

**Center for Language and Culture
2006 Roundtable
19 April 2006**

**Hand in Hand
*New Ways for Mason to Serve Virginia's Local Educational Agencies***

Executive Summary

I. Mason's rationale for convening the 2006 Roundtable

Jorge P. Osterling, Interim Director, Center for Language and Culture welcomed the participants from 15 school districts and from the George Mason faculty, and introduced the purpose of the Roundtable "to engage in dialogue with Virginia's Local Educational Agencies about their needs in meeting the challenges of increasing linguistic diversity."

The round table was to explore "New Ways for Mason to Serve Virginia's LEAs" including:

- Impact of changing demographics
- Ways to help improve minority achievement
- Narrowing the academic achievement gap
- Substantially reducing the drop out rate that continues to hurt our students of color

Mason speakers

Commented on the significance of the goals of the partnership between Mason and Virginia's Local Educational Agencies

- Joan Isenberg, Associate Dean, CEHD
- Marilyn Mobley, Associate Provost, Educational Programs
- Dennis Webster, Associate Dean, University Life and Director of Mason's Multicultural Research and Resource Center

Participating Mason faculty and staff

Jeanine Tate (Field Relations)
Libby Hall (ALPD)
Elaisa Gosnell (UTEEM)
Elavie Ndura (IET)
Marjorie Hall Haley (MME)
Becky Fox (MME and ASTL)
Lorraine Valdez Pierce (MME)
Shelley Wong (MME)
Rachel A. Grant (New Director of the Center for Language and Culture)
Barbara Noel (Adjunct Faculty)
Barbara Acosta (Adjunct Faculty)
Anita Bright (Doctoral Student)
Jorge P. Osterling (Interim Director, Center for Language and Culture)

II. School Districts presentations of their existing challenges and needs

Each LEA representative spoke for about 5 minutes. Summarized below are the key challenges and the key recommendations to Mason's CEHD and Center for Language and Culture.

Mark Johnston, Assistant Superintendent, Arlington, County; Carol Bass, ESOL Supervisor, Prince William County Public Schools; Teddi Predaris, Director ESOL Office, Fairfax County Schools; Jennifer Richter, Greene County Schools; Roger Rudy, Alexandria City Public Schools; Courtney Stuart, Albemarle County Public Schools; Wanda Hamilton, Harrison burg City Schools; Johnetta Smith, Loudon County; Barbara White, Culpepper County Public Schools; Shelley Pine, Clark County; Virginia Bowerman, Manassas Park City Schools; Nancy Guth, Stafford County; Megan Carol, Manassas City Public Schools; Gloria Guba, Falls Church City; Donna Whitley-Smith, Page County Public Schools; Valarie Gooss, Virginia Department of Education;

2.1 Key Challenges Identified by School Districts

- ❑ Address vocabulary development of ELLs, as well as literacy skills
- ❑ Addressing the needs of children of day laborers
- ❑ Being a small district with a growing ESOL population
- ❑ Culturally responsive teaching and cultural competence for professional staff
- ❑ Determination of appropriate instructional level (e.g., mathematics, science) of LEP/ELL students
- ❑ Dual identification and services (i.e. Special Ed/ Gifted and Talented and ESOL)
- ❑ Improve collaboration with foreign language departments to support heritage language students
- ❑ Induction, mentoring, professional development opportunities for novice teachers to work with diverse student populations, so that they can work with mainstream teachers (often with more experience)
- ❑ Infuse a "*joy of teaching*" into teachers who work as technicians
- ❑ Instructional materials for ESOL students
- ❑ Lack of funds for release time or enough days for teachers for staff development or to observe each other teach
- ❑ Need for all teachers to "*own*" ESOL students as their own rather than see them solely as the ESOL teachers' responsibility
- ❑ Need to have "courageous" conversations about what we can do in the classrooms to address the academic achievement gap, rather than blame the parents
- ❑ Need to have all content area teachers work with ESOL students and ESOL teachers to have more knowledge of content
- ❑ No Child Left Behind act (NCLB)-concerns regarding over-emphasized standardized testing, over identification of schools in need of improvement, using sanctions that do not help improve schools, challenges regarding compliance and full implementation
- ❑ Parental Engagement. Non-traditional parental involvement. Bring involvement of language minority parents into every school (not just a few "model" schools, programs)
- ❑ Problems of staff turnover

- Raising academic achievement in schools with 85% low SES
- Reading and mathematics. Need to focus on improving academic achievement in reading and mathematics and how to differentiate and diversify instruction in these areas
- Small school divisions. Need for smaller districts to team up with other districts for consortiums for funding
- Significant transformation of the housing market (e.g., Arlington, Alexandria); replacement of low-income housing with upper-scale units.
- Team Teaching. Need for teachers special education, ESOL and mainstream teachers to collaborate and co-teach.
- Professional development for all teachers to support collaboration and inclusion of English language learners instead of pull-out models

2.3 Key Recommendations for Mason

1. Culturally responsive teaching: help to develop and strengthen across the board cultural competence around race in on-going systematic ways rather than single-shot.
2. Continue/ reactivate:
 - a. Education Leadership programs, to address diversity.
 - b. Bilingual paraeducator teacher education program
 - c. Northern Virginia Writing Project
 - d. National Board Teacher Certification program
3. CEHD coursework should prepare *all pre-service students* (not just MME/ ESOL students) to:
 - a. Teach literacy skills and mathematics to diverse learners: accurate determination of instructional level
 - b. Work with students with diverse needs (e.g., dual identification and services)
 - c. Teach in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.
 - d. Team teach [mainstream / ESOL] content area
 - e. Encourage and support parental involvement. Become familiar with non-traditional parent outreach including training in ways to conduct home visits
 - f. Have (9 hours of) courses in cross-cultural/multicultural education, second language acquisition (SLA) and methods of teaching English Language Learners
4. Site based courses: Have Mason faculty and academic programs offer courses (evening/ weekend/summer) at alternate/outreach locations (e.g., in coordination with Virginia's eight Regions?)
5. Cross pollination: Facilitate opportunities for districts to learn from and work with one other
6. Offer more speakers on Saturdays (i.e., Speaker from National Literacy Panel), perhaps on the GMU campuses, as well as outreach locations
7. Interpreters (and Parent Liaisons): Work with school districts to set up courses for interpreters and parent liaisons, including specialized interpreters for Special Education (IEPs)