

Closing the Achievement Gap Conference

University of Connecticut
Wednesday, May 28 2008

At a Glance

8:00am	Registration & Breakfast	SU- 3rd Floor Atrium
9:00am	Opening Remarks	SU Ballroom
9:15am	Keynote Speaker: Dr. Sonia Nieto	SU Ballroom
10:30am	Session A	304 A, 304 B, 304 C, 318, 319, 320, 325
11:45am	Lunch	SU Ballroom
1:00pm	Session B	304 A, 304 B, 304 C, 317, 318, 319, 320
2:30pm	Session C	304 A, 304 B, 304 C, 317, 318, 319, 320, 325
3:45pm	End of Conference	

Schedule

**8:00am Registration & Breakfast-
SU 3rd Floor Atrium**

**9:00am Opening Remarks-
SU Ballroom**

**9:15am Keynote: Dr. Sonia Nieto -
SU Ballroom**



Dr. Sonia Nieto

Sonia Nieto is Professor Emeritus of Language, Literacy, and Culture, School of Education at the University of Massachusetts.

Dr. Nieto's scholarly work has focused on multicultural and bilingual education, curriculum reform, teacher education, Puerto Rican children's literature, the education of Latinos, immigrants, other culturally and linguistically diverse student populations.

She has received many awards for her research and advocacy, including the Educator of the Year Award from NAME, the National Association for Multicultural Education (1997), the 2005 Outstanding Educator from the National Council of Teachers of English, the 2006 Enrique T. Trueba Lifetime Achievement Award for Scholarship, Mentorship, and Service, and two awards from the American Educational Research Association (AERA) at the 2006 annual meeting.

10:30am Session A

CommPACT Schools: Connecticut's Collaborative Approach to Meeting the Needs of Urban Learners

"Featured Session"

*Eugene Chasin, University of Connecticut;
John Yrchik, Connecticut Education Association;
Sharon Palmer, American Federation of Teachers,
CT & Dave Larsen, Connecticut Association of
Public School Superintendents*

Room 304 B

Using Standards, Best Practices, and Formative Assessment Strategies to Promote Academic Progress and Deep Understanding for All Learners

Deborah Burns, Cheshire (CT) Public Schools
Room 304 A

Practical Strategies for Turning Around The Pedagogy of Purgatory Through High-End Learning Opportunities, Resources, and Encouragement

Joseph Renzulli, University of Connecticut
Room 304 C

Project M³: Mentoring Mathematical Minds: Closing the Achievement Gap for Mathematically Promising Elementary Students

M. Katherine Gavin, Tutita Casa, & Jill Adelson, University of Connecticut
Room 325

Closing the Vocabulary Gap in the Primary Grades: Supporting Vocabulary Development within a Response to Intervention Framework

Michael Coyne, University of Connecticut
Room 318

Comprehension Instruction after 4th Grade: What does RtI look like in a Middle School?

Michael Faggella-Luby, University of Connecticut
Room 319

Deconstructing Disinformation and Media Spin on the Role and Impact of Minorities in the 2008 Presidential Election: A Critical Thinking Challenge

Thomas Goodkind, University of Connecticut & Elizabeth Rowell, Rhode Island College
Room 320

11:45am Lunch - SU Ballroom

1:00pm Session B

**Changing the Curriculum Paradigm from Remedial to Rigorous
“Featured Session”**

Margaret Beecher, Bugbee Elementary School
Room 304 B

Creative and Humorous Ways to Teach Math Without the Use of Worksheets
Rachel McAnallen, University of Connecticut
Room 304 A

School Funding and the Achievement Gap
Dianne deVries & Panelists, Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding
Room 304 C

Strategies for Engaging All Learners: Closing the Achievement Gap through Academic Motivation
Jason Stephens, University of Connecticut
Room 317

Implementing Early Reading Intervention: Marshalling the Resources
Sharon Ware, Athena Lentini, Chrissy Civetelli, & Michael Coyne, University of Connecticut
Room 318

Realizing the Vision of Two-Way Immersion: Fostering Effective Programs and Classroom
Elizabeth Howard, University of Connecticut
Room 319

