



The Third Mile Group

Spring 2010 Update

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Hello from The Third Mile Group! We're happy to share with you news and information about our projects and clients. We've had a fairly busy year so far in 2010, and expect the summer to be pretty active as well – including lots of soccer, biking and hiking! We continue to enjoy our work and our clients and look forward to new projects and new challenges.

Project News

TMG is serving as the evaluator of two grants awarded to **Fountain-Fort Carson School District Eight** (FFC8) from the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). The evaluation team – Katy Anthes and Cathy Walker, along with Bob Palaich and Kathryn Rooney of Augenblick, Palaich and Associates – has been collecting data and information on several schools as part of a two grant projects (\$3.5 million total), which seek to improve student achievement, teacher effectiveness and school climate through specific interventions and diagnostic assessments that target the needs of military students. The team spent two days in Fountain in April holding interviews and focus groups with teachers, principals and district staff, as well as community and family members impacted by the grant activities. We were especially impressed with the level of commitment and dedication among all district staff and community supporters of the FFC8 district. Our first-year reports on both grants will be submitted later this summer.

Just this week DoDEA awarded a third grant to the FFC8 district that will focus on promoting student achievement through improved math curriculum and the use of technology at three targeted elementary schools. TMG will serve as the evaluator for this grant project as well.

FFC8 is also the recipient of an Expelled and At-Risk Student Services (EARSS) grant from the Colorado Department of Education. Through this grant the district launched the Second Chance program at the Lorraine Secondary School, an "alternative to alternative education" which offers another layer of intervention and online opportunities for the most at-risk middle and high school students in Fountain. The Second Chance program has served nearly 100 students this year, including several who enrolled in and completed postsecondary course work at Lorraine. A total of 12 SC students will graduate from high school this spring, the first year of the four-year project.

TMG partner Charles Coble continues to serve as the co-director (with Howard Gobstein, Vice President, Research and Science Policy) of the Science and Mathematics Teacher Imperative (SMTI) of the **Association for Public Land-Grant Universities (APLU)**. The primary goal of the initiative, which has engaged 122 institutions, is to increase the number and quality of middle grades and secondary science and mathematics teachers.

The SMTI 2010 National Conference, to be held June 9-11 in Cincinnati, Ohio will provide faculty from science and mathematics disciplines and colleges of education, administrators, and K-12 educators an opportunity to share successful programs or strategies on their campuses and to find solutions to common problems in stem education. Some of the presenters will be: **Carlos Contreras**, U.S. Education Director, Intel Corporation; **John Ewing**, President, Math for America; **Arthur Levine**, President, The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation; **Lee Todd**, President, University of Kentucky & Chair, SMTI Executive Committee; and **Suzanne Wilson**, University Distinguished Professor, Michigan State University.

Updates of the SMTI work are posted on the APLU website under [Major Initiatives, SMTI](#).

TMG has completed one project for the **Colorado Department of Education (CDE)**, as work continues on three other scopes of work. TMG was part of a study team that conducted a feasibility study on the design and implementation of a state academy for math, science and innovation for high school juniors and seniors. The team conducted several focus groups of educators, philanthropists and business representatives to assess interest, support and challenges of the academy, and presented findings and recommendations to the Commissioner and to the Legislature.

Three ongoing projects for CDE include the following. First, TMG is staffing the State Leadership Academy Board, which has been charged with providing a comprehensive leadership and professional development *system* that identifies, recruits, trains and inducts qualified persons for leadership positions in Colorado public schools. TMG has facilitated several meetings of the Board as it reviews and revises leadership standards, and prepares for peer and public input on the revised standards. TMG will continue to assist the Board as it moves forward to set policies and procedures and define selection criteria for the School Leadership Academy.

Second, TMG has been advising and facilitating deliberations of the Administrative Unit Task Force in its charge to develop recommendations for changes to state board regulations that will improve and enhance services for special education students. We are about to begin a second phase of work on this project that will include in-depth meetings to define specific AU components and scope, and to finalize the Task Force's report and recommendations to the Commissioner.

