



University of Illinois Chicago

Great Cities Institute

Neighborhoods Initiative

Evaluation Report

1998 - 1999

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Neighborhoods Initiative Evaluation Report 1998-1999

Introduction

This is the fourth annual evaluation report of the Neighborhoods Initiative. It will roughly follow the format of previous reports, first describing the projects that were observed, then describing UICNI activities, and concluding with a consideration of the results of projects and activities over the past four and one-half years and their implications for the vision of this program.

Evaluation research was conducted for the first time with undergraduate students, who did their research for credit in the Anthropology 210 course. The work concentrated mainly on JCD funded projects. Research procedure concentrated on partners' accounts of their goals, the way they did their work, and the results that they could point to as indications that they were achieving or not achieving their goals. We continue to be concerned with the extent to which both the community organization's and the university's capacity to address issues of community development in the Pilsen and Near West Side neighborhoods is enhanced by the work of UICNI.

PROJECTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUND

The Affordable Housing Fund is funded by the JCD grant and its purpose is to provide funding to two community development corporations, Near West CDC and The Resurrection Project, to provide matching funds for homeowner rehabbing. This complements a City of Chicago program for rehabbing exteriors. Begun in 1996, it took UIC and the City of Chicago two years to work out the legal details that would allow the CDCs to access the funds directly and be accountable locally. Funds are used as loans, which homeowners must match. Loan committees review and approve applications. The committees include CDC staff, Department of Housing staff, and community residents.

Near West Side

Near West Development Corporation has been very slow to recruit community residents for its loan committee. Since the JCD grant specifies that the committee must have community residents as members, Near West has just recently completed its loan committee membership, and the loan application process is underway. Applications are now being reviewed.

Pilsen

By May 1999, TRP had given out over fifty loan applications. People hear about the program through the churches and by word of mouth. A TRP staff member checks out the property of an applicant (which can be from one to four units) to estimate the cost of the repair work. The applicant, once approved, can choose any contractor he or she wishes. Loans range from \$2000 to \$10,000 depending on the area and on the matching money available to the applicant. Thus far, five loans (totaling \$20,000) have been closed and work begun or completed.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Near West Side

The Near West Community Development Corporation has been working on developing the area at Madison and Western Avenues since 1996. Near West CDC was successful in obtaining the land on the northeast corner from the city, and it has enough space for a Walgreen's drug store and either two large businesses or four to five small businesses. Walgreen's has committed to building its store there with an estimated completion date during the first quarter of 2000. Near West and its two partners are currently negotiating with two other businesses for the second facility.

Construction was delayed in March when toxic chemicals were discovered in the soil. The cost to clean up the site is \$24,000, and as of May, the city had agreed to pay the cost of the cleanup. Tim Lyster, Executive Director of NWCDC, believes that construction will proceed as planned and that the Walgreen's facility will be ready to open on schedule.

Pilsen

As of August 1998, Eighteenth St. Development Corporation and The Resurrection Project were negotiating a limited partnership to buy the Zensky Building on 18th and Paulina, renting out the first floor to Mr. Zensky and the second floor to UIC for a medical center. By December 1998, the Board and director of ESDC were having second thoughts about the partnership. After several meetings with Nacho Gonzalez and Yittayih Zelalem, they voiced their concerns and decided to proceed with the partnership. By April, however the UIC Medical Center had reconsidered its position. They were concerned about the size of the rental space and the cost and decided not to proceed. The response at TRP was less bitterness than frustration. UIC personnel, according to several people at TRP, were less interested in providing medical care than in cost per square foot. Issues such as care for the uninsured were simply not discussed. TRP is searching for another provider, e.g., Cook County, but it remains to be seen whether any medical provider will be more oriented to medical care than to the bottom line. In the meantime, James Isaac has resigned his position as Executive Director at ESDC, and Maria Muñoz has replaced him. As of late May, TRP and ESDC had yet to reopen discussions.

COMMUNITY PLANNING STUDIO -- UPP 555

This course, part of the Joint Community Development grant to UIC, has been given once, this being the second time. The goals of this course are:

- Foster the relationship between UIC and community organizations by each providing something that the other needs
- To expose students to hands-on work in the Chicago community
- To have students interact with community organizations and get an idea of how these organizations operate, and
- To have students produce research useful to community organizations.