Readers' Theatre in the Social Studies & Language Arts Classroom
John Zack, University of Connecticut
Room 320

2:30pm Session C

“We are not the problem”: Urban Youth Researchers Respond to the Achievement Gap
“Featured Session”

Jason Irizarry & Students from Project FUERTE, The University of Connecticut
Room 304 B

Approaches to Increase Inquiry in the Science Classroom
Jeanette Day, Eastern Connecticut State University

Learn How to Address the Achievement Gap by Offering 10th Graders the Class, United States History Through the African American Experience

Tracey Wilson & Susan Stefanowicz, Conard High School

Room 317

Music: The Offering of Equity, Empowerment, and Promise for Learning
Linda Neelly, University of Connecticut
Room 318

Mandating Reform versus Empowering Teacher Communities: The Promise and Pitfalls of Two Approaches to Better Serving all students
Thomas Levine, University of Connecticut
Room 304 C

Closing the Achievement Gap for Second Language Learners
John Leach, University of Connecticut
Room 325

Supporting Literacy Engagement for Upper Elementary and Middle Grade Students
Susannah Richards, Eastern Connecticut State University
Room 304 A

School based research: Closing the Achievement Gap for ELLs through Mathematics and through Parent Involvement.
Eliana Rojas & Panelists: Normaliz Acosta, Yusomil Bonet, Christina Burdzy, Ivan Flores, Joanie Landrum, Ana Davila and Margarita Martinez, University of Connecticut
Room 319

*** This session discussions will be delivered in two languages – Spanish and English

For session abstracts please see pages 4– 9.

Session Abstracts

9:15am Keynote- SU Ballroom

Come hear our Keynoter talk about her research.

10:30am Session A

“Featured Session”

CommPACT Schools: Connecticut’s Collaborative Approach to Meeting the Needs of Urban Learners

Eugene Chasin, The University of Connecticut;
John Yrchik, Connecticut Education Association;
Sharon Palmer, American Federation of Teachers, CT & *Dave Larsen*, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents

Room 304 B

In this presentation, a panel including superintendents, administrative partners, and university partners will talk about this new, exciting, and promising initiative for closing the achievement gap. For the first time nationally, stakeholders have signed off on a common agenda for urban school reform known as the CommPACT Schools. Through mutual agreement, these schools will be given considerable autonomy in areas such as governance, budgeting, and curriculum along with greater accountability for increased student achievement. Special focus will be given to closing the achievement gap and stemming the increase of schools facing sanctions under NCLB.

Using Standards, Best Practices, and Formative Assessment Strategies to Promote Academic Progress and Deep Understanding for All Learners

Deborah Burns, Cheshire (CT) Public Schools

Room 304 A

NCLB legislation created a ripple effect across most of America’s classrooms. As a result, many of us are searching for practical, effective lessons and techniques for raising the achievement of all learners. During this session participants will consider and discuss several key features of lesson and units plans designed to promote

academic progress for diverse students. We will: a) review strategies for identifying essential concepts and skills within our standards state-ments; b) examine a variety of ways to incorporate constructivist learning principles in our teaching and learning tasks; c) discuss practical preassessment and formative assessment techniques; and d) consider the important role that social learning, coaching, feedback, explicit teaching, choice, challenge, and authentic resources and tasks play in enhancing achievement, student motivation, and learning effort.

Practical Strategies for Turning Around the Pedagogy of Purgatory through High-End Learning Opportunities, Resources, and Encouragement

Joseph Renzulli, University of Connecticut

Room 304 C

The achievement gap is essentially the result of an opportunity gap that exists between schools that serve different SES groups. Our research has shown that that the pedagogy we developed for "gifted" students has consistently produced achievement gains when applied through a school wide enrichment model that promotes high levels of engagement and enjoyment in learning for all students.