Finally, TMG has been assisting the newly formed Office of Dropout Prevention, which is supported by ARRA funds, to create a technical assistance framework. TMG has facilitated

meetings with ODP staff and alternative education stakeholders to ensure that dropout prevention strategies are aligned with other efforts in the state as well as with funding sources. Numerous programs and strategies are employed throughout Colorado to prevent students from dropping out and to intervene when students do not succeed in the traditional classroom. ODP and stakeholders have identified program and funding gaps and will collaborate on finding solutions to the gaps and to better align programs.

Last December the Third Mile Group was asked to advise and staff the **Colorado Afterschool Network (CAN)** as it transitioned to its next incarnation as a network and advocate for out-of-school learning experiences. Created six years ago to work with Colorado communities to build systems, supports and resources for quality out-of-school learning opportunities, CAN's goal was to connect providers, policymakers and other stakeholders throughout Colorado into a force demonstrating that after-school programs work and are a vital part of community life. CAN represented program providers and key stakeholders and operated as a valuable resource and advocate to engage partners, find solutions and communicate the vision and goals of extended learning opportunities in the state. A key outcome of the work of CAN was the recommendation to the Colorado Department of Education to create the Expanded Learning Opportunity Commission, and to institutionalize and sustain the Commission as an essential guardian of the long-term vision for extended learning and out-of-school programs in Colorado. The Colorado Afterschool Network will now become aligned with the ELO Commission in the form of the **ELO Network**, and will be housed at the Colorado Legacy Foundation. Through this reorganization CAN members and ELO stakeholders in Colorado will be able to expand and leverage their work as well as strengthen collaborative initiatives with the Colorado Department of Education. TMG provided assistance to CAN in this transition effort, and also to CAN/ELO Network in submission of a grant application to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to support the next phase of work.

TMG has been retained to staff and facilitate the work of the **ELO Commission**, which has been charged with developing a policy framework for integrating ELOs into Colorado's preschool through postsecondary reform agenda. The framework will outline a vision of student-centered learning that transcends the school day and location and encourages education systems to use time, partners and technology in new ways to achieve greater long-term outcomes for students. Over the next 15 months the ELO Commission expects to identify a statewide policy framework and recommendations for expanded learning opportunities that result in increased academic growth, closing of the achievement gaps, decreased dropout rates and student postsecondary and workforce readiness.

TMG partners Katy Anthes and Cathy Walker continue to work with the **Texas High School Project (THSP)** 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. The TELC includes representatives from K-12 and higher education. In January TELC members attended the midwinter conference of the Texas Association of School Administrators and the Texas Council of Professors of Educational

Administration to present about TELC activities and products, and to encourage collaboration in efforts to improve leadership preparation across the state. The next meeting of TELC will be in September and will focus on creating a cohesive, proactive education leadership policy statement from members of TELC to give to various policymaking bodies in Texas.

The **Wyoming Department of Education (WDE)** has contracted with TMG to assist in the organization, resource selection and creation of vetting protocols for the final build-out of the Department's online Fusion Portal for school improvement. The WDE is in the process of developing a three-tiered framework of support for its 48 school districts: Tier One is the push-out of electronic resources; Tier Two involves coaching districts and providing technical assistance; Tier Three will provide targeted support to those districts most in need of assistance to rebuild their ability and capacity to provide quality education to improve student academic achievement. TMG will work with district staff on Tier One – electronic resources and vetting protocol.

TMG partner Katy Anthes has continued to assist the **Wyoming Afterschool Alliance (WYAA)** on sustainability and policy planning to ensure the viability and stability of the organization, including submission of a grant application to the Mott Foundation. The WYAA dedicates itself to ensuring equal access to afterschool programs for all school-aged Wyoming youth. The goals of WYAA include: (1) creating a sustainable structure of statewide, regional and local partnerships, particularly school community partnerships; (2) supporting the development and growth of statewide policies that will secure the resources needed to sustain new and existing afterschool programs; and (3) supporting statewide systems to ensure programs are of high quality.

We invite you to visit the [TMG website](#) for more details on our clients and projects, and we welcome your comments and questions about our work and about The Third Mile Group.

Katy, Charles and Cathy

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