



Retreat and Symposium November 8, 2008

Summary Report

The Carlston Family Foundation is a relatively small Foundation that annually seeks to identify and honor outstanding California High School Teachers. More recently, with the assistance of the growing group of Honorees, the Foundation has dedicated itself to helping promote a more effective system for teacher recruitment, preparation, induction, retention and professional development. The Foundation wishes to cultivate leadership in the teaching profession, help share and disseminate best practices of successful and consistently effective teachers, and enable highly accomplished teachers to contribute their views/to share their views on issues critical to California Education.

To accomplish this the Foundation has begun collaborative partnerships with California Schools and Colleges of Education to promote a range of research studies and policy initiatives to promote more classroom instructional time, improve assessment and evaluation of student learning, improve teacher assessment and evaluation and increase teacher empowerment and leadership in the development and dissemination of “best practices.”

In the fall of 2007, The Carlston Family Foundation hosted its First Annual Symposium on Education in California. The Foundation drew on the expertise of past Outstanding Teachers of America Honorees from throughout the state of California. This diverse group of teachers identified specific issues they believed affect classroom instruction, student achievement, teacher recruitment and retention and professional development. The results were summarized in a Report from the perspective of current classroom teachers who consistently produce high-achieving, academically successful students from the neediest communities and schools.

The 2007 Symposium focused on four general goals:

1. Improve High School learning and improve test scores
2. Improve teacher morale and foster a greater sense of professionalism among teachers
3. Assist in the recruitment and retention of teachers
4. Improve data collection and analysis and use information to create professional development programs that are meaningful, pertinent to the needs of classroom teachers and based on extensive collaboration

Over the course of 2008, the 2007 Summary Report has been disseminated to and reviewed by several College and University Schools and Colleges of Education along with various other foundations and organizations dedicated to the improvement of education in California.



Retreat and Symposium November 8, 2008

Summary Report

The Carlston Family Foundation continues to seek additional partnerships and strategic alliances with schools and colleges of education, and other Foundations that will assist in the incorporation of ideas, strategies and activities to address these goals, through policy initiatives, teacher preparation programs, and professional development activities in local school districts.

In November 2008, with the addition of the six 2008 Outstanding Teachers of America Honorees, the Carlston Family Foundation hosted the 2nd Annual Symposium on Education to review and refine the Foundation's 2007 focus and to identify future goals to advance a process for ongoing implementation of the 2007 goals. This group agreed there must be a restructuring of educational goals and practices in order to create new strategies that will result in creative and lasting change.

The CFF believes its Board of Advisors, made up of 31 exceptionally successful Secondary teachers, is well positioned to model and lead educational colleagues toward more effective teaching practices. The evidence of their consistent success, with the most difficult students in some of the highest-need schools in California, consistently demonstrates their skills, unique ideas and creative practices. From interviews with the hundreds of students who have nominated these exceptional, life-changing teachers, it is clear they share several important characteristics:

- Have an in-depth knowledge of subject matter
- Share a passion for their subject, for teaching and for students
- Use highly motivational techniques and practices to engage students in classroom activities
- Have an understanding of student capabilities and capacities
- Have high expectations that are fair, reasonable and achievable
- Use and create materials and content relevant to student learning
- Provide safe student centered learning environments
- Are unusually able to assess and evaluate student learning accurately
- Refuse to allow students to fail and focus on creating opportunities for all students to experience deserved success
- Recognize and honor cultural diversity
- Assist students at all levels to perform and achieve academic success necessary for academic success

Topics for Symposium Discussion



Retreat and Symposium November 8, 2008

Summary Report

The Carlston Family Foundation Advisory Board reviewed and discussed the following issues:

- Teacher preparation program effectiveness
- Teacher recruitment and retention
- Professional development that is relevant and of high-quality
- Teacher Agency and Empowerment
- Discipline and Classroom Management
- Collaboration and professional learning communities
- Student Assessment
- Teacher Evaluation
- Improving school culture and climate
- National, state and local education agency policy issues
- Curriculum integration

Position Statements

From the dialogue grew the following position statements:

- 1) Problems Facing California Schools
 - a) California and the nation face a crisis as schools struggle to recruit and retain high-quality teachers who are adequately prepared and who have access to the necessary support required to improve and provide quality classroom instruction.
 - b) Low-income students and students of color remain less likely to be taught by experienced, highly qualified teachers.
 - c) There is a need to reduce the existing conflict between a focus on teachers' professionalism, and the deregulation of the teaching profession, so that we can do a better job of recruiting teachers from business backgrounds who may not be trained in pedagogical theory.
- 2) Role of the Teacher in Effective School Reform
 - a) Teachers are central to improving and transforming schools and must be included in all matters related to assessment, instruction and evaluation of learning.
 - b) Teachers must regularly examine and improve their teaching skills and remain active as leaders, learners and collaborators.
 - c) Teachers must be empowered to help transform current teacher preparation programs, top-down hierarchies and relevant professional development programs.



