Making Connections
learning with and from each other
Letter From the Director

Now more than ever, everyone involved in the educational process—school leaders, teachers, parents, and students—must support one another to navigate the complicated terrain of education today. We face new cultural and political challenges, all too familiar struggles with limited resources, and extensive demands that are rooted in both local needs and national mandates like the No Child Left Behind Act. We must provide equal opportunities for all students to succeed in school, so that young people from coast to coast can meet high educational standards and become well-rounded individuals, able to share their unique talents with our nation.

For over 25 years, The Education Alliance has helped the education community make significant strides in meeting its goals for school improvement. One way we support the process is by making connections that build the capacity of policymakers, leaders, and teachers to improve their schools—connecting individual educators with networks so they can share and build their knowledge, connecting research and practice so educators can make sound decisions, connecting our work with the specific needs of our constituents, so we can make a lasting difference in the lives of students. By making connections, and learning with and from each other, we believe that we can advance equity and excellence in education for all students.

“Over the years I have found the resources available through the LAB (a program of The Education Alliance) to be informative, instructive, and based in solid, professional research. I have also found the staff of the LAB to be an excellent resource.”

Principal, Secondary School, Vermont
Since its inception in 1975, The Education Alliance has had an unwavering focus on issues of equity and diversity. Stemming from work in cultural and linguistic studies at Brown University, we began as a federally funded program assisting second language educators in New England. Our work received national recognition and support to conduct applied research and technical assistance that targeted race and gender issues, as well as language and culture. As we expanded, we have remained responsive to the increasing diversity in the nation’s public schools. In 1994, The Education Alliance became a university department, reflecting Brown’s ongoing commitment to public education.

The Education Alliance maintains strong connections to other departments at Brown, allowing for a rich exchange of ideas, resources, and opportunities. With the Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, we offer a joint Master’s Degree Program in Bilingual Education/English as a Second Language (ESL) and Cross-Cultural Studies. We also work closely with the Education Department, Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences Department, and other university-based education reform initiatives, such as the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and the A. Alfred Taubman Center for Public Policy and American Institutions.

Over the years, our work has evolved to include applied research, development, and consultations for practitioners and policymakers around the nation. We currently administer over 40 separate grants and contracts, ranging in size from short-term planning grants to multimillion dollar applied research and development programs. We receive funding from federal, state, and local education agencies, as well as foundations and corporations. We work with diverse constituents, from local unions to regional legislators, from national policymakers to international governments. Our work extends from secondary school redesign in Rhode Island to standards-based reform in the Virgin Islands. The demand for our services has increased over 35% in the past year alone. As we grow, we are vigilant about maintaining the quality and integrity of all our work.

From tackling broad research questions and policy concerns to offering practical guidance for school leaders and teachers, The Education Alliance continues to make a real difference in the lives of educational leaders, teachers, and students. This publication highlights recent projects that reflect some of our accomplishments and our commitment to improving public education.

Dr. Adeline Becker
Executive Director
Mission

The Education Alliance at Brown University promotes educational change to provide all students with equitable opportunities to succeed.

With our main focus on issues of equity and diversity, we advocate for populations whose access to excellent education has been limited or denied.

Who We Are

For over 25 years, The Education Alliance, a department at Brown University, has helped the education community to improve America’s schools. We provide applied research, technical assistance, and informational resources to connect research and practice, build knowledge and skills, and meet critical needs in the field.

With offices in Rhode Island, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, and a dedicated team of over 100 skilled professionals, collaborators, and partners, we provide services and resources to K–12 schools and districts across the country and beyond.

Our work makes connections to a national and global audience. For example, the Alliance is currently conducting an extensive evaluation of six comprehensive school reform models in over 80 schools from Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Virginia. And, our online services and publications have become vital resources for educators worldwide.

Several of our programs are designed exclusively to meet constituent needs in the Northeast region. For example, The Equity Assistance Center supports the anti-discrimination efforts of schools in New England. The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB) works with educators, parents, and community leaders to implement reforms that meet the needs of the 5.7 million students in New England, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.
What We Do

Committed to making a long-term difference in the lives of students, we work with teachers, administrators, parents, communities, and policymakers to

- build collaborative partnerships,
- advance professional development,
- apply best practices and research, and
- share resources and information.

Through adaptable and multifaceted programs and services, we provide

- technical assistance,
- applied research,
- evaluations,
- consultation,
- short- and long-term training,
- networking and mentoring opportunities,
- conferences, and
- multimedia products and online resources.

“The LAB continues to be a great resource in terms of current and future educational issues. The information provided at PLN meetings and summits continues to encourage me as an educational leader. It’s good to know that a great support system exists and functions for, by, and of principals.”

Participant, Principals’ Leadership Network Annual Summit, 2002
Our diverse portfolio of offerings reflects our ability to tackle complex problems and assist low-performing schools.

In an effort to connect research and practice, we use our expertise to apply evidence-based information to the specific needs of our constituents. We assess needs, offer options, and respond with comprehensive, innovative programs and services.

Our goals are to transform and inform policy and practice and to build the capacity of schools, districts, school leaders, and teachers to make America’s schools excellent and equitable.

Collaborating with schools and districts, we develop solutions to critical educational problems in such areas as:

- Secondary school restructuring
- Educational leadership
- Professional development
- Research and evaluation
- Literacy
- First and second language acquisition
- Cultural and linguistic diversity

**Contact Us**

To learn more about what we can offer you, contact us at 1-800-521-9550 or visit our Web site at [http://www.alliance.brown.edu/](http://www.alliance.brown.edu/).
Highlights
From Our Work
Leaders helping leaders

Our work helps leaders at every level of the education system identify ways to solve problems together. We focus on improving instructional practice and student achievement, especially in systems where there are large numbers of low-performing schools and children living in poverty. We facilitate better communication and understanding among state education agencies, districts, support organizations, and leaders in the school community. In this story, we show how superintendents exchange knowledge with their peers through our Superintendents’ Leadership Council.

**Superintendents Focus on Instructional Issues**

Inspiration struck Connecticut superintendents Patrick Proctor and Mary Jo Kramer at the 13th Annual Superintendents’ Leadership Institute in May of 2001. Sponsored in part by The Education Alliance at Brown University, the institute featured Dr. Richard Elmore, a Harvard education professor, talking about how everyone involved in school change needs to focus on instructional improvement—including the superintendent.

Proctor and Kramer, both board members of the Alliance’s Superintendents’ Leadership Council, decided to act. With the help of the Alliance’s head of superintendents’ initiatives, John Correiro, they formed a study group in which superintendents discuss how to focus reform on instructional issues.

“We are operating under the assumption that the superintendent has a key role to play in promoting and effecting system-wide change,” says

“I am grateful for the [way the Alliance uses its] resources to address critical issues in schooling and to phrase findings and conclusions in such a way that they are truly useful to practitioners.”

Superintendent, Vermont

When I meet with the group, it recharges my battery and helps me deal with the next new thing coming down the pike.”

Principal, Massachusetts
Proctor. “And that it’s not just change for change’s sake but change that is squarely focused on student achievement and improving instruction.”

Many of the superintendents had been grappling with these issues for some time. But, the study group, backed by the Connecticut Center for School Change, offered a more specific way to get to the heart of the matter in each of their districts—classroom observations and discussions with peers about what they saw.

