

# Center for Learning Connections

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NEWSLETTER

Spring 2009

## Learning Connections

By Julie Jacob, Director

The Center for Learning Connections helps organizations, and the people in them, to grow and to thrive in a fiercely competitive, ever-changing social and economic environment. We do that by bringing to the table a talent for teambuilding and years of experience in helping others realize their untapped potential through dialog and imagination. Here is a look at some of our most recent projects.

**“Community and Technical College Careers: Where Diversity Matters,”** the first-ever Washington State community and technical college diversity recruitment fair, was offered on November 8. Hosted by Everett Community College, the fair showcased exhibits by twelve colleges visited by 80 job seekers. Workshops focused on the job-search process. Topics included resume writing, interviewing skills, and how to demonstrate your teaching ability. The Center for Learning Connections assisted in planning the event, and in designing the on-line registration site. We worked closely with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, which makes its data base of applicants available to college human resource directors. Information collected during the on-line registration process was downloaded to the SBCTC’s site, accessible to college human resource directors in Washington State. Based on the overwhelming positive response from exhibiting colleges and job-seeker participants, this event will be offered again—perhaps annually.

The Center for Learning Connections recently completed an **evaluation of the Higher Education Coordinating Board’s Title II Teacher Quality Projects**. The No Child Left Behind funding supports the improvement of K-12 teacher quality in Washington State. Projects funded over the years have included partnerships that pair colleges of education and colleges of arts and science with high-need school districts. The Center reviewed 25 projects to determine overall effectiveness in improving positive teacher quality and student performance. Our evaluation will contribute toward a more compelling HECB proposal for Title II funding.

CLC is pleased to be presenting the **2009 Building Skills Conference**, an event specifically designed for frontline and supervisory staff in workforce development. This year’s conference is filled with sessions on the economy, strategies for working effectively, how to assist people to

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get jobs, working with youth in tough times, and many more captivating and useful session topics. Project coordinators have been convening planning committees, conducting on-line surveys, analyzing data, identifying audience needs, reviewing proposals from trainers, and marketing events to education and workforce professionals. The 2009 Building Skills Conference will be **April 14-16** at the Seattle Westin Hotel. To learn more about this events, visit: [www.learningconnections.org](http://www.learningconnections.org).

In October 2008, we sponsored the successful third annual **“Leadership: The Experience.”** Workshops targeted topics of interest to leaders at all levels: coaching, mentoring, working with generations, and legacy leadership. Drawing from her new book, ***Dare to Wear Your Soul on the Outside***, keynote speaker Gloria Burgess encouraged participants to connect person-to-person during the conference as a model for connecting person-to-person on the job. This event was held in the beautiful University of Washington Center for Urban Horticulture.

On January 22, the Center for Learning Connections began offering **web-based training** to provide learning opportunities readily accessible from the workplace—a cost-effective approach to staff training especially needful in these difficult economic times. For details, visit:

[www.learningconnections.org](http://www.learningconnections.org).



## Time is Money

By Dean Summers, Project Manager

Among the many wonderful projects and programs of CLC, we provide administrative support for the Center for Dependable Strengths, an organization that trains teachers and counselors to facilitate the Dependable Strengths Articulation Process (DSAP). DSAP helps you identify and talk about your abilities in ways that show your special value to the people who urgently need to meet you to put you to work.

The best, most effective part of DSAP is also the hardest part to sell: it takes time. It takes time to learn the process. It takes time to prepare and facilitate the workshops. It takes time for people to follow through beyond the workshops. It takes time to evaluate the results. I'm reminded of a "Far Side" cartoon. Someone wild-haired in a lab coat has just finished writing an equation on a chalkboard. The caption reads, "Einstein discovers that time is actually money."

Because, in some sense, time *is* money, a popular notion among administrators and accountants is that an organization can always save money by saving time. If one program promises results, and another program promises the same results in a fraction of the time, always go with the program that promises the quick results. Isn't that so?

Maybe so. Depends on the results you're looking for, and the results you get. It also depends on who's doing the looking.