Carlston Family Foundation

Retreat and Symposium November 8, 2008

Summary Report

- d) Teachers must be allowed to identify their own measures of success and create plans for achievement in a climate that supports release time during the school day for collaboration and lesson planning.
- e) Teachers must be provided the resources to disseminate findings from active research projects and best practices to other teachers.
- f) Teachers should be allowed to establish their own benchmarks for teaching and learning
- g) Current successful classroom teachers should be used to create collaborative efforts with College and University professionals in teacher education programs to review and improve teacher education programs.

3) Role of State, University and Administration in Effective School Reform

- a. Improving professional development must be driven by the interests and assessed needs of participants and be based on quality examination of current practices and research.
- b. Adequate time for collaboration and implementation of best practices and new ideas results in creative and successful outcomes in teacher morale, retention and student achievement.
- c. Schools and teachers require supportive conditions, including time, resources and administrative support to implement proposed changes.
- d. Proven best practices must be shared among colleagues, and mutual peer assessment and evaluation of skills and materials should be encouraged.
- e. School reform must be guided by State, district and individual school policies that encourage and support shared decision making and collaboration between teachers and administration.
- f. Administrative Leadership preparation programs must include training in assessment and evaluation of teachers, utilizing a consistent language and formula.
- g. Administrative Leadership preparation programs must focus on how to promote teacher empowerment and shared decision-making.
- h. Additional dollars must be allocated for stipends for colleagues to be released for collaboration and mutual observation, with a greater focus on newest and less experienced teachers.
- i. The number of new initiatives introduced should be limited so teachers have time to comprehend and implement one reform before moving on to another.
- j. Teachers who wish to be involved with classroom observations, mentoring and collaborative efforts designed to improve department and school-wide classroom instruction should be allowed to be.
- k. Teachers should be provided, in a timely fashion, with the data they need in order to assess student progress and to learn effective instructional strategies from one another.



Carlston Family Foundation

Retreat and Symposium November 8, 2008

Summary Report

1. Student achievement should not be confined only to standardized test scores and should include the evaluation of consistent work products that demonstrate evidence of learning.

RESEARCH OF TEACHING

It is the intent of the Carlston Family Foundation to collaborate with California college and university researchers to promote and support research that will ask a variety of questions and identify multiple and diverse measures of teaching effectiveness. The CFF Advisory Board Members suggested that current thinking about what effective teaching looks like is often misguided, and that the vision of quality professional development on best practices is inadequate. The Advisory Board suggested the following questions for research consideration:

1. Profession of Teaching
 - a. How can/do effective teachers:
 - i. Assess students
 - ii. Engage students
 - iii. Affect behavior and discipline
 - iv. Reduce drop-out rate
 - v. Closing the achievement gap
 - b. What are the common characteristics of effective teaching/teachers?
 - i. How do they advance learning?
 - ii. How do teachers share skills?
 - c. Is teaching a science or art? What are the skills and practices that can be taught to improve teacher effectiveness?
 - d. What are the best measurements of teacher success, student learning and school success?
 - e. Why do teachers leave the profession and what can be done to motivate and retain teachers in the profession?
 - f. How does teacher empowerment influence student learning and achievement?
 - g. Do teacher involvement and participation in extracurricular programs or special programs influence teacher recruitment and retention?
 - h. Do increased pay and benefits affect teacher effectiveness and why/why not?
2. Induction and Pre-service Programs for New Teachers



Carlston Family Foundation

Retreat and Symposium November 8, 2008

Summary Report

- a. Where are the most effective teacher preparation programs, and how is their effectiveness measured?
- b. Can credentialing programs pre-qualify prospective teachers and “weed out” marginal candidates?
3. Student Achievement
 - a. What impact do standardized tests have on student learning?
 - b. What is the impact of integrated curricula on promoting student achievement and closing the achievement gap?
 - c. What are the most effective measures of student learning?
 - d. How do California/US educational practices and student learning compare to European and Asian practices, particularly with regard to standardized testing?
4. School Restructuring
 - a. What are the policies, structures and supportive measures required to develop a supportive and professional culture in a school?
 - b. Where are the most successful school-based models that have been proven to advance student performance, what are their common characteristics, and are these characteristics easily transferrable?