The objectives of this course (of six graduate students) were to produce a:

1. A study detailing the most feasible categories of employment opportunities--especially construction--for the Rockwell Management Corporation (a tenants association) and,
2. A housing market study on the Near West Side for the Interfaith Organizing Project

The course included readings and lectures by Janet Smith, Yittayih Zelalem, and several members of local community organizations. Included in the course were three forums--one on mixed income communities, another on housing policy trends, and a third on the evolution of community development corporations. The two community organizations had not been selected in advance of the course. Students listened to presentations by representatives of each organization (which also included the Near West Community Development Corporation) and decided to work with IOP and RMC. By the second week of the course, students had divided into two teams, one responsible for the employment study and the other for the housing study. Each team worked on its own, first meeting with the clients and working out just what information the client wanted, then developing a work plan based on those conversations. Students then began the research, which focused on problems and opportunities, reporting progress and challenges in class each week. Each team used materials obtained from various sources, including the Voorhees Center, which either had or had access to the databases each team needed, e.g., tax records of properties, city information on properties, union issues, start up costs for different kinds of construction work, etc.

The student teams gave their initial final presentations in class on April 29, and then another to the clients the next week using a combination of overheads, maps, and still photographs. Only the IOP staff attended--the RMC director, Wardell Yataghan being ill--and the students presented both projects to them. The IOP team also presented their housing market study to the IOP board that same evening.

Results

Both studies were detailed but couched in language that is easily understood. The IOP representatives were pleased with the report on the housing market. They needed the study in order to do their own planning, and this information gave them the background on which to make decisions about which housing strategies to pursue in the long run. They were equally pleased with the study on construction business opportunities, which they IOP Board has said it will consider as another possible project in partnership with the Rockwell Gardens residents. This report was written as a manual for how to think about possible employment in construction, what training is necessary, what the start up costs of various areas of construction are, etc. The Voorhees Center will edit and publish both reports. The construction report, because of its length and detail, will probably be published in three shorter pieces.

Organizational Comments

While the students choosing which organizations they want to work with may create some tension, particularly among the organizations not chosen, it also has some advantages. These include

- Assessment of relative need and value to the organization
- Ownership of the considerable work they are about to do
- Obligation to the client that born of the students own choices

Recommendations

This is one of those projects whose goals and objectives are clear, whose implementation strategies are carefully worked out, and whose outcomes are as expected. Students get first hand experience working with community organizations in every aspect of collaborative planning. Their work is not merely an exercise but a professional experience with outcomes that matter to community clients. Course instructors have found that they can introduce readings and discussion topics, such as mixed income housing, which take on a different meaning to students who are involved in a community context.

- We recommend that this course, UPP 555, be integrated into the CUPPA curriculum after the JCD grant is complete.
- Choosing organizations to work with might be accomplished using the RFP model that City Design Center has used in the past, but this would entail sending out RFP's well in advance of the course.

CITYLAB PILSEN COMMERCIAL STUDY

This project was begun and completed in the fall semester, 1998, as a studio combining urban planning and architecture students. It's goal was to develop facade, signage, plaza, and streetscape designs and transportation and development plans for "the community as a whole" and for The Resurrection Project and the 18th St. Development Corporation. Their work focused on the 18th St. commercial area, a campus zone and entry zone between 16th St. and 20th St. and the intersection of 18th St. and Paulina. Students, faculty, clients, and people from the Pilsen community gathered for informal and formal presentations during and at the end of the semester. The considerable detail and scope of this project, covering parking, traffic patterns, economic development schemas, plaza designs, etc., are described and illustrated and available on CityLab's Web page--<http://www.uic.edu/aa/cdc/citylab98/homepage.html>.

The TRP clients found this work, particularly the plaza study to be of immediate use in their development planning. TRP is using pieces of the project, rather than the entire design, for their own planning. The drawings of the plaza--and the way in which students conceptualized it--helped TRP staff to reconceptualize what they want the plaza to look like. Most helpful in their thinking about the plaza concept has been the traffic studies, which link with economic impact of plaza development. Staff said that the combination of architectural designs with the rich information provided by urban planning students is what made the plaza concept clear to them. The documentation helps give substance to the designs so that it is clear why the designs make sense. Also very useful is the economic modeling provided for the Mexican Fine Arts Museum. TRP is using this model for their plaza planning.

C-TRAIN (Near West Home Care Training Institute)

Project Inception

This project began in 1996 as a partnership between UICNI, Westside Consortium, UNITE, CAPA, Malcolm X College, and the Salvation Army. Its goals were to construct a day care facility for Near West Side residents and to train residents as certified day care workers. When funding for the building did not materialize, the second goal was actualized in a training program called C-TRAIN, a program to select Near West Side residents to take certification courses (for college credit) at Malcolm X in child development and childcare. C-TRAIN staff was charged with recruitment and support services for candidates. A total of fourteen women were recruited for the program. Of these two had completed their training by 1998.

Procedure

C-TRAIN personnel, led by Jill Stein, recruited 14 women over two years and got them enrolled at Malcolm X. By fall 1998, Patrick Roberts had replaced Jill Stein, and Kennedy King College was added as a place for training. The training consists of two semesters of course work in child development and childcare techniques. C-TRAIN provided funding for tuition and books and support services (e.g., literacy skills) and tracking of the participants.