Project M3: Mentoring Mathematical Minds: Closing the Achievement Gap for Mathematically Promising Elementary Students

M. Katherine Gavin, Tutita Casa, & Jill Adelson, University of Connecticut

Room 325

Project M3: Mentoring Mathematical Minds is a six-year research and curriculum grant designed to narrow the gap in mathematics achievement for students with talent potential from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, second-language learners and minorities. Challenging, motivational units have been written and field tested in schools of varying socio-economic status. Achievement results show highly significant gains from pre to post testing and between comparison and intervention groups. In addition, students from lower SES schools have made greater growth than

students from higher SES schools. Practical strategies on implementing high-end curriculum, raising expectations for all students and helping teachers recognize and nurture math talent will be shared.

Closing the Vocabulary Gap in the Primary Grades: Supporting Vocabulary Development within a Response to Intervention Framework

Michael Coyne, University of Connecticut
Room 318

Children come to school with important differences in vocabulary knowledge and this vocabulary gap only grows larger and more discrepant in the early grades. This session will examine the achievement gap in vocabulary knowledge and present evidence-based instructional strategies for supporting vocabulary development for the range of learners in both classroom instruction and targeted intervention. These strategies were developed and evaluated as part of two multi-year program of research funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Results of this research indicate that the vocabulary gap is substantial and extremely difficult to counteract. However, this research also suggests that through intensive multi-tiered support, all children can develop deep and full vocabulary knowledge.

Comprehension Instruction after 4th Grade: What does RtI look like in a Middle School?

Michael Faggella-Luby, University of Connecticut
Room 319

Research findings will be presented related to the efficacy and response to intervention (RtI) of three different Tier-Two literacy interventions in an urban middle school. Results inform practitioner knowledge of best practice in support classroom literacy intervention instruction, summative and progress measure application, and suggestions for making student placement decisions. Recent proliferations of multi-tier RtI theoretical frameworks are dramatically impacting service delivery at the elementary school level. Unfortunately, far less is known about RtI in middle and high schools (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007). Specifically, secondary practitioners seek greater knowledge related to (1) school-wide implementation of Tier-One interventions,

(2) summative and progress monitoring measures to make decisions about student placement in, and response to, Tier-Two interventions, (3) the nature of Tier-Two instructional practices, including, instructional intensity, emphasis, and specificity, and (4) practical suggestions for making decisions about exiting students from Tier-Two instruction back to Tier One. The purpose of this research study was to compare the efficacy and response to intervention of three different Tier-Two interventions in a middle school with a school-wide Tier-One literacy program.

Deconstructing Disinformation and Media Spin on the Role and Impact of Minorities in the 2008 Presidential Election:

A Critical Thinking Challenge

Thomas Goodkind, University of Connecticut & *Elizabeth Rowell*, Rhode Island College

Room 320

Session focuses on the growing trend towards disseminating disinformation and news media spin in discussing and depicting minorities and their role and influence in the 2008 Presidential election. Explores the important challenge to teachers, students, and the public to critically examine such information. Session includes brief background of disinformation and media spin; a multimedia presentation of classic and recent examples; hands-on reflective activities deconstructing media samples; and discussion and tie-ins with participants' interests.

1:00pm Session B

“Featured Session”

Changing the Curriculum Paradigm from Remedial to Rigorous

Margaret Beecher, Bugbee Elementary School
Room 304 B

This presentation will focus on a school’s eight-year educational journey that resulted in dramatically reducing the achievement gap between rich and poor and different ethnic groups. A unique approach to this pervasive problem that shifted an elementary school from a remedial paradigm to a rigorous curriculum with the strength-based methodology of school wide enrichment teaching and learning will be presented. The following essential elements of this successful approach will be highlighted: the vision, the leader’s role, strategic planning, the development of an enriched and differentiated curriculum, high expectations for all children, data based decision making, formative assessments, teacher and student accountability and effective staff development.

Creative and Humorous Ways to Teach Math Without the Use of Worksheets

Rachel McAnallen, University of Connecticut
Room 304 A

This workshop is designed to use place value as a tool to understand the four basic arithmetic operations. Using a monetary approach and calling numbers by their correct place value names, the participants will find many creative and humorous ways to teach the basic math concepts. Developmental theory, multiple intelligences and different learning styles will be emphasized which should enable teachers help all students, including those who are dyslexic and math anxious, to understand math concepts from the concrete stages to the abstract. The final outcome of the workshop is to understand that arithmetic is answering the question whereas mathematics is questioning the answer. Participants should come prepared to laugh and play with math.

