

February 2010

2009 already seems like a distant memory as we begin this new decade. This letter highlights a few of our most recent activities and accomplishments as we continue to explore new ways to influence and improve public education in Colorado.

Colorado Conference on Online and Blended Learning

Over the past year the foundation has participated in a series of discussions on the topic of online and blended (use of both classroom and online learning within one program) learning. We have discovered some interesting innovations around the state and the nation. Several states and researchers have demonstrated that online and blended learning increase educational opportunities and improve outcomes for a wide range of students. Though we have learned of pockets of innovation sprouting up across our state and nation, the expansion of such efforts is happening at far too slow a pace.

As such, Donnell-Kay is interested in working with others in our state to examine how we can expand access to quality online and blended learning for Colorado's students. On March 18, 2010 Donnell-Kay is hosting a conference to further examine innovative national and local blended and online learning programs and systems. The conference will also discuss how Colorado can keep up with this movement in order to better prepare students for success today and into the future. For more information, contact Amy Anderson at aanderson@dkfoundation.org.

Parent and Community Speaker Series "More From Our Schools"

Our first speaker in our three-part speaker series "Learn more. Expect more. Do more." was a rousing success. Over 80 members of the community came to Manual High School in November to hear the inspiring presentation of Dr. Howard Fuller, Founder & Director, Institute for the Transformation of Learning, at Marquette University and Co-Founder of the Black Alliance for Educational Options in Education. Dr. Fuller has dedicated his career to improving educational opportunities for low-income children and is nationally known for his work with programs that increase parents' choice for their children's education.

On February 18 at Montbello High School, our second speaker will be Eva Moskowitz, Chief Executive Office of the Success Charter Network, a former elected official, and Chair of the New York City Council Education Committee. Our third and final speakers in this series will be two representatives from Parent Revolution (<http://parentrevolution.org/>) who will share their experiences around grassroots reform in education. This event is scheduled for March 4 at Valdez Elementary School in Denver. For more information about this series, please check the website, www.MoreFromOurSchools.com. To register for either event, contact Claudia Winkler at cwinkler@dkfoundation.org.

"Hot Lunch" Speaker Series

So far this season, we have had a number of outstanding speakers for our very popular "Hot Lunch" speakers series, including Dr. Howard Fuller in November. Most recently, we had a full house to hear Chris Barbic, Founder and Head of School for YES Prep Public Schools speak about how low-income students can achieve at the same level as their more affluent peers.

As this newsletter goes to print, we will have *two* speakers in February. The first, a last-minute addition to our schedule is Ray Cortines, Superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District. On February 8 he will share his thoughts with the audience about how LA Unified is juggling parental control, new school operators and tougher standards for charter schools. The following speaker, on February 19, will be Eva Moskowitz, who will also be speaking at our Parent and Community Speaker Series. Our line-up

continues in March with Susan Patrick, President & CEO of the International Association for K12 Online Learning (iNACOL) and former Director of the Office of Educational Technology at the U.S. Department of Education. Ms. Patrick will also be speaking at our Conference on Online and Blended Learning in March.

Education Entrepreneurship

When we look nationally, the hotbeds of education reform tend to be concentrated in cities like Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Houston, New Orleans and the Bay Area. We are fortunate to have some leading national reformers operating in Colorado already (e.g., TFA, KIPP, College Summit, Revolution Foods) and several local efforts emerging (Get Smart Schools, West Denver Prep, Envision Schools Colorado, Denver School of Science and Technology). However, school districts and communities are asking for better quality schools and educational programs and at times we lack the capacity here to meet the demand.

So how can we continue to support both established and emerging local entrepreneurs, while at the same time create an environment that will attract more high-quality national entrepreneurs to our state? Donnell-Kay is exploring the concept of a center for education entrepreneurship in Colorado that would focus exclusively on this work. We are having initial conversations about this concept with local and national groups and welcome your thoughts and ideas as well. For more information, contact Amy Anderson.

Get Smart Schools

As we shared in our last newsletter, the University of Denver's Daniels College of Business will incorporate its cutting-edge MBA core curriculum with a specially-designed concentration in education, developed in cooperation with the Morgridge College of Education and Get Smart Schools. We're excited to report that the first cohort of students, designed to train entrepreneurial educators to open and lead schools, will start classes in March 2010. By August of 2012, these students will have completed their MBA, school residencies and had 5-6 months of dedicated planning time to prepare to open or lead schools. We look forward to watching the development of this program and its graduates in the coming months.

Additionally, we are working with Get Smart Schools and other partners to research and develop capacity-building for Chief Financial Officers who will work with new and expanding Charter Management Organizations and new charter schools in the metro area.

Improving Access to High-Quality Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The Finance Project (www.financeproject.org) has begun working on the case studies of the financial sustainability of two local providers to explore the replication of existing models in partnership with charter schools. For more information about this project, please contact Reyna Perez-Oquendo at rperez@dkfoundation.org.

Recent Grants

Our recent grant-making efforts have included support to the Public Education and Business Coalition (\$40,000) for their EdNews Colorado website (www.ednewscolorado.org), the Johns Hopkins University-Center for Social Organization of Schools (\$21,000) and the Boys and Girls Club of Metro Denver (\$10,000). We welcome concept papers on education policy issues from any interested applicants.

As always, we enjoy the opportunity to update you on our work and we value your support and input. For more details about any of our projects, please go to our website, www.dkfoundation.org.

Cheers,

Tony Lewis ▪ Amy Berk Anderson ▪ Kim Knous Dolan ▪ Reyna Perez-Oquendo ▪ Claudia Winkler