“We talk a lot about principals becoming instructional leaders,” says Correiro. “Well, superintendents need to be instructional leaders, too. And they’re never going to do that unless they get into the classrooms.”

Dr. Elmore, who agreed to facilitate the group’s discussions, convinced the superintendents to open their districts for observation. The superintendents in the group established a mission, visit protocols, and a problem identification framework based on Elmore’s theories of leadership for instructional improvement. The framework, to be filled out by the district superintendent, identifies the problem, its relationship to the theme of leadership capacity for instructional improvement, and specific evidence of the problem.

Subgroups of the team then examined the problem statement, visited a chosen school in the district, and took notes on instruction, student engagement, and the school environment. During these visits, they spent 15–20 minutes in each classroom and also met with the schools’ literacy teams. They kept their observations focused on what was seen and heard in the classrooms, avoiding editorial comments and concentrating on relationships and what the students were supposed to be learning.

“They needed to look at the level of intensity of instructional practice in the schools,” says Elmore, “and then decide whether you can expect that level of practice to produce the kind of achievement you are looking for.”

The group also took the time to debrief with the staff and the principal at each school. “Teachers were obviously nervous at first,” says Proctor. “But then they realized that this was not judgmental. We were engaged in reflective inquiry and we let them know everything we were doing. It was not enough to just observe. It was very important for us to hear from the practitioners firsthand.”

The information the superintendents gained from these visits, including examples of student work and paraprofessional roles, led to several deep discussions about instructional issues. They began to pinpoint the differences in practice from room to room and subject to subject.

“There is excellent practice out there, but the variability in quality of practice among
classrooms is substantial,” says Proctor. “We are looking at how to reduce that and how to direct instruction toward what we know to be effective practices.”

But, Proctor says, those effective practices often differ from subject to subject, and schools need a common language for identifying strategies that work in each area and replicating them in their own settings. For this purpose the group is now working on a common understanding of what effective practice looks like for literacy.

“Before, I was struggling with trying to focus on student achievement,” says Kathleen Binkowski, a superintendent from central Connecticut. “These visitations gave us something concrete. We were all looking through the same lens.

It sends a message to the entire district that this is important.”

Proctor agrees. “I now do my job much more directed toward the classroom, whereas before I saw my job as one of orchestration, coordination, and guidance,” he says. “Now, I’m much more engaged in replicating on the local level what’s happening in our group.”

Formed a little less than two years ago, the group has already visited districts from rural, urban, and suburban settings throughout Connecticut. And three more districts are set to join the group in the next year.

“I have watched the level of talk change over the course of a year,” says Dr. Elmore. “The conversations have gotten more specific, more problem-centered. People are much more candid and analytic. Instead of just taking a position, they’re asking questions and then speaking from the evidence.”

Both Binkowski and Proctor credit Dr. Elmore’s guidance with pushing their thinking on school reform and instruction to higher levels. But they also believe that the rare opportunity to share collegial discussion with their peers has contributed to the success of the group. This is somewhat uncharted territory, they say, and the whole group is gaining new insight together.

“Superintendents in Connecticut have a retreat every year and the state has conferences,” says Binkowski. “But this is very focused and ongoing. This is the kind of continuous professional development you want to see in education.”
Future teachers find support

To increase the number and quality of teachers certified to teach English language learners, we help pre-service and in-service teachers complete the teacher preparation process and get placement in public school classrooms. Our Career Ladder Initiative, for example, addresses the shortage of teachers with Southeast Asian and Latino backgrounds credentialed to teach English language learners (ELLs) in Rhode Island. As this story shows, Career Ladder participants value the academic advisement, tutoring, tuition assistance, and opportunities to network with other educators.

“I am extremely thankful for the wonderful opportunities that Proyecto Vital [part of the Career Ladder Initiative] has given to each one of us. It has not been easy for me to work and go to school part-time. The motivation I have to succeed comes from the staff who are willing to listen. They take the time to support each of us. I want to continue to be the best that I can. This program has given me the chance to believe in myself—to follow my dreams!”

Participant, Career Ladder Initiative

Career Ladder: Teachers Rise to the Challenge

Sinaun Touch remembers what it was like to learn English for the first time in a classroom, and she appreciates the importance of a teacher’s sensitivity to a child’s learning. “I had two particular teachers who inspired me,” recalls Touch, whose family came to the U.S. from Cambodia when she was 11. “I remember they were very understanding, and they made learning English fun for me. That has always stayed with me.”

Now a participant in The Education Alliance’s Career Ladder initiative, Touch is pursuing a lifelong dream of becoming a teacher. She wants to carry her own life experiences into the classroom to show minority children that language and culture do not have to be barriers to success, but rather that they are assets contributing to a richer, more diverse society. Touch got her first taste of the classroom as a volunteer teaching citizenship/ESL classes at the Socioeconomic
Development Center for the Southeast Asian Community. “I saw the students’ faces light up when I taught them something new, and from then on I just knew I would teach.”

Touch is one of 50 participants currently enrolled in the Career Ladder Initiative, which provides resources and assistance to selected members of the Southeast Asian and Latino communities who are becoming certified to teach English language learners in Rhode Island public schools. The initiative supports prospective teachers’ access to teacher preparation courses, academic success in pre-service training, and placement in school districts. It also provides ongoing academic and financial support for in-service bilingual teachers’ professional study and networking across school districts. “I have all those people helping me academically,” says Touch, who holds a full-time job in addition to her studies. “It’s really more than I ever expected.”

The Career Ladder Initiative was founded five years ago in response to a need for increased diversity among teaching staff in Rhode Island. The initial focus of the initiative was the Southeast Asian community in the Providence area, but it has expanded to meet the needs of the Spanish-speaking population across the state because the largest numbers of English language learners in Rhode Island hail from these communities.

Alliance senior specialist Maria Wilson-Portuondo describes why it’s beneficial for a teaching force to reflect its student population. “Research, as well as our experience in schools, validated that the lack of certified bilingual/ESL personnel has led to a lack of understanding of the educational needs of ELLs. In addition, a lack of advocates for ELLs has led to lower expectations, perpetuated myths and stereotypes, and resulted in some inappropriate referrals to special education.”

For candidates whose first language is not English, the barriers to completing a recognized teacher preparation program can be complex and seem insurmountable. According to Wilson-Portuondo, the barriers can include not merely the candidate’s English language proficiency level and cultural background but also the complexity of the higher education system, socioeconomic constraints, lack of academic advisement, and other factors: “It is only when these factors are seen and understood as ongoing and persistent problems that we start to comprehend how easily the most motivated and capable candidate can be derailed from completing their teacher preparation program.”

Career Ladder participants benefit from academic advisement, access to mentors and tutors, workshops designed to develop specific skills, and continuous encouragement.
and support for the sustained effort necessary to achieve their goals. When reviewing the enormous number of Career Ladder applications, Alliance staff Makna Men and Melissa Torres consider a wide range of criteria. Interviews confirm the strength of applicants’ educational backgrounds, motivation, persistence, and commitment to being leaders within their communities.

“The support I get from the project is amazing,” says Yadira Morales, another Career Ladder participant. “I still can’t believe that I am part of a wonderful organization whose support and willingness to help others succeed is truly the opportunity I have been waiting for. I am extremely thankful for being part of this program and for being surrounded by an amazing team.”