Recently an organization in the job-search business that was making very good use of the Dependable Strengths® process, decided to opt for an alternate program that



Allen Boivin-Brown presenting at a DS training

allowed clients to identify a set of marketable skills through a very brief online encounter. Administrators and accountants were happy as clams. Clients were being processed in minutes, rather than days. Problem was the frontline workers weren't happy. With Dependable Strengths they had found a way to truly help their clients—help them find work, and help them improve all aspects of their lives by way of a real transformation from hopelessness and perceived use-less-ness to hopefulness and confirmed use-ful-ness. Now, those same frontline workers were expected to be content with rushing their clients out the door as quickly as possible.



But they weren't content. Despite their administrators and accountants, they found ways to stay with Dependable Strengths. They knew a good thing when they had it. And the administrators and accountants seem to be getting the message! They were planning to wind down their use of Dependable Strengths, but now they are finding the time to train additional Dependable Strengths facilitators and to offer more Dependable Strengths workshops. They are discovering time *is* money! But in a different way than they had first imagined.

There is an old saying attributed to Abe Lincoln: "Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." If the task at hand is helping people prepare for successful futures, quality prep time is time well spent. Frontline workers know that better than anyone.

One of the things we do at CLC is to encourage people to listen to one another. We definitely encourage administrators and accountants to listen to their frontline workers!

For more on Dependable Strengths®, visit:  
[www.dependablestrengths.org](http://www.dependablestrengths.org)



## A Vision to Catch

By Cal Crow, Program Director

Through the Center for Learning Connections, the influence of Highline Community College extends far beyond our location in Des Moines, Washington. Our expertise is in demand coast to coast and around the world. One special point of contact is in New York City with CUNY Catch (the City University of New York College Alliance for Transitional Career Help), a program for young people newly out of jail (also serving others who have been identified as “at risk”).

CUNY Catch was recently named one of the top twelve youth and development programs for juvenile offenders in the country. The program helps young people transition from incarceration on Rikers Island to the college campus, where they can earn their GED diplomas, then move directly into employment or on to college courses as matriculated freshmen. The program is available at two New York City colleges: LaGuardia Community College and Bronx Community College, which recently changed its name to Future Now at Bronx Community College.

I have been working in this program for the past six years, both at Rikers and at the two colleges, to help bring new perspectives into offender education and GED preparation.

### The CLC Strategy

- ▶ Help each student visualize a successful future, set goals, and develop a sense of “planfulness.”
- ▶ View the GED diploma as a means to help young people create successful futures. It is not an end in itself. When students are asked why they are in the program, their answers should go beyond, “To get my GED.” Our goal is to have them respond with something such as, “The GED is a first step toward helping me achieve my education and career goals, which are...”
- ▶ Personalize the program. Organize it around students’ strengths, skills, talents, interests, and dreams, rather than around the GED curriculum itself.
- ▶ Design the program to help students develop learner, worker, and success identities. If students are not able to internalize and “own” positive self-descriptors and act on them, they will have a difficult time creating successful futures.
- ▶ Build student self-efficacy and help students tap into their natural resiliency. This is especially important for students who have experienced setbacks in their lives—a reality for all CUNY Catch students.



### The Results

- ▶ More of our students are earning GED diplomas.
- ▶ More of our students are entering and succeeding in college.
- ▶ Fewer development education courses are required of our students for college entrance.

In addition, GED recipients in the Bronx program have formed an “alumni organization” called Club IMPACT (Improving My Progress at College Today), which serves as a support system for former CUNY Catch students now enrolled at the college. IMPACT has attracted the attention of the Mayor’s Office of Adult Education, which hopes to create GED alumni organizations throughout New York City.

In October, I was asked to share our “new approach to GED preparation” at a meeting attended by the Mayor’s Director of Adult Education, two of his staff members, and the Manager of Bronx CUNY Catch. Shortly after that, two Bronx staff members and two students accompanied representatives from the Mayor’s office to share the IMPACT story at a national conference in Rhode Island.