School Funding and the Achievement Gap

Dianne deVries & Panelists, Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding
Room 304 C

What role does inadequate and inequitable school funding have in explaining the achievement gap? Inherent tensions between the fiscal capacity of school districts and the urgent need to implement policies and programs aimed at closing the gap will be discussed, together with recent developments in the education adequacy/equity lawsuit brought against the state by the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding.

Strategies for Engaging All Learners: Closing the Achievement Gap through Academic Motivation

Jason Stephens, University of Connecticut
Room 317

The sources of the achievement gap are numerous and complex, and the cause of much debate among scholars and policy-makers. The proposed session avoids such debates and focuses squarely on effective strategies for enhancing the academic engagement and achievement of all students. While some attention is paid to individual and cultural differences, this session emphasizes broadly applicable principles and practices relevant for all grade levels and in all cultural settings. Particular attention is paid to strategies for fostering students’ intrinsic motivation to learn by creating mastery-oriented learning environment that offer multiple opportunities for the development and expression of competence, autonomy and relatedness*.

*Deci, E., & Ryan, R. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Academic Press.

Implementing Early Reading Intervention: Marshalling the Resources

Sharon Ware, Athena Lentini, Chrissy Civetelli, & Michael Coyne, University of Connecticut
Room 318

One of the most consistent and consequential findings to emerge from extensive research in beginning reading is that the trajectory of reading success or failure begins early in a child's educational experience. There is widespread agreement that a preventive approach to reading difficulties is more effective in closing the reading achievement gap than trying to remediate difficulties once students fall behind, and before negative reading trajectories become intractable. This session will present information about how several Connecticut school districts have implemented early reading interventions and will offer suggestions for managing the school-based challenges of implementing successful intervention programs.

Realizing the Vision of Two-Way Immersion: Fostering Effective Programs and Classroom

Elizabeth Howard, University of Connecticut
Room 319

This presentation will highlight a new book from Liz Howard and Julie Sugarman. *Realizing the vision of two-way immersion: Fostering effective programs and classrooms*. Drawing on ten years of research, the authors illustrate how the cultures of intellectualism, equity and leadership reinforce positive instructional practices at four effective TWI schools.

Readers' Theatre in the Social Studies & Language Arts Classroom

John Zack, University of Connecticut
Room 320

In order to close the achievement gap we need to find methods that work in inclusive classrooms and in increasingly diverse settings. Readers' theatre offers educators a medium that addresses these vital needs. This session will introduce readers' theatre as a teaching method in the humanities. The method serves inclusive classrooms for it allows for students from a wide range of abilities to participate in recreating significant literary and historical events. It is multicultural for it allows teachers and students to explore in depth people and events typically ignored in traditional text. Rees and DiPillo (2006) report that sixth graders using readers' theatre in their social studies classroom expressed 1) an increased interest and enjoyment with the content, 2) increased retention of historic information, and 3) an ability to connect personally with people and places from the past.

2:30pm Session C

"Featured Session"

"We are not the problem": Urban Youth Researchers Respond to the Achievement Gap

Jason Irizarry & Students from Project *FUERTE*, The University of Connecticut
Room 304 B

In this presentation, student researchers from Project *FUERTE* (Future Urban Educators conducting Research to inform Teacher Education), and Dr. Jason G. Irizarry will share the findings from their year-long research projects exploring the ways that power and opportunity are manifested in urban schools. Instead of being positioned as the "problem" within school reform efforts, urban youth participating in this project serve as researchers developing and delivering empirically-based recommendations to enhance the professional development of teachers and administrators.

Approaches to Increase Inquiry in the Science Classroom

Jeanelle Day, Eastern Connecticut State University
Room 320

Inquiry – a seven letter word that needlessly spreads fear through many educators, particularly in the elementary science classroom. Loss of teacher control, and lack of student ability and/or time are typical reasons that many teachers say that inquiry cannot work in their classroom. This workshop will dispel some of the myths about inquiry and give practical approaches to move students from simple scientific activities to inquiry in a few easy steps. In this session, participants will analyze common science activities at various grade levels to determine how to best move students toward inquiry and increased scientific thinking ability.