Outcomes

Two women completed the training by fall 1998. One of these was looking for a job and another had gotten a job. By spring 1999, two women were enrolled at Kennedy King (both in their second semester) and two were at Malcolm X (one in the first semester and one in the second).

Challenges

Barriers to completion of C-TRAIN training were several. One was requiring courses to be taken for college credit. This was feasible for people with the requisite literacy skills but not for those who were not prepared for college level reading and writing. Because of home situations in several cases, it was difficult to maintain contact with participants. Some had no telephones and were either too busy or too distracted to contact C-TRAIN personnel. There was a range of commitment to the program on the part of candidates, some being highly motivated to complete their training and others not. Transportation to classes was a major problem for some. Finally, the City of Chicago has never been wholly happy with large day care facilities. Its own training and certification programs have, since the mid-1980s at least, been geared to individuals doing day care in their own homes. By 1997, the city's policy was to discourage the large group facilities in favor of individual entrepreneurs.

Outcome of the outcomes

Lessons learned from C-TRAIN have served to reformulate the objectives to accomplish the original goal of training local residents to become licensed day care providers. Patrick Roberts and Kathleen Hayes focused efforts on planning a training program more in line with city policy and one that is more sensitive to the needs of the people being trained. In a June 15, 1999 memorandum, Patrick Roberts presented a proposal to reformulate C-TRAIN as the *Near West Home Care Training Institute*. The Institute would comprise UICNI, CUED, Chicago

Department of Human Services, Malcolm X College, and the Westside Consortium as partners.

Briefly, Near West Home Care Training Institute is envisioned as a three-year program to train and license 270 people in three cohorts of 90 people per year. Training is done in stages:

- Pre-training: screening and assessment, a pre-training seminar and licensing and orientation to the training program. This will be C-TRAIN's first role (4 weeks).
- Module 1: Courses--Foundations of Child Development and Introduction to Managing a Home Business (either for academic credit or as a continuing education course, depending on the participant), with C-TRAIN providing support services. (8 weeks)
- Module 2: Courses as above, part 2. (8 weeks)
- Module 3: (optional) completion of work for A.A.S degree.

The project will be housed at Malcolm X, with a director-coordinator, C-TRAIN staff (acting as case managers and conducting pre-training), mentors, CUED evaluators, and teaching staff with a board of Directors consisting of Malcolm X, City of Chicago, UIC (CUED), and Westside Consortium representatives. The construction of a model apartment as a day care laboratory is part of the proposal.

[DOH WATCH AND THE PROPERTY TAX FORUM](#)

Project Inception and Goals

Since 1996, UICNI has provided funding for interns and research assistants to work at the Chicago Rehab Network. Two major projects using UICNI funding have been:

- Analysis of DOH reports (by quarter) on meeting its five-year projections for the construction and rehabbing of affordable housing by income level
- The analysis of patterns of property taxes levied on new and rehabbed housing in different parts of the city and the effects of property tax policies on such trends as gentrification and subsequent forcing of low-income residents out of their neighborhoods.

The goals of these two projects have been to make these data public and available to the 43 members of the Network and to other interested parties and to use these reports to influence DOH policy on the use of funds.

Procedures

Interns use DOH reports and other available data for analysis of allocation of rehab and construction resources by DOH in relation to its own five-year projections in accordance with the Affordable Housing ordinance passed by the city council. These analyses have resulted in a series of CRN reports comparing DOH's projections with their actual allocation of funds and comparing these to the intent of the original ordinance. Findings have been critical of DOH's policies, particularly the differential subsidies allocated to higher income construction at the expense of lower income housing. During this year, two interns have worked on these analyses:

Marlita White and Christina Nerz. They have also expanded their work to include information about the time it takes to process applications to DOH. Interns also accompany CRN personnel to hearings at the city council. In the past, UIC interns were the technical support people at the hearings, but this year they are observers (as CRN has increased its own professional staff with addition of Joyce Probst).

The property tax forum was an idea begun by CRN before UICNI involvement, and interns have helped to maintain its work from 1996 to 1998. Data on property tax patterns are analyzed with regard to the distribution of taxes by neighborhood and how this affects the ability of homeowners to remain in their neighborhoods. These analyses are also made available to CRN's members and are the basis of CRN's own policy work with the county assessor. This work has, however, been shifted from UIC interns to CRN staff.

