additional special meetings. Generally, each meeting will last from 4:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. The first meeting will provide an overview and welcome dinner (for remaining meetings, a light meal will be available beginning at 3:45). The location will be determined based on convenience to group members. A tentative schedule follows:

- *Wednesday, October 17:* This initial meeting will include a special orientation to the program goals. The first **Educator Quality and Compensation** session will be led by **Columbus (Ohio) Education Association President John Grossman**. Columbus has a model teacher peer mentoring program as well as a system-wide concentration on student learning and classroom instruction. This meeting will begin at 4:30 and conclude by 8 p.m., following dinner.
- *Wednesday, October 31:* The second **Educator Quality and Compensation** session will be led by the **Coventry Public Schools** interim superintendent and union president. They will discuss the Rhode Island district's unique approach to systemic standards-based reform, including compensation based on teacher skills and knowledge and student achievement results.
- *Wednesday, November 14:* **Dr. June Rivers**, partner to noted statistician **William Sanders** will lead the session on **Student Assessment** with a presentation of the **value-added** analysis system. This work provides an extraordinary means to examine the impact of teaching and schools on student achievement.
- *Wednesday, November 28:* **Adam Urbanski**, director of the **Teacher Union Reform Network** and president of the **Rochester Teachers Association – AFT**, will describe cutting-edge practice in peer mentoring programs and other teacher leadership examples across the country.
- *Wednesday, December 12:* A representative from the **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards** and a Board-certified teacher will discuss how the program enhances and recognizes excellent teaching.
- *Two additional meetings in January TBD*