

October 3, 2001 at 11:00 a.m.

Board Meeting Room, Newark Public Schools, 2 Cedar Street,
Newark, New Jersey

Newark, NJ -- "Reaching children with good technique is only part of the answer for building a strong reading program," according to Donna Ogle, president of the International Reading Association (IRA) speaking at the announcement of the Partnership for Urban Literacy. Ogle continued, "effective reading programs also need teachers who understand how to reach children whose experiences have created barriers to effective learning." The announcement was made today at the Newark (NJ) Public Schools. Eric Cooper, executive director of the National Urban Alliance (NUA) said that this initial partnership between IRA and NUA would form the base of a new effort to improve instruction based on three core principles:

1. That education reform must be focused on the classroom.
2. That the impact of racism has been a barrier to instruction. And
3. That the impact of poverty on children's learning is not mediated by single year or a single focus program.

Ms. Marion Bolden, Superintendent of Newark Public Schools, in hosting the announcement said, "education reform has many key elements but at its core must be instruction." Ms Bolden cited the significant increases in writing scores that the school district has seen since working with NUA as an example of how improvements can be made and expanded.

Echoing that perspective was the written statement of Duncan N.P. Pritchett, Superintendent, Indianapolis Public Schools, who said:

The IPS/NUA Initiative is making a difference for the kids in our community. As a result of this partnership our student test scores are improving and it is leading the way for the transformation of this district. It has served as a springboard for us to put together a grant proposal that was just funded from the Lilly Endowment for \$16.4 million. We find that the community is putting their faith and their children back into IPS.

The Partnership for Urban Literacy will be a relationship between the IRA and NUA to:

1. Expand the range of information available to teachers working in urban school districts

2. Improve the long-term professional development programs of urban teachers, and
3. Expand the research and dissemination activities in urban classrooms.

The International Reading Association will be providing scholars-in-residence to work with the NUA teams to continue to improve reading instruction in the schools and districts that have been identified. The IRA and NUA will also be working together to secure the public support needed to change instruction at all levels so that every student has access to a total reading program in their schools and pre-schools.

Speakers at the press conference included:

- Ms. Marion Bolden, Superintendent of Newark Public Schools
- Dr. Sonia Diaz-Salcedo, Superintendent, Bridgeport Public Schools
- Dr. Donna Ogle, President of the International Reading Association
- Dr. Vito DiCesare, Superintendent, Beacon, New York Public Schools
- Dr. Askia Davis, Superintendent for Corporate Partnerships, New York City Board of Education
- Dr. John Ramos, Norwalk, Ct. Public Schools
- Dr. Eric Cooper, Executive Director, National Urban Alliance

Reading instruction is critical for the success of all students, but Joseph Olchefske, Superintendent, Seattle Public Schools said it best:

"Given the recent events in our country, it is critical to focus on improving education. The need for developing critical thinkers and readers in our nation, citizens who are able to withhold judgment and weigh options without bias, is part of what it means to be an American. The Urban Partnership for Literacy among school districts, the National Urban Alliance and the International Reading Association, provides all of us with the additional impetus and academic excellence in teaching needed to reach that goal."

In summary, Cooper concluded: "the time is right to take the next steps in education reform and to build on the success of the NUA and the knowledge of the IRA to understand that we will need a comprehensive approach to instruction that includes not only knowing how to

technically teach reading well, but to also know how social issues impact each child's instruction and how that can be effectively changed."

The Partnership for Urban Literacy is about teaching each teacher we work with a process of how to meet the needs of each of their children.

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