Besides UIC interns, UICNI has provided funding for a research assistant, Deepa Sanyal, to enable CRN to expand its work to the state level. An experienced researcher specializing in International Development, this is her first experience with a community organization. Her research as focused on how the Illinois Development Authority uses state and federal money in six affordable housing projects throughout the Illinois. How funds are distributed at different income levels, the percentages of single occupant versus rental housing, where development projects are located, and how much of the money is actually disbursed are the major issues that Deepa has addressed in her research. CRN staff considers Deepa's work crucial to their own organizational growth, allowing them to begin to address affordable housing issues such as senior housing in relation to low income housing statewide for the first time.

Results

Work of UIC interns and research assistants has enabled CRN to play a role in shaping affordable housing policies in Chicago that would have been difficult otherwise. The analyses of DOH reports and application processes provided Kevin Jackson and Joyce Probst with the information necessary to both publicize way that DOH has distributed affordable housing money both to projects and to developers and to give testimony at City Council hearings. Analyses of property tax patterns in Chicago has enabled CRN to play a major role in shaping policy that protects homeowners from the worst ravages of gentrification. At the level of building organizational capacity, UIC students' work has been unquestionably important. For the UIC students, the experience has been formative, although this varies with the student. Interns tend to get far more experience in the communities and in the political aspect of Chicago housing than research assistants. For all of the students, their placement at CRN has had the advantage of their being able to see results of their work in a larger context of policy and how it is influenced.

The results of CRN's use of student research are more difficult to assess. DOH practice has in fact changed over the years since CRN's reports began. Low income housing subsidies have increased, particularly over the income levels between 16% and 60% of median income, since 1995, but not to the extent that CRN advocates. Application processing time has decreased from a year or more to seven months, a 42% decrease. How much of this change is attributable to CRN's efforts is impossible to determine. But if one looks at the subtle change in language from earlier reports, e.g., 1995 and 1996, which was adversarial, to the most recent report, *What*

Matters Most, which is even-handed in congratulating DOH on its accomplishments and specifying those areas of policy and practice that need more attention and change, one gets the strong impression of parties who talk to one another about matters of common on a regular basis.

ESPERANZA FAMILIAR

Project Inception and Development

Esperanza Familiar began as a response to inadequate culturally appropriate services for Pilsen families experiencing a range of difficulties and a lack of interest from major funding sources. St. Pius, St. Procopius, and St. Adalbert joined with The Resurrection Project to form a steering committee to address this need. The Jane Addams School of Social Work agreed to provide a liaison and three graduate students to the steering committee to begin a needs assessment of community concerns in the summer of 1996. Richard Kordeh, visiting professor, joined the steering committee as the UIC liaison (and supervisor of the Jane Addams student interns), and the group began a two-year project to develop a curriculum, to find funding, to design outreach, and to plan schedules for the project. Student research on possible models of organization and curriculum were fed to the steering committee, which made all final decisions.

Megan Riley, of the St. Pius staff, supervised the UIC students on a day-to-day basis for the first eighteen months of the project. She described them (in 1996) as “the engine that drives Esperanza Familiar.” By the spring of 1998, the parent workshops, which deal with issues such as domestic violence, adaptation to living in Chicago, social isolation, intergenerational conflict, and the like, began under then director Melanee Mosquera. St. Pius has conducted its own set of workshops, while St. Procopius and St. Adalbert work together under Ana Romero with a separate set of workshops. UIC students in AY 1998-1999 worked at St. Adalbert and St. Procopius.

Workshop Goals and Procedures

The goal of the workshops is to create a supportive environment that empowers participants to address and deal with the difficulties that confront them in. The personal growth that makes empowerment possible requires each participant to look outside his/her own situation, seeing it as part of a larger set of processes that shape the environment that envelops each family. This kind of learning is facilitated by the presence of other people from other families with similar experiences. Each workshop, which meets weekly for either six or twelve sessions, has a particular topic, e.g., Violence Against Women, Leadership Development, Between Teens, Parenting Skills. Workshop procedure is best characterized as a Freirian approach to learning, where a facilitator asks participants questions or poses issues for participants to discuss, introducing certain kinds of information at particular points in the discussion to take discussion in a new direction or to recontextualize what the participants already know. With this kind of procedure, specific events that participants have described get linked with other events such that a larger pattern emerges in the discussion, e.g., links between drinking and employment. In a Freirian model, the outcome of discussion is a larger picture of a family that is part of a community that is part of a city, etc., each level placing constraints on the one it contains. Economic interests, political interests, and other interests of the larger level shape many of the

events that occur at the smaller level. Thus, the experiences of families are not unique, but common experience that results from a shared environment. Change in one's situation is part of establishing a changed relationship to that larger environment. In this context, the skills that bring about these changes make sense as strategies for dealing with one's environment. Discussion, new information, rethinking what is being discussed, recontextualizing personal experience, and devising strategies for implementing change in an enlarged personal context, are parts of a systematic emergence of an enlarged universe of possibilities. Empowerment is one outcome of that emergence.