Jorge Torres, a native of Colombia, joined the program in 2001. Under the state’s emergency waiver program—which allows degreed professionals to teach in districts with teacher shortages while working towards their certification—he now teaches math at Central Falls High School. With a bachelor’s degree in Mining and Metallurgical Engineering, Torres had worked as a supervisor in coal and gold mines before leaving Colombia. His first exposure to teaching came as a private tutor, and he later began teaching high school equivalency classes at Progreso Latino in Central Falls. Like Sinaun Touch, he feels a responsibility to share the benefit of his experience with the students he teaches.

“I think newcomers or kids who come from immigrant families need someone who understands what they’re going through and who can help keep them motivated to stay in school,” he says. “Besides math, I think I can teach responsibility by being a role model in a way. Sometimes immigrants think that their future is only working in factories, and I would like them to see that there can be more than that.”

That’s a big part of what’s behind the Career Ladder Initiative: giving children a glimpse of their possible futures. “I’m glad this program exists, because at job fairs I go to, the majority of the people I see there are white,” says Touch. “For the younger generation, I want them to see minority people in the professional field. So many kids are dropping out. Some of them try to tell me that they’re not smart enough. And I try to tell them that it’s the effort that matters. I was in their shoes. I don’t want them to give up so easily.”

While there have been bilingual programs for Spanish-speakers, there has never been a bilingual program for Southeast Asian students, despite their 25-year presence in the state. Touch, who received her M.A.T. degree in Teaching English as a Second Language in May 2003, acknowledges that she chose to teach ESL over any other subject for a reason. “My English isn’t perfect either, but I want these kids to look at me and say, ‘If Ms. Sinaun can do it, so can I.’”
High-quality high schools

We believe that high schools should be learning communities that engage all students. To help schools meet their reform goals and foster high standards for all students, we conduct studies, develop resources, and work directly with school staff and other stakeholders. Our Breaking Ranks project, for example, promotes more effective learning environments through such strategies as developing personalized learning plans for students, engaging teachers in collaborative leadership roles, and helping school leaders use data to make strategic decisions. In this story, a Breaking Ranks coach and school staff strategize large-scale change to a smaller learning community in an urban high school.

“Anonymity is the power to rebel,” says Janice Young, an English teacher reflecting on the challenge of educating students in the large urban environment of Roosevelt High School in Yonkers, New York. “When you’re not known to anyone, who’s then there to hold you accountable?”

Like Young, many educators are realizing that schools need to create an alternative environment to the traditional high school, in which students often feel alienated or lost.

Throughout the nation, traditional high schools face extremely high drop-out rates, low scores on international achievement tests, escalating...
incidents of school violence, and students graduating without the skills they need to succeed in the workforce or college—all pointing to the urgent need for high school reform.

But what would an alternative school look like, and how does a community go about creating it? The Education Alliance is guiding teachers and administrators in finding out just how to make this ideal a reality.

At 23 schools in the northeast region, the Breaking Ranks project is helping educators restructure their schools into smaller learning environments that allow students to make a personal connection to their education. When students feel that what they’re learning in school is relevant, they are more likely to attend class, learn skills, improve their test scores, and graduate with confidence.

The Alliance’s approach draws on research from the report Breaking Ranks: Changing An American Institution, which offers a blueprint for an effective American high school. Published in 1996 by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Breaking Ranks has become a guiding force in high school restructuring throughout the nation.

In the Alliance’s Breaking Ranks project, coaches share strategies from the latest research to help school staff develop more effective learning communities. Working with a school change team—comprised of 5 to 10 school staff, the Alliance coach presents workshops on what personalization means and how to make it happen at all levels of the school’s system.

Educators at Roosevelt embarked on a campaign to personalize their programs when the state designated them as a School in Need of Improvement in 2000. The designation pushed staff to closely examine what was not working at the 1600-student, urban school and to consider new ways of working.

“We had to ask ourselves, ‘What can we do to make this work?’” says Principal Bill Moore. “How can we adapt things according to the needs of the kids?”

To achieve the goals of a more personalized environment and smaller learning communities at Roosevelt, the Alliance provided guidance to Moore and his staff. The Alliance coach, Dale Worsley, presented workshops, helped staff map out a four-year school plan, and met regularly with members to discuss progress.

Worsley stressed to the Roosevelt change team that in order to sustain change, the entire system must change. It does not work to change only the schedule, a few classrooms, or even the size of a school.
Nor is it enough to add a new program or outline a fresh set of standards. The nature of personalization requires a broader approach, one in which large-scale transformation grows out of small innovations, and schools adapt existing systems to fit a new set of priorities and values.

"With time, the staff has begun to see how each component fits into the overall picture," says Worsley. "Gradually a sense develops that something larger than any one individual or team is gathering force."

The Alliance has designed a series of workshops to help school change teams understand six major strategies for personalization and plan an approach that will engage people at each level of the system. Each workshop corresponds to one of the six areas the school must change: student engagement, advising and guidance, teaching methods, curriculum design, leadership roles, and community engagement. The workshops help teams examine different perspectives on a given issue, then use research and theory to assert their own organizing purpose.

This process, says Worsley, helps get the entire school community on the same page. "The more staff is involved in the change process, the more they are willing to accept the consequences of change," he says.

The Alliance is in its third year of working with Roosevelt. The first step was collecting and analyzing school data. After reflecting with the coach, the change team found that parent involvement was low and that the school had particularly high rates of suspensions and tardiness. They decided to implement small learning communities, where students would remain together for all academic courses and have common teachers. This set-up allowed for common planning time among teachers with the same students and also created opportunities for parents to meet the people involved in their child's education.

By learning to see how layers of the system interact, a change team, over time, can become skilled in adjusting small parts of the system and preparing the whole structure to support personalized learning. For example, the Roosevelt team learned that its tardiness problems were partially due to problems with public transportation. In response, the school instituted a policy where those students who had difficulty arriving on time began their school day at the start of second period. Not only did tardiness and suspension rates go down, but students' test scores rose.

The move toward personalization also enhanced professional development at Roosevelt. Teachers regularly observe programs at other schools and bring back best practices to share. In addition to serving on the change team, Roosevelt staff members now serve on numerous subcommittees, including a data committee and an "out-of-the-box" committee.

Educators at Roosevelt have learned how important it is to develop a culture in which students and teachers know each other well and value learning. Students at Roosevelt are now graduating with more options and marketable skills. They earn licenses in computer training and public safety, with internships available at local police and fire departments. As part of the initiative to engage the community, students teach courses in English and computer skills to parents on Saturdays.

“For kids who are coming from unstable backgrounds, the stability of the school and our program is something they instinctively crave," says Young. "The school almost becomes a second home. It's the one constant in their lives. If you create a safe haven, you tend to get better results academically.”
Real learning in a virtual classroom

Our online technology resources link information from research and practice and enable educators to learn with and from peers. Ranging from online seminars to award-winning Web sites to innovative e-books, our online resources invite participation in collaborative learning activities that aren’t limited by the school bell. In particular, we are exploring different ways to use the online environment to enhance professional development. This story illustrates how our series of online seminars has connected over 90 math coaches from across the country to learn how to coach teachers more effectively.

“"I live in a fairly rural area and teach in a small school district. The seminar allowed me to do this professional development without traveling and without taking time away from my regular work (my classroom).””

