



## **The Third Mile Group Spring 2009 Update**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The Third Mile Group is pleased to send you this update about our work and activities over the past several months. We continue to enjoy our clients and our projects, and, feel very fortunate to be able to work with such great partners in improving education.

### **Project News**

TMG partner Charles Coble continues to serve as the co-director of the Science and Mathematics Teacher Imperative (SMTI) of the **Association for Public Land-Grant Universities** (APLU, formerly NASULGC). The primary goal of the initiative is to increase the number and quality of middle grades and secondary science and mathematics teachers. The project just wrapped up a highly successful sequence of conferences in Boulder, Colorado. On May 17, a half-day meeting was held with 11 university system representatives from across the nation who discussed ways to assist individual campuses in the SMTI work. The next day, 73 of the 83 universities who have signed on to the SMTI commitment attended a day-long meeting to learn more about the University of Colorado-Boulder approach to STEM teacher preparation. Participants also heard from Linda Slakey, Division Director of EHR/DUE at the National Science Foundation (NSF), and attended several very focused breakout sessions designed to support institutions to meet their goals of increasing the quantity, quality and diversity of science-math teachers. The series wrapped up with a two-day meeting for the 27 institutions that are part of a NSF Research, Evaluation and Technical Assistance (RETA) grant, which is focused specifically on expanding the number of physics, chemistry and mathematics teachers. A major focus of that meeting was the specific expectations for achieving the SMTI commitment. In addition, RETA participants learned more about the analytic framework as a tool for supporting discussions on campuses to improve programs across the teacher development continuum from recruitment, preparation, induction and development, and how it will be used by all 27 institutions to develop an Implementation and Assessment Plan (IAP) as part of their responsibilities under the RETA grant.

Updates of the SMTI work are posted on the APLU website under Major Initiatives, SMTI (<http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=584>).

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One year ago, TMG began working with the **Texas High School Project** to organize and convene the Texas Educational Leadership Council (TELC), an effort to strengthen education leadership stakeholder collaboration across the state of Texas, and to identify policy levers in the system that could substantively improve the education leadership system. Through a series of meetings facilitated by TMG, the TELC design team forged a unique partnership to accomplish a great deal in the past 12 months, including an environmental scan of the leadership policies, initiatives, and players in Texas; a gap analysis that identifies needs in K-12 education leadership policies and programs in specific areas; and a survey of practitioners to further determine areas of critical need and/or redundancy in efforts to help the state's education leaders. Moving forward, TELC wants to build on these identified needs by offering to state policymaking bodies recommendations that will lead to high quality education for all students in the state, as well as position TELC to provide insight into the implementation of the policy recommendations. TELC has drafted a business plan outlining next steps and funding requirements. Most recently, TMG is assisting TELC and the Texas Education Agency in convening a meeting of leadership preparation programs from across the state to discuss best practices and continuous improvement.

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Our strategic planning and fundraising work with **Fountain-Fort Carson School District Eight** in Fountain, Colorado continues to support the Lorraine Education and Community Center, which houses both an alternative middle/high school for at-risk students and an array of social service providers. In April the school district hosted a reception to celebrate our progress over the past two years, and recognize foundations and organizations that have funded our efforts, including the Joseph Henry Edmondson Foundation, The Daniels Fund, Myron Stratton Home Grants Programs, Woodford Foundation/Minority Scholarship Fund, City of Fountain, and Pikes Peak Community College. Grant funds are supporting the family advocate position, the human resources coordinator, the college transitions coordinator, and the postsecondary program for current and former students – graduates and non-graduates alike. The postsecondary program has completed four terms so far with over 60 students enrolling in postsecondary courses. TMG will continue to work with the district on creating a plan for sustaining strategic planning efforts and strengthening collaboration among the service providers.

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TMG began working with the **Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia** last fall on its strategic plan goal to produce 80% of the state's need for new teachers by the year 2020. TMG Partner Charles Coble provides consultation and expertise to staff at USG in their efforts to (1) expand the number of USG institutions offering teacher preparation; (2) define more specifically what the supply and demand for teachers throughout Georgia and align programs to help address those needs; (3) assist in the development of proposals to help build campus capacity to address specific needs for

teachers.