UIC interns for this year are Laura Licea, Angela Pichardo (both fluent Spanish speakers) and Dia Johnson (who speaks no Spanish), all graduate students at Jane Addams School of Social work, all of whom work as facilitators in the workshops. Dia Johnson's work with the Teens program has capitalized on her prior experience working with adolescents while minimizing her lack of Spanish, since all the teens in her program speak English. Licea and Pichardo have worked with adults in their sessions.

Results

Participants were all recruited from the churches, each of which housed parenting skills, leadership development, and teen courses that were completed in July 1998, December 1999, and April 1999. These courses served 100 families, with childcare for over 150 children of participants attending courses. Some of the participants were referred to counseling services at the participating churches or at Mujeres Latinas en Accion. Facilitators noted changes in most participants (86% female, 14% male) throughout the process of each workshop, but follow up with families after course completion has been impossible to do given lack of staff. The first offerings of leadership development classes have been completed with participants making up their own work plans for conducting community action projects (within their churches and/or in their local communities). Participants expressed not only satisfaction with the courses, but many want to know what "we" are going to do next. [Juan Gamiño had the same experience with the Parent Leadership Program at Walsh School in 1995-1997--a measure of the success of this kind of project is the momentum it generates in the demand for more.]

UIC interns have been more than enthusiastic about their experience with Esperanza Familiar for a number of reasons. First, this gave them a context to join their classroom experience to real world experience in a community context. Theoretical materials that make sense in a classroom context make a very different kind of sense in practice. Principles of General System Theory, for example, are palpable in a Freirian context, whose goal is to get participants to understand their experiences are part of larger systems. These principles come alive in the parenting skills and leadership classes, where personal, family, and ethnic identity are seen to have systematic features. Students also got to test methods learned in the classroom, e.g., the *genogram*, a synthesis of a sociogram, a map, and a genealogy diagram. Participants drew diagrams of family connections in Chicago, using a genealogy chart to link relatives. Then they connected this diagram with relatives outside Chicago, e.g., California and Mexico. These diagrams showed very clearly how and where kin connections were with relative distances. The relative social isolation of some families was painfully clear in their genograms. Participants became intensely involved in this work, not only during class time, but also spending a good deal of time outside

classes working on them. Interns see Esperanza as their classroom--one not dominated by mainstream whites and one where there is no institutionalized barrier to learning. For all three women--all of color--this experienced has fused professional and personal identities in a way that is impossible in a university context. One of the interns has decided from her experience that Pilsen is where she wants to work.

Rich Kordesh and the interns have presented the Esperanza Familiar Project at several professional meeting, and both he and at least one of the interns have had requests for further information from interested professionals. TRP project has also received the prestigious Sara Lee Foundation Spirit Award, \$100,000, for its work with Esperanza Familiar.

Organizational Comments

Esperanza Familiar at St. Adalbert and St. Procopius operates with only two staff people and with interns who vary from year to year. There is an increasing demand from both new participants who have heard about the program by word of mouth and past participants who want new workshops. Ana Romero must contend with increasing demand while the EF steering committee searches for a new director for the program. One full time staff member and three part-time interns have been able to conduct a full set of sessions, but additional duties place a great burden on their time. Such was the case when a group of graduate students from Community Psychology came to St. Adalbert to work on an evaluation instrument for EF. While this project had been proposed to the EF steering committee and approved by them, no one ever queried the staff and interns. This was a project that was simply dumped on them. Had the three psychology students been fluent in Spanish and able to sit in on the sessions and observe them, they would have been able to put together an evaluation instrument that could have been useful. None were fluent enough in Spanish to collect their own data, and so staff had to take the time to explain to them what they and the participants were doing. The information the students got was second hand, and the burden on staff to work with them as well as do their own work was heavy. The instrument that was finally produced has been, according to staff and interns, "useless."

Challenges

Esperanza Familiar is still in its developmental stages, and this affects both how staff does their work and how UIC interns shape their own contributions and their own learning within this project. Thus, the challenges are internal to the project and external to the extent that the partnership with UIC has been part of the project.

Internal Challenges

- To find a new director for the project in a short time period
- To codify the goals, objectives, methods, and philosophy for each class so that the new director has a sense of the project and how it has gone thus far
- To assess and fine tune the classes, particularly the new leadership and teen classes
- To develop a peer facilitator program so that parents who have gone through the classes and function as facilitators in the classes
- Maintaining a flexible schedule with classes held in different locations and interns having

their own time constraints

- The logistics of coordinating childcare for classes when staff is never sure how many children will show up at each class meeting
- Finding staff who are (a) bilingual, (b) comfortable in a faith based setting, and © familiar and comfortable with the community.