Participant, CESAME Online Seminar

Click and Connect: Online Professional Development

As more schools are exploring how coaching fits within their professional development activities, it is increasingly important to define the dimensions of the role. Coaches may be specialized full-time or part-time staff, or they may be teachers making a career transition to coach. For those moving into the new, complex role of coaching, the transition requires a change in focus—from seeing what’s happening in the classroom with a “teaching eye” to that of a “coaching eye.” What kinds of support do coaches need? What skills are needed for coaching? What coaching strategies are most effective?

“This seminar was a unique opportunity for me because it was so grounded in cases written from recent, real experiences. Participants were regularly encountering similar dilemmas. The interchange of ideas was immediately useful. More than that, though, the conversations let me expand my ideas about coaching. It challenged me in that it forced me to really reflect upon my practice in the classroom working with my teachers.”

Participant, CESAME Online Seminar

A unique resource for coaches, developed to address these issues, is the CESAME online seminar, Leading the
Way: Coaching Teachers Using Investigations. This professional development opportunity has been offered three times so far, through a Web-based network called the CESAME Support Site for Investigations in Number, Data, and Space (http://www.lab.brown.edu/investigations/).

It was developed by the Center for the Enhancement of Science and Mathematics Education at Northeastern University (CESAME) and The Education Alliance at Brown University through support from The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory (LAB). In addition to offering this seminar, the Alliance and CESAME are investigating how online communities can support professional learning.

The seminar is designed to assist coaches who work with elementary school teachers using Investigations in Number, Data, and Space, a standards-based mathematics curriculum. Just as teachers need to deepen their mathematical understanding and adjust their pedagogy to the demands of this curriculum, so too do coaches need to expand their knowledge and repertoire of strategies to support the teachers.

Through each eight-week seminar, 20 coaches from across the country have access to a rich collaborative environment that supports peer-to-peer learning. Facilitated by Kris Woleck, a math specialist and coach in Connecticut, the seminar connects participants from different districts in states such as Massachusetts, Colorado, Iowa, New York, Louisiana, and Maine. By bringing together coaches of varying backgrounds, from those new to coaching to experienced mentors, the seminar offers an opportunity to examine their unique situations and similar struggles.

Case studies of coaching situations are the springboard for discussion of the weekly topic. Through reading and discussing the cases and research articles, participants analyze various coaching situations. As they apply strategies gleaned from the seminar to their on-site coaching, they reflect on their experiences in weekly writings, culminating in a case study as a final project.

Seminar participants log in to the CESAME online forum and link to resources and a threaded discussion—a question followed by comments, descending in a chain. Case studies and other materials—such as samples of student work and research articles—are available in the forum and also are mailed to participants.

In the online environment, a reflective professional dialogue emerges through written text. The facilitator poses focus questions about the case studies. Participants write about their interpretations, questions, and experiences. The facilitator prompts discussion and sum-
In contrast to a face-to-face conversation, online comments are posted at separate times, or asynchronously. “The asynchronous dialogue gives everyone a chance to reflect a lot before writing their posting. They can take their time to respond… And everyone’s voice can really be heard,” says Woleck. Their online writing serves as important professional development, as well as a record of the seminar for everyone to use.

The first seminar topic, The Role of Questioning, elicits rich discussions. As one participant says, “Questions are the tools of the trade!” Questioning can be tricky for someone new to coaching. A participant from Washington comments: “I sometimes find myself feeling that when I am questioning teachers, they feel put on the spot and can become uncomfortable. That balance is difficult to find especially when you are establishing a relationship.”

During the seminar session, Demonstration Lessons—To Do or Not to Do, coaches reflect on the pros and cons of this strategy. A participant from Arizona describes the plusses: “For some teachers ‘seeing is believing.’ If a teacher hasn’t really seen or experienced teaching outside their paradigm, [a ‘demo’] could be very useful.”

But, asks another participant: “If the teacher simply sits back and watches the coach, what investment has he/she made in this lesson and what learning has taken place for this teacher?”

Through the exchanges, promising strategies emerge. A coach from Texas notes, “The ‘demo’ lesson was always better if there was an opportunity to meet with the teacher prior to the lesson to discuss the students’ and the teacher’s understanding of the mathematics materials.”

Through the online environment, unbridled by barriers of time and distance, coaches share what they know and learn with each other. In their evaluations, participants noted that the seminar provided an opportunity to reflect on individual practice in the context of “others’ experiences” and to consider a range of approaches by engaging with “a group struggling with the same issues and situations.”

They in turn have been using this knowledge to help shape how coaching is carried out locally. “They develop a language to talk about the work they are doing and that carries over into conversations they’re having with teachers and administrators,” says Woleck.

As Alliance project lead Stephanie Feger says, “The seminar is a dynamic laboratory. Everyone involved is gaining insight into how an online environment can support professional development. What makes it effective is how grounded it is in the challenges that practitioners face in their daily work.”
Literacy: A key for learning

Literacy—the ability to read, write, speak, listen, and think effectively—is fundamental to teaching and learning. To support literacy development from the early years to the high school level, we conduct studies and evaluations, offer a variety of programs and products, and bring our expertise directly into schools. This story describes how our adolescent literacy project promotes effective strategies for improving adolescent literacy development in the region and generates valuable resources for educators across the country.

Today’s teens need stronger literacy skills than ever before, not only to meet tough new content-area learning standards but also to acquire the basic skills necessary to make a living. “Students need more literacy skills because of today’s technology, because they will be changing jobs, because the world is getting smaller,” says Betty Jordan, director of the Washington County Consortium for School Improvement in Maine.

Jordan’s organization is one of many in Maine concerned about the low level of literacy among high school students. One issue is how access to high-quality professional development in literacy has been limited, especially in rural areas.

Recognizing the centrality of literacy to successful educational reform, such as that outlined in Maine’s landmark Promising Futures document, the former commissioner of education in Maine asked The Education Alliance’s Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB) and one of its partner organizations, The Center for...
Resource Management (CRM), for support. Together, they would supplement the K–8 literacy efforts already under-way by starting an adolescent literacy project in Washington County high schools.

To do so, the Alliance partnered with the Maine Department of Education, the Center for Inquiry of Secondary Education, the University of Maine at Orono and at Machias, the Mitchell Institute, and the Washington County Consortium. Their goal was to strengthen content-area literacy development in several, small, rural high schools. The three-year project with Washington County high schools includes a research component, professional development in content-area literacy for teachers, and technical assistance to school-based teams to plan and implement literacy action plans.

The centerpiece of the project is the Adolescent Literacy Support Framework, developed by CRM and the LAB to bridge the divide between literacy research and practice. “This research-based framework helps school leaders identify what they need to address to effectively support adolescent literacy development,” says Julie Meltzer, senior research associate at CRM and director of the Washington County adolescent literacy project.

Four key components of the framework, each with its own associated research-based best practices, work together to improve literacy skills: (1) address student motivation, (2) implement research-based literacy strategies, (3) support reading and writing across the curriculum, and (4) ensure organizational support. To improve literacy school-wide, all four key components of the framework must be put into place.

Jeanne Bishop, principal of Shead High School in Eastport, Maine, has been working with the framework for two years. “I had students in the high school who weren’t reading at grade level, and I wasn’t seeing a lot of reading for enjoyment or a lot of use of the library,” she says.

She and five content-area teachers decided to take the intensive professional development course. They also participated in monthly on-site technical assistance sessions facilitated by the school coach and content-area reading specialist, Roz Weizer. These sessions included four mini-workshops that Meltzer and Weizer developed to help educators meet goals in two areas of their literacy action plan: improving reading comprehension across the content areas and implementing an effective sustained silent reading program.