Learn How to Address the Achievement Gap by Offering 10th Graders the Class, United States History Through the African American Experience

Tracey Wilson & Susan Stefanowicz, Conard High School
Room 317

This pilot program is offered to 10th graders at Conard High School in West Hartford and has created high interest and active learning among minority students. This workshop explores co-teaching with a Reading Specialist, the use of a college level text, document-based writing assessments, and the social aspects of being a scholar. Participants will grapple with content material and literacy strategies that have been successful over the past school year.

Music: The Offering of Equity, Empowerment, and Promise for Learning
Linda Neelly, University of Connecticut
Room 318

The experience of music involves the powerful intermingling of sound, thought, feeling, and action. In this presentation, I will demonstrate ways in which the experience of music can assist us in closing the achievement gap for all children. Relevant research based understandings and practical examples will focus on the following topics: genetic musical capacity as an equitable centerpiece for learning; relevant music-brain research; music as a powerful/prevalent cognitive/cultural endeavor; connections among music other learning domains; suggestions for best practice, including environmental forces.

Mandating Reform versus Empowering Teacher Communities: The Promise and Pitfalls of Two Approaches to Better Serving all Students
Thomas Levine, University of Connecticut
Room 304 C

To better meet the needs of traditionally underserved students, some district and school leaders undertake prescriptive interventions which control teacher practice, curriculum, or school routines, measuring linear progress towards a fixed endpoint, i.e., 100% fidelity of implementation of some mandated reform. Other schools empower collaborative teacher groups to undertake multiple “trajectories” of less linear learning. This session discusses the comparative advantages and disadvantages of both approaches, and considers their complementarity. We then address the promise and problems of teacher collaboration, considering what kinds of teacher communities and collaboration are most likely to improve schooling for traditionally underserved groups of students.

Closing the Achievement Gap for Second Language Learners

John Leach, University of Connecticut
Room 325

This interactive presentation will identify and discuss strategies and initiatives to eliminate the gap between learners. Special attention will be given to students with TESOL and ESOL needs. There will be specific recommendations to attain the desired goal - eliminating the gap between learners.

Supporting Literacy Engagement for Upper Elementary and Middle Grade Students

Susannah Richards, Eastern Connecticut State University
Room 304 A

What are the qualities of a reading and language arts program that supports literacy engagement? This session will explore strategies and resources to create an environment that supports the development of lifetime and not schooltime readers and writers. Using the work of Stephanie Harvey, Lucy Caulkins, Joseph Renzulli, Carol Ann Tomlinson and others for a foundation, this approach emphasizes a reading and language arts classroom where students want to read and write. The focus will be on building on students' interests to create opportunities to explore writing and reading experiences in a variety of genres including graphic novels, poetry and nonfiction. Sample learning experiences and suggested materials will be shared and used to model high level differentiated curriculum for upper elementary and middle grade students that replicates the qualities of lifetime readers and writers.

School based research: Closing the achievement gap for ELLs through Mathematics and through Parent Involvement.