External Challenges

- Finding a bilingual liaison between Jane Addams School of Social Work and the EF steering committee (to replace Rich Kordesh, who has left UIC)
- Finding a way to ensure continued participation in the program of qualified, bilingual interns

Recommendations

- Jane Addams School of Social Work should make every effort to continue its partnership with Esperanza Familiar, given its mutual benefits for both TRP and UIC, both in selecting a liaison to the EF steering committee and selecting mature student interns
- Given that this project is in its developmental stages, UICNI coordinators should resist any and every effort by UIC faculty other than the Jane Addams liaison to use this project for training its students or for research unless the products are clearly of use to the **EF staff and interns**, who should be the ones to determine usefulness in terms of the costs to them of participating in the research compared to the benefits of the research.
- Evaluation of this project should be reorganized as a negotiation between UICNI and the Esperanza Familiar directors and staff, following the recommendation above.

SENIOR MANAGERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

This is a program that began in 1997 designed to build peer relationships among cohorts of twelve executive and board members of community organizations (all parts of umbrella organizations) dedicated to community development. Fellows are chosen through application to represent different disciplinary approaches, e.g., housing, economic development, health, and education, and different levels of experience (facilitating mentoring between more and less experienced managers). In regular meetings held at UIC, at the members' organizations, and at sites in Chicago and elsewhere (e.g., San Francisco), fellows designed their own program using a combination of seminars, presentations with discussion, site visits, and one-on-one consultations to become familiar with one another's organizations, their jobs in those organizations, and their positions on various development issues. These issues included the history, successes, challenges and prospects of community based organizations, strategies for accomplishing policy change, welfare reform, economic development and a living wage, and others.

The first cohort of fellows included:

- *Pamela Alfonso*, Executive Director of Metropolitan Tenants Organization
- Lisa Beachum, Community Development Director at the Resurrection Project
- John Donahue, Executive Director of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless,
- Janice Finney, Senior Planning Analyst at the City of Chicago Department of Housing,
- Willie Hayes, Executive Director of the Community Workshop on Economic Development.
- Tony Hernandez, Deputy Director of Industrial Retention, Greater North-Pulaski Development Corporation,
- Maurice Williams, Executive Director of the Roseland Christian Community Homes Corporation,
- Kevin Jackson, Executive Director of the Chicago Rehab Network, and
- Yittayih Zelalem, Senior Planner, Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for neighborhood Development (UIC).

Kevin Jackson was responsible for the organization of the program, maintenance of scheduling, coordination of site visits, and facilitation of meetings.

Fellows reported that they appreciated the time away from their own organizations to reflect on their work and the alternative ways they might do it. One of the consistent themes of discussion was the different kind of tools, strategies, and approaches one might take to specific policy issues. These discussions took advantage of the different disciplinary backgrounds and experience of the fellows, such that fellows gained a wide variety of alternative ways of implementing their organizations' objectives. Early indications from the program are that peer relationships were indeed built up. Some fellows reported being able to tap into other fellows' networks for access to needed resources. There seems to have been a good deal of informal interaction among fellows outside of fellows' meetings. As a cohort, this group appeared to build up solidarity throughout the year, e.g., when forced to miss a meeting, fellows regularly let the others know why they were forced to be absent. These early indicators will be fleshed out when the group holds its proposed wrap up session.

GUADALUPANO CULTURAL CENTER

The sanctuary space at the old St. Vitas church has gone through the first stage of a multi-phase rehab, and the four arts groups that had been using the space signed license agreements to use the space for rehearsals and performances. This space is also used by TRP for occasional dinners and presentations by the Mexican Fine Arts Center and UIC (e.g., the International Center for Health Leadership Development). The license agreements expire on December 1, 1999. In the meantime, Sylvia Puente has been working with a planning committee for use of the space, but says that the idea of a cultural center is now on hold while other programs at TRP have a higher

priority and planning for rehabbing the space (particularly the mezzanine and the heating-ventilation system) proceeds.

GREAT CITIES - GREAT CAREERS

Project Inception and Goals

This project has evolved over the past three years from Steve Tozer's involvement with Benito Juarez High School as part of the Great Cities - Great Careers project and with Professor Connie Yowell's research with elementary school student perceptions of their futures in relation to schooling. Convinced by Yowell's data that there is a major difference in how children of affluent and those of poor parents perceive the relationship between their future career aspirations and their schooling, Tozer and Yowell have sought to turn research findings in classroom practices. The goal of their work at Benito Juarez is to use research findings as a catalyst for curriculum development in Juarez high school English classes that clearly connects their work in high school to their aspirations for future careers. Thus, students come to realize that their achievements in their high school courses are stepping-stones to their career options.