“Right now, I can see an impact through a change in teaching styles,” says Bishop. “I’m seeing more group work, tighter expectations and rubrics guiding class assignments, interdisciplinary collaboration, and teachers excited about using the strategies.”

The literacy development strategies motivate teachers and students alike. For example, instead of just giving an assignment and having a discussion afterward, teachers can choose to use various graphic organizers to clarify concepts, or an anticipation guide to help students access prior knowledge, or group reports to motivate the students to learn.

“The strategies can be generalized to different settings. For example, a student in English class who just finished using the Cornell note-taking method could go to science class and use the same note-taking strategy there,” says Jim Roberts, curriculum developer for the Washington County Consortium in Machias. “The biggest impact I see is that teachers across content areas are using consistent literacy strategies in the classroom.”

Teachers trust the framework’s strategies because they are current with cognitive research and grounded in scientific theory about what motivates students to
learn. Ongoing professional development after the literacy training offers teachers practical support. “The follow-up professional development is so powerful,” says Roberts, “and the bag of tricks is so deep, you can look for a multitude of ways to motivate students.”

According to Roberts, professional development is critical. “The standards-based tests have a strong emphasis on literacy. So, if you don’t have a solid background in strategies that teach literacy, you won’t be able to help students develop the skills they need.” To meet Maine’s challenging content-area standards, secondary schools need to keep their students’ comprehension and communication techniques up to par in all the content areas.

The success of the adolescent literacy project in Washington County is growing. The University of Maine’s advanced adolescent literacy institute enrolled 21 teachers last year in a pilot version, co-developed by Julie Meltzer, Jeff Wilhelm, and Tanya Baker. During the summer of 2003, more than 60 teachers from throughout the state participated, and 12 content-area literacy teachers became mentors. High schools in other counties are now creating their own literacy teams. “This is broader than Washington County, Maine,” says Betty Jordan. “This is a national issue and concern.”

To benefit both a regional and a national audience, the Alliance and CRM have been developing literacy improvement materials and professional development opportunities. Practitioners from across the country have responded enthusiastically to the print publication, Adolescent Literacy Resources: Linking Research and Practice and the online resource, the Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas spotlight on The Knowledge Loom Web site. To support teachers using these materials, national presentations and workshops have been facilitated by Meltzer, Weizer, and Alliance staff Mary Anne Mather and Sidney Okashige.

Twenty four educators from the northeast region are participating in a new online professional development experience, the Collaboratory, which combines online seminars and on-site coaching. As a result, an increasing number of educators and policymakers have been using the framework to guide their thinking about adolescent literacy development.

“If the bottom line is that the kids leave our high school with what they need for life,” says Colleen Haskell, principal of Maine’s Jonesport-Beals High School, “that’s what I’m looking for.”
Multiple uses for multimedia products

In developing our multimedia products and services, we consider how educators can use the material for specific purposes. For example, what are the best ways to use the information on a Web site for focused professional development and school improvement? As this story shows, we actively address this question by designing publications, workshops, and educational opportunities geared toward utilizing the rich content of our Web site, The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching and Learning (http://knowledgeloom.org).

“The Loom site has helped me to build a professional community based on its staff development features. For me it has been the articles that I’ve been reading. It has given me some new ideas on how to run workshops. I’m looking for articles that can move teachers to change. If you’re looking at teachers, you want to get more practical.”

Math Specialist Staff Developer, New York

“[The teachers] were equally impressed with the interactive tools and the idea of being able to interact with experts for ongoing technical assistance. I just can’t marvel enough about your wonderful Web site. Thank you!”

Staff Developer, Maine

Learning Online and On-Site With The Knowledge Loom

“From a school perspective,” says a staff developer from Texas, “time is a critical resource. If I am a principal with 1500 kids, 80 or 90 teachers, dealing with parents and the community, the budget, there is an intensive pressure for time. If I wanted to do a study on, let’s say, middle school math, I don’t have time to go to the library, pull out the books, et cetera. [The Knowledge Loom has] got it all in one step. You have quick access to the best practices. [The site shows] how a school did it.”

The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching and Learning Web site is an award-winning online resource for educators. The Loom presents topic-based collections of best practices in teaching and learning. It’s a place for K–12 educators worldwide to find research identifying effective practices, read stories about real schools and districts, learn to replicate these practices, discover...
organizations and resources, and participate in online events and discussions.

“The Knowledge Loom has a direct impact on the way educators teach, lead, and learn. Some use it to gather online resources and teaching ideas, others use it to network with colleagues, and still others use it as part of an organized professional development effort,” says Allison Brettschneider, Alliance senior research associate and content manager for The Knowledge Loom.

The Web site was conceived in October, 1998, when the United States Department of Education assigned resources to the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB) to develop a “sustainable, customer-driven, distributed repository/database of information on best practices in teaching and learning.”

“After talking to many educators, we realized that a ‘repository’ was not enough,” says Mary Anne Mather, Alliance program planning specialist and Knowledge Loom project manager. “Our vision was The Knowledge Loom—a comprehensive electronic environment that moves from information delivery to information creation, from data to people, from a learning library to a learning community.”

Currently, there are almost 7,000 registered users of the site and over 500 organizations linked to the Loom. In a 2001 Educational Researcher article, John Willinsky calls it one of “a few innovative educational Web sites…dedicated to supporting public access to educational research.”

The Loom is divided into twelve ‘spotlights’—specially organized collections of resources on high-demand education topics. Spotlight content comes from two major sources: Education Alliance project work and partner organizations with expertise in the field. For example, Alliance project staff produced the Principal as Instructional Leader spotlight in conjunction with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Association of Elementary School Principals. The spotlight draws on the work of the Alliance’s Principals' Leadership Network.

For a recently launched spotlight on art education, content development itself was part of professional development and graduate course work. Alliance staff worked closely with a group of practitioners, graduate students, and art education professors from the Massachusetts College of Art (MassArt), who form the Teaching for Artistic Behavior Partnership. To develop Loom content, educator Katherine Douglas offered a summer course through MassArt in which graduate students synthesized and articulated best practices, teaching strategies, research, and practitioners’ stories.

This semester, Douglas has been actively using the site and printouts as text for her under-
graduate Methods of Teaching classes. She has assigned students to write about their teaching experiences using the Share Your Story site feature. As Douglas says, “For future teachers, writing for the Web is important. Because there is so much information for teachers on the Web and it is such a good way for teachers to connect with each other, this is something all teachers should have in their repertoire. If you are willing to write something to put up on a Web page that is thoughtful and interesting, you are also teaching others across the country. It is a way that teachers can take charge of the problem of teacher isolation.”

Considering its global reach, what are the best ways to encourage people to use the information on a Web site for an intended purpose? In an effort to help educators use the Loom for professional development and school improvement, the Alliance created a companion Guidebook, *Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development* in 2002. Practitioners and staff developers working with school improvement teams can use the Guidebook to facilitate discussion and reflection using Loom content and online interactive tools.

“Over time… if somebody consistently uses the resource [the Loom and Guidebook], and the teachers get used to going through the process, it really trains people how to do an action research or an inquiry-based problem-solving exercise,” says a staff developer. “One of the long-term benefits is that it does develop a thinking pattern for reflective teaching.”