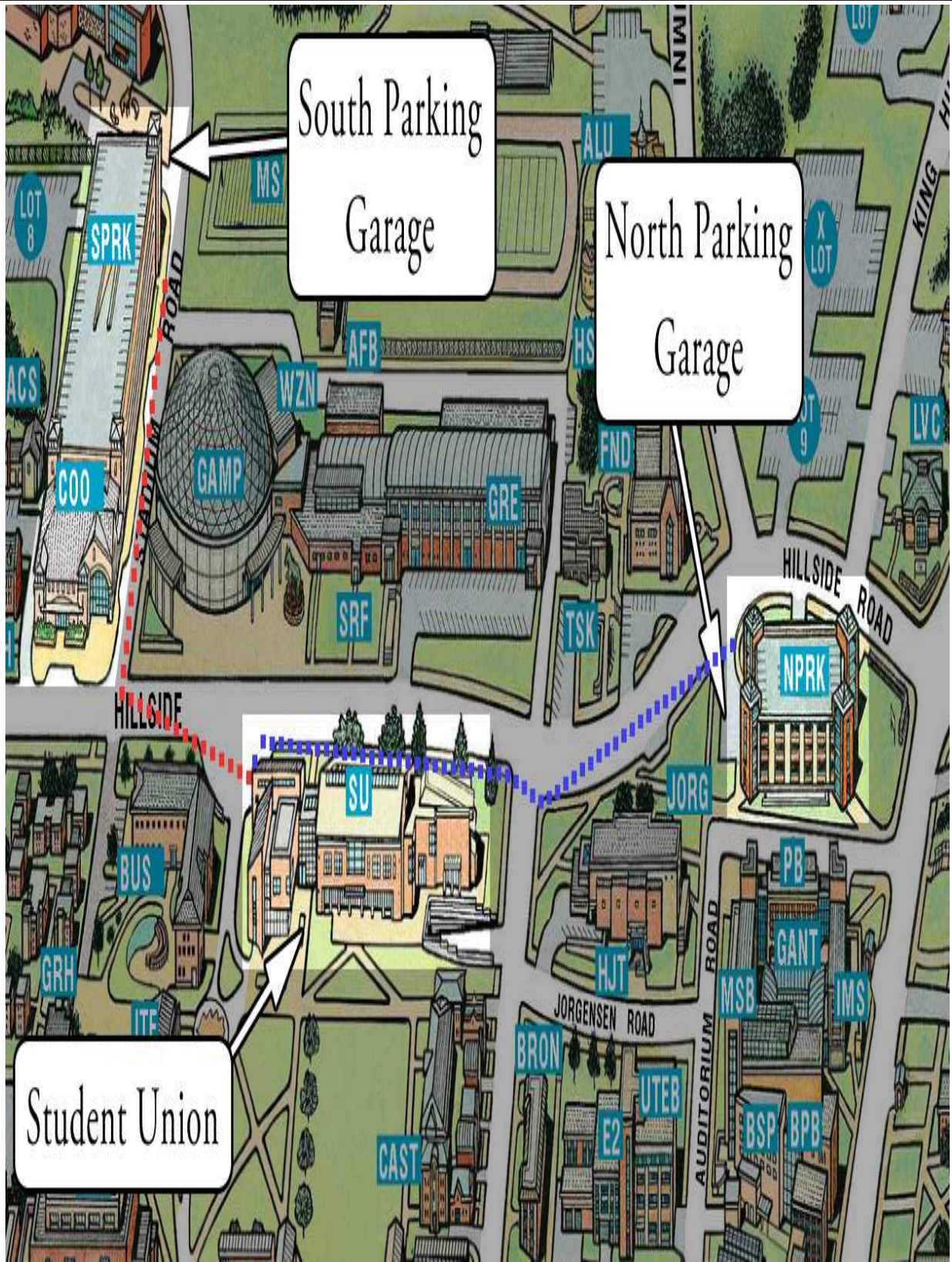
Eliana Rojas & Panelists: Normaliz Acosta, Yusomil Bonet, Christina Burdzy, Ivan Flores, Joanie Landrum, Ana Davila and Margarita Martinez, University of Connecticut
Room 319

In this session, the panelists who are grantees from the Raising Expectations for All Language Learners (REALL) grant will share findings from research conducted for one of their graduate

courses. Acosta and Bonet interviewed students, parents and teachers about their understanding of parent involvement and their experiences in a Middle school setting as compared to their prior experiences in other settings. They will share responses related to barriers identified and recommendations on what would facilitate more parent involvement. Burdzy, Flores and Landrum examined placement practices and opportunities for English Language Learners (ELLs) in a High School. Their findings shed light on the structural and institutional practices that exclude ELLs from high level math courses that are critical for accessing higher education. Panelists will discuss how the findings from their research affected their individual practices and understandings of what needs to be done from where they stand as counselor, math teacher, ELL transition teacher (HS), Newcomer Transition teacher, and bilingual teacher (Middle School) and the steps they have taken to benefit their students.