Procedures

This project consists of two related activities--research and curriculum planning and implementation in the classroom. Research with students has used focus groups, surveys, and interviews to find out what students goals for their future are, who they look to for advice and support, what they think education is for, and the like. This is basic information about both student aspirations and the social contexts of those aspirations. Yowell and her students also asked about what students fear the most during high school. These data were collected and presented to the English teachers, who used them to construct the second phase of the project--constructing a curriculum.

The Juarez English teachers have met biweekly with Professors Yowell and Tozer since August, 1998, to work out a series of classroom materials and exercises for the students. They used the research to first address the major issues that had emerged:

- What are the steps that get students from where they are now to their goals?
- Teachers don't care about us
- High school is chaotic

Every classroom presentation, reading, and exercise addresses these issues in one-way or another. Classroom discussions and biweekly writing assignments have been used to get at various aspects of students awareness of themselves in relation to school, to one another, and to their future aspirations. Assignments have included work on the following topics:

- **ABOUT ME:** This one describes who each student thinks he or she is. These essays were discussed and revised.
- **MORNING RITUAL:** Teachers saw things like "First I pick up X, and then we have to

go pick up Y and Z." It was clear why this group of kids regularly arrived late. Teachers used the first drafts to discuss the issues kids had just getting to school. Discussions got students to reflect on their daily routines (and edit their prose, and revise their papers).

- **WHAT I'M GOOD AT:** here there were a wide variety of real world things like dancing, singing, cooking, and not the usual "football"
- **DESCRIBE A CONFLICT (YOU'VE HAD):** this is not necessarily a violent conflict, but some conflict of interest and what they did about it.
- **HOW DO I EDUCATE MY CLASSMATES ABOUT PREVENTING VIOLENCE?** We ran this as a contest. This topic generated a lot of discussion.
- **ADVICE TO GIVE TO 8TH GRADERS ABOUT NEGOTIATING THE TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL:** this topic was generated by research findings on how difficult and stressful the freshman year in high school was for most students
- **DESCRIBE YOUR SPACE AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT:** This was an important essay for teachers and students. According to Rich Gelb, the lead teacher in this project, "This is where we all found out about where a kid's private space is and what it is like. Things like where the kid does his/her homework, the noise level while the kid is trying to get stuff done. We got an idea of the contexts of their lives.
- **METRO CHICAGO HISTORY FAIR** [fair, run by Alan Schwartz out of the Newberry Library, citywide]. Students wrote 7-12 page papers with citations and bibliographies with a field trip to the library to orient them to this project.
- **SCIENCE PROJECT:** studying water pollution by testing the water from the Chicago River, located just next to Juarez and from the Illinois River next to Starved Rock. This involves researching two rivers-Chicago and Illinois rivers, and comparing them.
- **ADVICE TO THE STUDENT COUNCIL FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT:** The school administration was particularly interested in this one
- **PLANNING MY DREAM HOUSE:** This involves students in decision-making: where to live? What kind of house to buy (or build)? Why do you want a basement in this house? Why do you want three bedrooms? How are you going to afford this house in this area? This is a design activity that builds some important kinds of conversations. Teachers used a CD-ROM program that lets the student put pieces of a house together [on the order of SIM CITY].

Results

The kind of outcomes that fulfill this project's goals will not be apparent until students reach their junior or senior years. At this point in the project what we look for is indicators of progress toward this goal. These are of two sorts: commitment of the teachers and the work of the students. There are two indicators of teachers' commitment. One is the satisfaction of the teachers, most of whom were new to Juarez. They expressed satisfaction with the focus of the program, helping them to structure their class work in concert with other teachers. A second indicator is the voluntary participation of the English teachers in Rich Gelb's Saturday Explorers program. Teachers from other departments also cooperated on specific projects, e.g., science teachers with the water testing and drafting teachers on the house designs. Student progress can be seen in the steady improvement of their work through the year, the fact that a number of students from English classes joined the Explorers program, and from the grade patterns. According to Rich Gelb, final grades in English showed a 20% reduction in failing grades when this class of 450 freshmen is compared to previous freshman English classes. This percentage, however, includes number of students who entered Juarez in January after completing a semester at a transition school. If these students were excluded, the reduction of failing grades is actually larger than 20%.

Challenges

While there are a host of challenges to any new curriculum in any school, the major challenges emanate from the ever-changing policies of the Chicago Public Schools, particularly the heavy emphasis on the three different tests that are mandated and the trend toward "direct instruction."

Facilitating Factors

The support of the principal of Benito Juarez High School has thus far been very important to the success of this project. That most of the English teachers are new to the school has also facilitated the adoption of the project, over which the teachers have taken ownership.