Alliance staff regularly conduct presentations at national conferences and hands-on workshops in school districts to help teachers and administrators understand how to use the Loom and Guidebook for school improvement. Presentation topics range from a general overview about how these resources can support ongoing, job-embedded professional learning to spotlight-focused seminars on topics such as literacy and technology integration.

“When people have had an introduction to the site, they are more able to use the material,” says Julie Meltzer, senior researcher at LAB partner organization Center for Resource Management (CRM). Meltzer developed the content for the Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas spotlight—content that is actively being used by teachers throughout the country.

“We constantly get feedback that people think that it’s wonderful to have all the examples in one place,” says Meltzer. “Literacy coordinators and coaches find it very helpful because they know that content-area teachers want a specific example that’s relevant to them.”

Taking it a step further, the Alliance is piloting a new initiative that enables professional learning to happen both in the online environment and on site. The Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas Collaboratory is an innovative professional development opportunity. Drawing from The Knowledge Loom site and Guidebook content, the Collaboratory engages participants in facilitated online discussions, written reflections, and collaborative activities with school team members. Teams of content-area teachers learn to integrate adolescent literacy best practices into their curriculum (math, social studies, English/language arts, and science).

“Many teachers feel that the best professional development comes from talking with other teachers,” explains Mather. “Electronic environments like the Collaboratory create opportunities for social interaction among peers that focus less on an institutional system for learning and more on developing knowledge situated in practice. Through the Collaboratory, we hope to learn what it takes to develop and sustain a community of practice around rich topic-centered content and field-based experience.”

As one participant says, “I appreciate the opportunity to work more in the realm of actual practice than in theory by working with people who do the same thing I do.”
Good decisions from good data

Our evaluations provide educators with qualitative and quantitative data that they can use to improve their programs and school reform work. Our approach considers multiple perspectives and local contexts to ensure that educators can apply our recommendations to their specific problems. We have conducted assessments of school change models, online professional development offerings, school support organizations, and ESL and bilingual programs. We also evaluate how assessment strategies inform professional development and classroom practice in terms of national standards. In this story, the careful analysis of data leads state, district, and school administrators to take a broader view of what instructional practices work best to support improvement.

Researching Best Strategies for School Improvement

Less than a year into her tenure at Quinnipiac Elementary School in New Haven, Connecticut, principal Pat Morgillo was stunned when she saw charts of the school’s math and reading scores disaggregated by each strand of each test. District staff had prepared the charts to help Morgillo look at her school’s data in a new way.

“Kids would score between 44 and 49 [above intervention level] on the multiple choice parts of the test,” she said. “Then you’d see intervention scores on comprehension sections. Why? Well, sometimes the topics of the readings don’t resonate with the kids. So they just give up reading. We realized we needed to teach strategies they could apply to anything.”

This revelation led to changes in instruction at the...
school. The teachers began to focus on the skills students needed to respond to the short-answer and essay parts of the test, including reading a topic sentence, identifying the "who, what, when, where, and how," and predicting the end of a story. Morgillo also stressed that staff access to the data was crucial to creating high expectations and better understanding of student needs. So she created the Wall of Achievement in her office, a huge color-coded chart of students’ scores that shows gains over time and serves as a reference point for teachers about the effectiveness of their instruction.

Staff from the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB), a program of the Alliance, witnessed several such strategies at the request of Connecticut’s Commissioner of Education, Theodore Sergi. Quinnipiac was just one of the priority schools, defined as those schools having the largest numbers of students at intervention level on the Connecticut Mastery Test. Each school had been working on a school improvement plan for at least a year, but the commissioner wanted a wider view of the schools’ improvement strategies than test scores alone could give him.

“The approach we took was looking at multiple stakeholders and their views about what was working and what the problems were,” says Richard Giordano, managing specialist for research design and implementation at the Alliance. “We tried to be as inclusive as possible to give the commissioner a 360-degree view of each school.”

To do this, Alliance staff created interview protocols for meeting with administrators, community groups, parents, teachers, students, district staff members, and each school’s improvement team. The protocols included five key questions on core improvement activities, strategies to improve student achievement, the outside supports necessary to the school’s progress, the nature of the school’s stakeholder engagement, and the overall changes observed during the course of the year. During the visits, staff also looked at progress tests, standardized test scores of various kinds, attendance rates, and other school improvement data.

Alliance staff learned about the dynamics at play in each school, information that was essential to understanding the implementation of improvement strategies in each unique environment. They wrote individual reports for each school and then analyzed the data from all the schools to extract the common practices that were the most effective.

“Once we identified the high-payoff practices, we looked at those in light of the larger research base,” says Chris Dwyer of RMC Research.
Corporation, a LAB partner in the Connecticut work. “How do these link to the information [in existing research] about what works?”

The overall report to the state identified the effective practices as: a focus on literacy, a principal who was an instructional leader, a consistent curriculum with frequent assessments embedded in classroom activities, on-site professional development, personalized relationships with students, integrating parents into the staff as paraprofessionals and tutors, co-teaching strategies, sharing leadership responsibilities, and networks of external organizations supporting the academic mission of the school. The report also pointed out district practices that supported the schools’ efforts, including training for principals in the use of data for instructional decision making and the availability of district-wide professional development and curriculum resources.

The Alliance then took its study a step further, identifying barriers to long-term improvement during the second year of visits. While the first report had given the state a good idea of what strategies produced short-term gains, the second emphasized that all levels of the system had to work together to ensure sustained progress.

“We can use the second-year report as a bridge to the district,” says Juan Lopez, Director of Communications at the Alliance.

Dwyer agrees. “It is important to point out to districts that some schools are getting left out of district resources and attention,” she says. “But it’s not just about what the districts do with individual schools. It’s also about what they can do on their own to help, like the way they organize professional development.”

Now in the third year of the project, the Alliance is beginning intensive work with a subset of priority schools that have made little or no progress over the two years. This next phase of the work naturally includes the district as well as the state and the schools.

“We were able to look at practices in these schools that had some success, and then get that information into the hands of schools that didn’t make enough progress,” says Dwyer. “Now we are working with the districts to help make sure the ways in which these schools are spending their money are the best uses of their resources.”

Based on analysis of data from the two years of school visits and existing research, Alliance staff are now helping the schools develop further plans for improvement. This work requires listening to the district’s priorities and folding those into the lessons the Alliance has learned to date.

“We customize our assistance to them,” says Lopez. “We find ways we can help the district with new approaches to their problems. We help them prioritize around instruction, data analysis, time on task, staff development, and communication between classes. The key is to listen and see the things that come to the top.”

The Alliance has also begun disseminating the information from the Connecticut visits to other states in the region. In both Vermont and Rhode Island, Alliance staff have used the findings from Connecticut to help state education agencies examine requirements for their districts in relation to low-performing schools. This work has influenced the states to support their districts in ways that make sense for compliance with No Child Left Behind and the long-term improvement implied in the law.

“Ultimately, the issue is sustainability,” says Lopez. “You can do it for a year or two, but sometimes it just goes away when a principal or a teacher leader leaves. The system needs to sustain teacher training, alignment of curriculum, effective hiring practices. They need to keep at it all the time.”
Promoting equity and diversity

Today, our nation’s students represent an unprecedented level of diversity—in abilities, learning styles, cultures, and home situations. To effectively educate all learners, we take a lead role in addressing how to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse student populations. We focus on building the capacities of schools and educators to be more responsive to the nature of their student population. As this story shows, our Equity Assistance Center (EAC) conducts workshops, training, evaluations, and consultations to support teachers and school leaders in meeting this challenge.