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TMG is completing a scope of work for the **Wyoming Department of Education At-Risk Task Force**, including production of a policy brief on dropout prevention and research and data on other states' efforts for decreasing the dropout rate and increasing high school completion rates. The task force is focusing on creating a continuum of support services for at-risk students that will be considered by policymakers in 2010. A number of states and/or cities have implemented similar ideas, sometimes called, "collaborative management programs" that encourage partnerships among schools and human and social service providers, maximize resources and promote comprehensive policies for children and youth. TMG Partner Katy Anthes has provided the task force with expertise and assistance on crafting policy recommendations for consideration by the Wyoming legislature.

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The Third Mile Group is providing consultation and research/analysis assistance to the **National Commission on Teaching for America's Future (NCTAF)** on a Gates Foundation-supported project on teacher pension plans and school staffing policies. TMG's scope of the project is an examination and comparison of pension plans and policies from 15 states, particularly incentives and implications for early retirement and for retirees returning to teaching. The research will inform NCTAF's efforts to create cross-generational learning teams, as well as an understanding of pension components that encourage teachers to persist in the profession and barriers to retirement flexibility. NCTAF will convene a meeting in October to present the project findings.

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TMG is working with the **Education Commission of the States (ECS)** to launch a teaching quality and leadership initiative. The first step was a meeting in late March of the "strategy team," a panel of national experts on teaching programs, practices, systems, and student assessment. The team engaged in a day-long discussion about the most effective teacher competencies, past efforts and initiatives and key levers for improving teacher quality, creating political and public will on teacher education, and data and other system needs for moving forward. The overall objective of the national project will be to demonstrate the fundamental connection between the quality of the teachers in the classroom and the preparedness and capability of school leaders, and translate that connection into effective educational policy and practice in the states. ECS is preparing a concept paper describing the overall design of a pilot project, including expectations and requirements for participating pre-service organizations and preparation programs.

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TMG Partner Charles Coble is providing consultation to the **Center for Inquiry-Based Learning (CIBL)** as part of its Teachers and Scientists Collaborating (TASC) research

projected funded by the National Science Foundation. CIBL's purpose is to provide North Carolina K-8 students with opportunities to learn to think as scientists: critically, creatively, and independently. Coble is assisting CIBL staff in developing research questions and data analysis to determine the TASC program's effectiveness.

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The Third Mile Group is partnering with Unchartered Territories, Inc. to develop an **Education Leadership Summit** designed for innovative leaders in the field of public education who long to reconnect with their personal mission of service and learning that inspired their careers many years ago. Targeted specifically at superintendents and principals, the program will utilize a systems thinking approach to help participants clarify their vision and motivations and to energize and renew their spirit and passions about education. The first two and a half day summit will take place in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina in fall 2009, and will include a hike to the summit of a local mountain and a dramatic teambuilding activity that requires the skills and talents of the entire group. Participants are promised opportunities for personal reflections on career and legacy as well as an expanded network of peers. Additional information will be available from TMG as the program is developed and dates are confirmed.

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#### New Partnership Developed to Serve States and Districts on ARRA funds

The unprecedented amount of education dollars provided by the Obama administration's economic recovery plan, including the Race to the Top grant funds, provides tremendous opportunities for states and districts to realize some of the education reforms that have been talked about for years. This exciting opportunity has led TMG to partner with two other Colorado-based organizations focused on education reform and excellence.

Our organizations – the Center for Education Policy Analysis at the School of Public Affairs, University of Colorado Denver; Augenblick, Palaich & Associates; and The Third Mile Group – have extensive experience as consultants on education reform. We are passionate about improving education and enthusiastic about many of the change agendas that have been articulated by state departments, governors' offices and school districts. We see our role as helping policymakers and district leaders solve problems in ways that lead to better educational outcomes, ultimately making all students prepared for successful futures.

The collective expertise housed at our organizations allows us to offer customized assistance in a wide variety of areas including planning, research, evaluation, fiscal analysis and policy gap analysis. For more information about how this collaborative partnership can help, contact, Katy Anthes.

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We invite you to visit our website - [www.thirdmilegroup.com](http://www.thirdmilegroup.com) - for more details on our clients and projects. We welcome your comments and questions about our work and about The Third Mile Group.

- Katy, Charles and Cathy

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