**** This session discussions will be delivered in two languages – Spanish and English*

Helpful Map



Parking Information

The Closing the Achievement gap Conference will be held in the Student Union. The nearest visitor parking is in the South Garage located adjacent to the Gampel Pavilion.

South Parking Garage:

- ◆ On North Eagleville Road, at second stoplight, turn left onto North Hillside Road
- ◆ Follow North Hillside Road (you will pass the Student Union on your left, Gampel Pavilion is on right).
- ◆ Turn right onto Stadium Road. Garage entrance will be on left.
- ◆ From South Parking Garage, walk back down Stadium Road toward Hillside Road
- ◆ Turn left onto Hillside Road
- ◆ The Student Union will be on the right side of the road, across from the Field House

***** Please bring your parking tickets to validate them.**

Neag School of Education Information

We thank you for attending this conference! As many of these presentations demonstrate, Neag School faculty, representing many disciplines, are working on “Closing the Achievement Gap” and appreciate this opportunity to share their research with you.

Whether it is through teaching, research, counseling, mentoring or learning, Neag School faculty and students touch more than 70 percent of Connecticut’s communities and hundreds of schools around the world.

We’ve built a solid reputation for training bright, highly-skilled educators, researchers and community leaders dedicated to improving education and health for children and adults. According to the latest U.S. News & World Report rankings, four of the Neag School’s core programs are ranked in the top 20. This makes us the top public graduate school of education in the Northeast and on the East Coast. Our doctoral program in kinesiology is ranked #1 in the country by the American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education.

Teacher education and exercise science are just two of the programs upon which we’ve built our reputation. Special education, gifted and talented, literacy and technology, education policy, educational psychology, student affairs, and measurement, evaluation and assessment are programs of excellence recognized for high levels of research productivity and graduating outstanding students who are leaders in their respective fields.

We are also home to two federally designated centers, the National Research Center for the Gifted and Talented and the Center for Behavioral Interventions & Supports, and are the base of operations for two national comprehensive school reform programs -- Accelerated Schools PLUS and ATLAS Communities.

We invite you to check our website to find out more about how our research centers and programs might benefit your school district. Please go to www.education.uconn.edu. A comprehensive list of our graduate programs can be found on the following page.

Thank you!

Neag School of Education Programs

Curriculum & Instruction

Teacher Preparation Programs

- Integrated Bachelor's/Master's (IB/M)
- Teacher Certification Program for College Graduates
- Master's Programs
- Ph. D. Programs
- Bilingual Bicultural Education

Educational Leadership

Adult Learning

- The Master's Program in Adult Learning
- The Doctoral Program in Adult Learning

Educational Administration

- University of Connecticut Administrator Preparation Program (UCAPP)
- Executive Leadership Program for Prospective School Superintendents
- Ed. D Program in Educational Leadership Higher Education
- Master's Program in Student Affairs

Educational Psychology

Cognition & Instruction

- The Master's Program in Cognition and Instruction
- The Sixth Year Program in Cognition and Instruction
- The Doctoral Program in Cognition and Instruction

School Counseling

- The Master's Program in School Counseling
- The Sixth Year Program in School Counseling
- The Doctoral Program in School Counseling
- The Three Summers On-line Sixth Year Diploma

Gifted & Talented

- Doctoral Program
- The Three Summers Master's Program
- Regular Master's Program
- The Three Summers On-line Masters' Program
- The Three Summers Sixth Year Diploma
- Regular Sixth Year Diploma

Learning Technology

- Two Summers Master's Programs
- Doctoral Program

Measurement, Evaluation and Assessment

- Master's Program
- Doctoral Program

School Psychology

- The Master of Arts/Sixth Year Program
- The Doctoral Program in School Psychology

Special Education

- Integrated Bachelor's/Master's Program
- Teacher Certification for College Graduates Program
- Master's Program
- Sixth Year Program
- Ph. D. Program

Kinesiology

- Athletic Training
- Exercise Science
- Sport Management & Sociology