Policy

While Federal and State legislators and educators consistently work to address the needs of schools and students throughout the country, many of their decisions related to “change” simply are not based upon sound research and/or the necessary data. Thus, legislators without adequate input are often unable to foresee the consequences of their decisions. Therefore, the Carlston Family Foundation would like to support the inclusion of proven classroom teachers in the discussion and development of policy at the Federal, State and local levels. In addition, the Foundation wishes to include Honorees in the design of teacher education, preparation, credentialing and evaluation programs. The CFF Advisory Board suggested the following:

1. The Carlston Family Foundation and the Board of advisors will help craft policies encouraging teachers help design policies that give teachers incentive to collaborate
2. Advocate for expansion of recruitment and incentives for retention of **highly qualified and prepared** teachers of color in high-need schools
3. Support policies that improve working, health and safety conditions in high-need schools
4. Promote policies that create incentives for teachers and administrators to restructure the school day to provide time for collaboration, mentoring and leadership development.



Carlston Family Foundation

Retreat and Symposium November 8, 2008

Summary Report

5. Support policies favoring the use of multiple sources of data to evaluate students.
6. Reduce the loss of instructional time due to excessive and redundant standardized testing.
7. Support teachers as expert professionals and capitalize on their knowledge and leadership skills.
8. Develop incentives for skill improvement through the Beginning Teachers Support and Assessment Programs (BTSA) and allow this to count toward National Board Certification requirements.
9. Advocate for leadership opportunities for classroom teachers to become mentors and coaches, and provide for released time for collaboration and professional development.
10. Support policies that honor the expertise, understanding and experience of local teachers in working on reform.
11. Create incentives for teachers? This is unclear to me to lead and improve schools by sharing and collaboration with colleagues
12. Consider pay incentives for years of service of effective teachers and support their participation as mentors and coaches for younger, less experienced teachers.

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The Carlston Family Foundation continues to support the following:

1. Ensuring teachers are full partners in educational reform.
2. The promotion of teaching as an important and significant profession worthy of great respect.
3. The creation and promotion of an extraordinary group of exemplary teachers to lead their respective schools, local teacher credentialing programs and policy makers toward more effective decisions and best practices that focus on improving student and closing the achievement gap.
4. Supporting the use of teachers to act as liaisons, mentors, etc., with California Colleges and Schools of Education to review and revise credentialing curricula and teacher education.

Therefore, the foundation will:

1. Inspire and guide the work of “re-imagining” the teaching profession in California school districts throughout the state of California
2. Develop and support a network of CFF Honorees to address common issues and solve common problems;



Carlston Family Foundation

Retreat and Symposium November 8, 2008

Summary Report

3. Support the sharing of “Best Practices” among Advisory Board Members, and will work to see that information is disseminated to all college and university schools of education, State and County Departments of Education and all school districts within the State of California;
4. Continue to create strategic partnerships with Schools of Education and research programs to promote core principles into teacher and administrative preparation programs ;
5. Encourage the partnership of Carlston Family Foundation Outstanding Teachers of America Honorees with College and University Departments and Schools of Education to assist in the development of a variety of research projects related to teacher effectiveness, improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap;
6. Promote the voices of CFF Honorees in local, regional and statewide forums to promote dissemination of “Best Practices” and the promotion of teaching professionalism;
7. Continue to create opportunities for rich discussion and collaborative learning between classroom teachers and colleagues, teachers and college and university schools of education, and State and local policy makers.

Conclusion

Since the inception of the Carlston Family Foundation’s Outstanding Teachers of America Award, the Foundation has honored some of California’s most outstanding and successful teachers working in some of the most demanding, high-need areas of California. In each case, these Honorees have consistently produced students who have achieved academic and personal excellence and success at institutions of higher learning throughout the world. A majority of these students have been first-generation college students who never believed a college education was within their grasp until they had a life-changing experience with their exceptional teacher who recognized their talents and proved their capabilities to achieve.

Given this group of highly successful and experienced teachers, the Carlston Family Foundation made the decision to share the exceptional competence of this group with schools and colleges of education, policy makers and other teachers with the purpose of helping to improve the quality of education in California. While the resources of the Foundation are limited, by forming partnerships and strategic alliances, we believe we can help to facilitate small but significant change and improvement in classroom achievement.

The Foundation hopes to make its primary focus the development of the current and future teaching force in California. We believe a higher quality of well-prepared classroom teachers will be the key to



**Retreat and Symposium
November 8, 2008**

Summary Report

creating successful schools in California. The current California economic crisis complicates the process of change at all levels. In fact, the proposed budget proposals will give California education a setback.

However, the Foundation hopes to combine with other influential groups to help policy makers remain focused on creating systems that will support the development of a strong force of highly qualified teachers who will meet the growing challenges we face in California. This effort must focus on the recruitment and preparation of highly qualified teachers placed in supportive learning environments and compensated accordingly.

If you are interested in working in partnership or forming strategic alliances with the Carlston Family Foundation or in accessing the expertise of the Carlston Family Foundation Board of Advisors, please contact Tim Allen, Executive Director of the Foundation.