Our goal is to have the GED curriculum and other CUNY Catch services delivered in a way that addresses students’ career preferences and plans. This will result in teachers instructing and talking differently with students, and in case managers engaging students at deeper and more meaningful levels.

Earlier this year, CLC was included in the grant that will provide CUNY Catch funding for the next five year cycle. This ensures that we will be able to assist young New Yorkers for many years to come.

For more information on one CUNY Catch program, visit: [http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/InstitutionalDevelopment/CUNY\\_Catch](http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/InstitutionalDevelopment/CUNY_Catch)

## Connections

*By John House, Special Projects Director*

There's a reason why we're called the Center for Learning Connections!

If there ever was a time for bold, creative leadership, it is now. However, images found in old newsreel footage of past heads of state seem to have shaped how we think of leadership more than what our present situation demands. These iconic images of past leaders with clenched fists and jutting jaws convey strength, confidence, and a kind of lone, independent-operator approach to leadership. This archetype is everywhere, and is especially present during a presidential election season.

An alternative approach to leadership, based on interdependence and collaboration, may be a much more needed form of leadership today. It makes sense that the tools required to address our present-day, socially-complex challenges are to be found in a unique set of collaborative socially-networked forms of leadership, right on the ground-level where the action is.

This idea of a more collaborative, networked, and situational form of leadership has always been present in our communities, and is best exemplified in our school PTAs, in our religious institutions and community-based organizations, and on Main Street. Chambers of commerce have had a tradition of advocating for community improvements and addressing community needs. Local businesses have brought character, economic opportunity, and a sense of place to our communities, thus creating places to gather, to interact, and to form shared visions. The idea of a cohesive, geographically connected Main Street, USA may no longer be a reality but with the aid of technology and the resources of chambers of commerce, we're seeing new networks and alliances forming with collaborative leadership as one clear outcome.



**At Pierce College, Puyallup's Rick Hogan provides an in-depth overview of the DISC Assessment**



The Center for Learning Connections, with its emphasis on connecting, has been both a supporter and a practitioner of collaborative leadership since its founding. The CLC's work in workforce development, education reform, and the creation of a non-profit coalition are examples of this. In those fields, the CLC ensures that a mix of organizations and groups can come together, share resources, engage in professional development, and ultimately help themselves form new and deeper understandings of the value of connections and the opportunities they provide for leveraging resources, sharing information, and supporting clients and customers.

The CLC's experience in facilitating collaborative leadership has found a new application. While a new Leadership Institute through the Puyallup-Sumner Chamber of Commerce was being planned by key community partners, an agency with experience in facilitating, managing, and supporting leadership development was sought. When the CLC was chosen, we set out to create a unique year-long Leadership Institute that would provide forward-thinking, seminal resources, top-notch speakers, and supportive experiences that would support the development of collaborative leadership.

A new wiki page helps participants maintain contact between meetings, team assignments provide opportunities for collaborative interactions, and special speakers are coached to create seminars that build in cooperative tasks. These and other strategies are being used throughout the Leadership Institute to support and enhance what our communities need more than ever—opportunities to engage in collaborative, participatory leadership at all levels.

For more on the Leadership Institute, visit <http://www.learningconnections.org/instituteworkspace/index.htm>.

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## Staff Development - truly a return on investment!

By Anna McCain, Project Manager

In economic times like these, now more than ever, is the urgency and importance of ensuring that staff are continued to be trained, to cope with challenging workload and workplace changes, and growing demands of the increasing client base or business needs. **The Non-Profit Staff Development Coalition (NPSDC)** is committed to supporting the belief that investing in workforce/staff training and development yields direct and beneficial “returns on investment” to the sustainability and continued growth of any organization in any workforce sector.

It may take creativity or innovation or collaboration, and certainly even prioritization, of addressing specific training needs, but nonetheless, it continues to require the unwavering focus of ensuring that an organization’s most valuable resource, its staff, are effectively trained and equipped with skills to execute their jobs with the optimum results.