“The Education Alliance’s workshops have helped Hartford Schools build more effective parental involvement and have sent a message about the need to empower parents and help them to become partners and participants in their children’s learning. The triad of home, school, and community has to become tighter. The Education Alliance’s workshops are moving us in the right direction.”

Bilingual/Bicultural Training Coordinator, Connecticut

Meeting Requests From Schools and Districts

A Connecticut superintendent is struggling to meet the needs of a growing immigrant student population. While the No Child Left Behind Act emphasizes that English language learners (ELLs) should be integrated into regular classrooms and supported to achieve academic excellence, few of his teachers are informed about ELL-appropriate assessments, strategies for building upon students’ first language knowledge, and effective practices for advancing student achievement.

A Rhode Island principal is alarmed by multiple incidents of bullying and teasing in her elementary school. She and her staff need up-to-date information to address and prevent the problem, examine the school’s policy, and implement it consistently.

Complaints are piling up in a Massachusetts’ superin-
tendent’s office, revealing that students of color, their parents, and ELLs are not feeling welcomed in the district. The teachers and counselors need to become better educated about ways to include these groups and to make them feel part of their school community.

The bilingual department of a Connecticut city with a large Hispanic population is looking for ways to involve more parents in students’ literacy activities. Many of these parents do not speak English and are uncertain about what schools expect of them.

These are typical of the requests made to staff at the New England Equity Assistance Center (EAC), a federally funded program housed within The Education Alliance. The EAC provides a variety of services, including workshops, conferences, technical assistance, information dissemination, and professional development within schools and districts throughout New England. Alliance staff, all experts in their fields and mostly bilingual, work with schools to create environments free from discrimination and harassment where all students can achieve to their highest potential.

The Alliance’s equity assistance work is customized to meet the needs of the particular school and district, explains Francine Collignon, managing specialist for Equity and Diversity projects. “We go to the district to find out who the families are, what services are offered, and acquire a full picture of the community in order to help school staff know their populations.” All workshops, assessments, and trainings contain follow-up components, because “our work is about accompanying people, supporting their work, and providing a connecting link between systems.”

In the case of the Connecticut superintendent’s request for assistance with ELLs, Alliance staff designed an observation protocol and conducted a needs assessment, interviewing teachers and administrators and observing classes. They reported their findings and recommendations for curricular planning and policy implementation to the superintendent. He was impressed by the respect Alliance staff demonstrated toward the school community, which created an environment where teachers and school personnel opened up and shared problems and concerns, leading to a deflation of tensions and a clarification of needs.

“People often come to us and they’re uncertain about what they want,” explains senior specialist Maria Wilson-Portuondo. “Through conversations, we help them to gain focus, structure a sequence of activities, and offer them a variety of options for beginning our work together.”

Often, the Alliance’s assistance involves customized tools for the needs of school staff. For example, senior specialist Loel Greene designed
a workbook combining documented research and legal information with practical application strategies for his workshops on preventing bullying, teasing, and harassment. To provide a synthesis of up-to-date information on the relation of human development, language, and culture, EAC staff collaborated with The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Lab (LAB) to produce The Diversity Kit: An Introductory Resource for Social Change in Education, a three-volume toolkit with vignettes and activities that can be used for pre-service training or in-service professional development. The toolkit is available in print and online at www.lab.brown.edu/tdl/, and has proven so valuable that a second printing is underway.

Alliance staff have conducted numerous parents’ workshops in Spanish and English on effective literacy practices in a range of curricular topics. For example, Playtime is Science is a series of hands-on activities that can be done at home or in school to enhance students’ understanding of basic scientific concepts. Parents and teachers have been thrilled with opportunities to learn ways to encourage good study habits and scientific knowledge; districts often ask the trainers to return and host more activities.

“The Education Alliance’s workshops have helped Hartford Schools build more effective parental involvement and have sent a message about the need to empower parents and help them to become partners and participants in their children’s learning,” affirms an administrator in Hartford’s Public Schools. Mark Ankarberg, ESL Coordinator for Nashua, New Hampshire’s public schools, praises the excellence, professionalism, and support of EAC staff. “Teachers told me how much they are learning about ELLs from the training sessions with [Equity Coordinator] Sara Smith, and have nothing but praise for her and the course content.”

Our staff pursue the cutting edge of research and approach their assistance and interventions with schools as a way to translate research into effective education practices. “We respond to new educational issues and programs, and constantly bring in equity themes, linking them to publications and making people aware of the greater repercussions of equity issues,” says Wilson-Portuondo. Staff are particularly attuned to how new education initiatives, such as English immersion policies, impact diverse groups.

Uninformed observers may view technical assistance as mere “workshops,” or “school professional development,” but the Alliance’s equity assistance work is far-ranging. Our research leads to contributions to professional journals, presentations at national conferences, authorship of books and instructional materials, and the development of Web content. Many staff teach graduate courses, and participants in Alliance-based programs and initiatives often become trainers themselves. The work spirals outward in ways that reach a broad range of audiences—K–12 teachers, parents, administrators, policymakers, and pre-service teachers.

The EAC’s interventions lead to school change, more inclusive school policies and programs, and improved parent-teacher relations. Maria Pacheco, director of Equity and Diversity programs, sums up the importance of this work: “We look at systems, the integration and infusion of what’s known from research, and leverage our knowledge into effective practice. Our work connects and fosters partnerships, bringing people to resources.”
How You Can Work With Us

Join us in improving education for our youth. Learn more about our professional services, degree programs for teachers, products and conferences, and how we can work together. For more information, call us at 1-800-521-9550 or e-mail: info@alliance.brown.edu.

Professional Services

We tailor all our work to the specific needs of our clients. We are available to design high-quality services in the United States and other countries as well. Below we have listed some of our most requested services. Contact Lisa_Vaillancourt@brown.edu for more information.

INVESTIGATING YOUR OPTIONS
Our consultation and evaluation services help school personnel to assess initiatives and develop sound action steps.

IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY
We help educators align standards, assessments, and accountability to ensure their teaching practice meets students’ learning needs.

MEETING DIVERSE STUDENT NEEDS
Our workshops and services address what teachers and school leaders need to know and do to consistently meet the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse student population.

CONNECTING SCHOOL LEADERS
The Superintendents’ Leadership Council (SLC) and Principals’ Leadership Network (PLN) connect school leaders through networking and mentoring opportunities.

REDESIGNING YOUR SECONDARY SCHOOL
The Breaking Ranks project trains secondary school leaders and teachers to create smaller, more personalized learning environments that engage all students.

Degree Programs

For more information, contact Maria_Pacheco@brown.edu.

BECOMING A TEACHER
The Master’s Program in Bilingual Education/ESL and Cross-Cultural Studies provides tuition support and teacher training.

The Career Ladder Initiative prepares Southeast Asian and Hispanic students for teaching careers through a certification program in Rhode Island.
Products and Conferences

Products

The Education Alliance produces high-quality products—multimedia publications, online resources, discussion toolkits, and workshops—that span the breadth of our work and address topics of national interest. These resources are affordable and available both in print and online. Some of our most requested products are described below. To order a publication, e-mail: publications@alliance.brown.edu.

ADOLESCENT LITERACY RESOURCES: LINKING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Adolescent Literacy Resources brings together in one place research from several fields related to the effective support of adolescent literacy development. It helps educators gain knowledge about adolescent literacy and identify resources for designing an adolescent literacy initiative. 2002.