Looking back at 2008, its fifth year of operation, NPSDC welcomed an additional five new organizations to the Coalition membership, currently tallying to over 40 organizations. The NPSDC Committee continued meeting regularly, every two months, to collaboratively work on developing staff training workshops. This year the Committee recognized reaching its 40th meeting milestone since NPSDC was established in March 2003. An additional new feature of the Committee meetings was inviting trainers of upcoming workshops to be a part of the discussion and planning process.

NPSDC developed and delivered 17 workshops to member and non-member organizations, with between 40-50 (and sometimes more!) participants. Several new topics were introduced, including *Exploring Privilege and Oppression*, *Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace*, and *Conflict Resolution (A Map)*. The Committee worked creatively to develop two new workshop series: “*Building Leadership Skills*,” a series of four workshops addressing topics such as *Developing High Performance Work Teams*, *Managing Performance*, *Employee Engagement and Motivation*, and *Supervisory Communication Skills*; and the new “*Communication Skills*” series of four workshops focusing on *Compassionate Listening*, *Communication and Learning Styles*, *Workplace Civility*, and *Handling Difficult Conversations*.

The majority of these 17 workshops received very positive evaluations, with some participants reporting success after immediately applying these learned skills to their jobs.

With these workshops, we continued to build our trainer network of over 30 quality trainers, adding another six to the group. These trainers responsively and effectively worked with NPSDC to customize or develop new curriculum to address the specific highlighted need areas of each workshop topic.



For 2009, NPSDC is planning to develop and deliver another 12 workshops to address high-priority training

### NPSDC is people

needs identified through the 2009 Staff Training Needs Survey administered in September last year. Even with potential budget cuts, the NPSDC Committee is committed to engage and empower as many staff as possible this year, to pursue training. The Committee will be exploring a variety of workshop formats to cost effectively deliver the necessary training. These could include half-day (instead of full-day workshops), online webinars, and brown-bag lunch sessions.

NPSDC member organizations understand and appreciate that it is important to remain stable, innovative, and even competitive in challenging economic times. That is why, in 2009, NPSDC will continue to encourage workforce employers not to waver in their focus to develop their organization’s most important resource—their staff. In doing so, they will be enabling staff to equip themselves with much needed skills to face the changing economic and social future.

For information about NPSDC and its workshops, contact Anna McCain: [amccain@highline.edu](mailto:amccain@highline.edu)

And visit the NPSDC website: [www.learningconnections.org/coalition](http://www.learningconnections.org/coalition)



Non-Profit Staff Development Coalition

## The Association

By Kati Hays, Project Coordinator

Here at CLC, when we speak of The Association, we are speaking of The Association of Washington Community and Technical College Administrators and Exempt Staff. CLC is the executive office for The Association.

Representing all administrators and exempt employees in Washington State, The Association offers an array of professional development events. Topics address current trends, concerns, and needs for employees from each of Washington's thirty-four community and technical colleges. More than one hundred college staff participated in the timely Fall 2008 Conference in November: "Thriving in Turbulent Economic Times," which featured Wolfgang Opitz, Deputy Director of the Washington Office of Financial Management.

In addition to, or possibly replacing, our three conferences a year, we plan to offer webinars and regional workshops on critical issues. This winter, we planned a workshop on how to choose effective budget reductions in times of economic downturns. This spring, Human Resource managers will present regional training sessions on implementing the new classified staff contracts. Other topics will address supervisory training issues and how to better assist returning veterans in transitioning to college.

In response to the budget reduction mandates from Governor Gregoire for state employees to reduce travel expenses, the Association looked to technology such



### Association Winter conference Elluminate session.

as Elluminate and ITV as a way to deliver the winter conference. The theme of the conference, "Using Technology to Take a Bite out of the Budget Crunch," focused on technology, so we were "walking our talk." We presented the uses of technology, with issues pertaining to staff and students. In addition to showcasing currently available technology, we explored the technology initiative of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and current legislative issues pertinent to community and technical colleges.

Using new technology, we can get together "virtually" any time, anywhere!

For more information, contact Kati Hays:  
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or visit:  
[www.learningconnections.org/association](http://www.learningconnections.org/association)



Kati Hays at the Association Fall Conference