CHANGING SYSTEMS TO PERSONALIZE LEARNING

This series of six workshops is designed to help high school change teams increase their understanding of personalized learning and learn ways to adapt existing practices to improve student engagement.

Workshop materials currently available:

Personalized Learning—Understand the scope of personalization and how to involve students in designing their own learning goals by using Personal Learning Plans (PLPs), best work portfolios, and student presentations. 2003.

The Power of Advisories—Develop ways to introduce an adult advocate into the life of every student to help guide student planning, learning, and assessment. 2003.

Teaching to Each Student—Learn teaching methods that allow students with different skills, aspirations, and interests to succeed in meeting the same standards. 2003.

THE DIVERSITY KIT: AN INTRODUCTORY RESOURCE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN EDUCATION

This three-part kit aims to bridge the gap between research and practice with insights on language acquisition and the effects of students’ cultural backgrounds on the learning process. It invites educators at all levels, policymakers, and community members to examine their beliefs, perceptions, behaviors, and educational practices with respect to diversity in education. Each of the three parts contains interactive content—activities, vignettes, and suggestions for further exploration, including Web sites, videos, and print sources—which can be used as a starting point for discussion. 2002.
“I can hardly contain my enthusiasm, admiration, and gratitude for The Diversity Kit. Your materials bring together the extensive and disparate research on culture, community, teaching, and learning in a compelling, user-friendly way, and the activities look strong as well. You are to be commended on providing such an outstanding service, and I am forwarding your link to my colleagues at Teach for America, where we prepare over 1,800 teachers annually.”

Director of Curriculum Development, Cambridge, Massachusetts

ELECTRONIC COLLABORATION: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS
Designed for teachers, school leaders, curriculum experts, technical specialists, and anyone interested in emerging educational technology, this guide presents information on how to conceptualize, plan, and implement electronic collaboration. Topics range from participating in online collaborations and setting up a collaborative environment to moderating a discussion. 1999.

KEEP TALKING: THE FAMILY ON YOUR SCHOOL’S AGENDA
Through a three-year study on family partnerships in several New England schools, we discovered that even the best schools find it hard to create family programs. It is even more difficult to keep them going. These five conversation guides will help principals facilitate ongoing discussions about family partnerships. 2001.

STUDENT VOICES: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (VIDEO AND GUIDE)
This 30-minute video and set of three discussion booklets feature the perspectives of students on issues they faced as English language learners. This discussion kit was created to enhance the understanding of language, culture, and schooling, better equipping educators to make learning environments more responsive to linguistically and culturally diverse groups. 2000.

“Student Voices is powerful because it identifies crucial issues that I try to bring to my students, but it does so in a ‘real’ context, with real voices. One of the greatest strengths is that it shows how bright and articulate ELL students are—unfortunately, a surprise to some educators. I will use the video with my undergraduate classes on Teaching Language Arts.”

Professor, Department of Elementary Education, Rhode Island
THE TEACHING DIVERSE LEARNERS WEB SITE (http://www.lab.brown.edu/tdl/) is a vital resource for teachers working with culturally diverse populations, especially English language learners (ELLs). Sections on teaching and learning strategies, assessment, policy, families and communities, and grant opportunities provide information and guidelines for advancing the education of all students.

THE KNOWLEDGE LOOM: WHAT WORKS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING WEB SITE (http://knowledgeloom.org) is an award-winning collection of best practices, success stories, and resources for school improvement. The Loom addresses topics of national interest such as improving literacy across the content areas, leadership structures, high school restructuring, and effective models of technology in education.

USING THE KNOWLEDGE LOOM: IDEAS AND TOOLS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This guidebook is a how-to resource for collaborative professional development activities that use The Knowledge Loom Web site content and online interactive tools to guide improved teaching and learning. 2002.
Conferences

We actively engage in a dialogue with the field by sharing our work at conferences and symposiums across the country. Over the last two years, we have presented at 100 national, regional, and state-level conferences, one third of which were either sponsored or co-sponsored by The Education Alliance. We have participated in conferences given by American Association of School Administrators, American Educational Research Association, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, International Reading Association, The National Association of Bilingual Educators, National Association of Bilingual Education, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Council of Teachers of English, and more.

Learn more about our upcoming conferences as well as educational events across the country through our Information Center: http://www.alliance.brown.edu/services/infoctr/.

“The staff at the LAB brings a myriad of experiences and a wealth of information to the table in tackling difficult and complex problems. Their insights and support have helped me to specifically target my district’s strengths and weaknesses in special education while developing an improvement plan that embraces the views of all stakeholders. Without the scientifically based research and involvement of the LAB team, I never would have been able to make the strides I have made in improving the provision of services to children in my urban school district in one year.”

Director of Special Services, Connecticut
Support for Our Work

Over the years, our work has received endorsements from participants, continued requests for services, national commendations for excellence, and awards of major grants. Our work is made possible through a variety of funding sources, from federal, state, and foundation grants to fee-for-service contracts.

The renewal of competitive federal contracts for the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory and the New England Equity Assistance Center has acknowledged our accomplishments and capacity to make a long-term contribution to the field.

This confidence in our abilities is also demonstrated by numerous professional service and program evaluation contracts from state and local education agencies across the country. In the northeast region, we currently have awards from the states of Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, and we have contracts with districts in New York City; Yonkers, New York; Providence, Rhode Island; and numerous other cities in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Most recently, our work has been recognized through foundation grants from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

We actively seek new funding sources to support the expansion of our work, especially consultations and evaluations taking place beyond the Northeast region.

To learn more about how you can support our work, please contact Lisa_Vaillancourt @brown.edu.

Learn more about us!

The Education Alliance Web site (http://www.alliance.brown.edu/) describes our work and provides extensive information and resources about education reform.
The LAB helped focus the school on what would work to affect teaching practice and student achievement. Now we are not working in isolation...the [LAB] partnership brings us strength and keeps us on our focused road.”

Principal, Elementary School, Rhode Island

**Partners and Collaborators**

**Major Partners**

- Abt Associates, Inc., Cambridge, MA
- Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C.
- Center for Resource Management, Portsmouth, NH
- Jobs for the Future, Boston, MA
- RMC Research Corporation, Portsmouth, NH
- University of Vermont, Burlington, VT
- National Association of Elementary School Principals, Alexandria, VA

**Major Collaborators**

- A. Alfred Taubman Center for Public Policy and American Institutions at Brown University
- The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University
- ArtsLiteracy Project at Brown University
- Brown University Department of Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences
- Brown University Department of Education
- Brown University Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies
- Center for Inquiry on Secondary Education at the Maine Department of Education
- The Center for Race and Ethnicity at Brown University
- Connecticut Center for School Change
- East Central Vermont Literacy Collaborative
- Lyndon State College
- Maine Department of Education
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- The National Association for Bilingual Education
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- The New York Technical Assistance Center
- Northeastern University Center for Enhancement of Science and Mathematics Education (CESAME)
- Regional Educational Laboratory Network
- Providence College
- Rhode Island College
- United Federation of Teachers in New York City
- University of Maine at Machias
- University of Maine at Orono
- University of Massachusetts
- Vermont Reads Institute
- Vermont State College System
- Washington County, ME, Adolescent Literacy Project Advisory Council
- Washington County, ME, Consortium for School Improvement