Recommendations

As this project develops, every effort should be made by GCI to help Tozer and Yowell to disseminate information about the project.

ACTIVITIES

NI UPDATE

At the UICNI Update meeting held on March 4, 1999 at Circle Center, there were two presentations for an audience that numbered just 22 people. UIC Police presented their program on dealing with bullying in four Pilsen elementary schools. Using a combination of surveys, conflict resolution strategies, one-on-one counseling, and class presentations, UIC police and graduate students from Jane Addams have been working with students to deal with bullying. Two officers are assigned to visit two schools each on a regular basis, while graduate students work directly with the children. Chief Boyer stated that control of bullying, not only in school but also on the way to and from the schools should reduce absenteeism as well as stress.

Connie Yowell and Richard Gelb gave a presentation on the Great Cities - Great Careers program at Benito Juarez High School. Yowell described the research component of the Program and how research results are fed to the teachers. Gelb described the planning process for the English curriculum in which teachers try to help students link their career aspirations with the educational process (see Great Cities - Great Careers above). This presentation elicited several questions and animated discussion.

Organizational Comments

The UICNI Update was begun to serve the information dissemination and networking function that was so important a part of the old Planning Committee. The small audiences for this activity are clear evidence that it serves neither purpose very well, at least as it is presently organized.

Recommendations

The Steering Committee needs to rethink this activity. What are its objectives? What is the intended audience for the NI Update, and what should this audience come away with?

BUILDING TOMORROW'S NEW BUSINESS PEOPLE: A UICNI COMMUNITY GRANT FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR INTERNSHIPS

This is a new program is designed to support the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership's Social Entrepreneur Internship program, for which UIC received a \$25,000 grant from the Center. The money pays for five MBA student interns to work on projects proposed by community organizations. Each intern is paid \$7000, of which the Kauffman grant pays \$5000, while the community organization pays the rest. UICNI's program is designed to help alleviate the financial burden for those community organizations with good projects that are unable to afford \$2000. For each of three community groups from the Neighborhoods Initiative area selected by Kauffman, UICNI has made available grants of \$500 to \$1000 to help the organization match its required \$2000 amount.

The three organizations selected this year were

- *The Resurrection Project* for research and development of a business lending needs assessment analysis for the Hispanic population in the City of Chicago
- *The Gads Hill Child Care Center* for work on a business plan for a new child care center for the lower West Side, Near West side, North Lawndale and South Lawndale.
- *Boys To Men* for project administration for the Boys To Men Entrepreneurial Program.

Interns will work through the summer on these projects.

UICNI STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee has continued the practice begun last year of monitoring ongoing NI projects with updates on the Affordable Housing Fund and the Commercial Development programs, whose funds must be spent within the five-year JCD limit, as well as other NI projects, e.g., the Great Cities Great Careers project at Benito Juarez. The committee has also expanded its programmatic interests, inviting presentations of proposed projects, e.g., Virginia Martinez's conflict resolution program, and projects done by other units, e.g., the Community Prevention Research Center's projects at TRP (an evaluation instrument for Esperanza Familiar and a project at the James Jordan Boys and Girls Club to increase the participation of 13-19 years olds in activities at the club). Although these sorts of presentations are valuable in disseminating information to committee members on what is going on in the NI area, they have taken an increasingly greater proportion of meeting time. At the April meeting, the committee never got to its own business agenda.

The Steering Committee continues to have unfilled member slots, and recruiting new members continues to be a challenge. This is exacerbated by organizational turnover that removes committee members, e.g., James Isaac has left ESDC, Tim Later has left Near West Community Development Corporation, and Ismael Guerrero has left TRP. Recruitment is now a major issue for the Steering Committee.

Recommendations

- The Steering Committee needs to decide how it wants its agenda arranged. Besides project updates, which are part of its business, the committee needs to decide what kinds of project presentations it wants to hear about (if any) and why. Loomis Mayfield and Nacho Gonzalez have a lot of information about what is going on in the NI area, and it might be helpful if they prepare a menu of possible options for the committee to choose.
- Recruitment of new members may need some policy decisions. Do particular partners have permanent slots on the committee, and if so, should new members be recruited with an eye to making their organizations permanent members? Should members be recruited on a basis other than being an NI partner?

CONCLUSION

UICNI continues to generate projects that are unique: the Great Cities - Great Careers projects, which has been transformed by Tozer, Yowell, Gelb, and the Juarez English teachers into a powerful combination of research and action in the classroom whose early indicators appear to justify the considerable effort the program requires. The Esperanza Familiar program appears also to be achieving its empowerment goals, given early indicators such as willingness to talk frankly in public, willingness of some families to accept counseling, and enthusiasm of families who have participated to go on to new sessions. The DOH Watch and Property Tax Forum have resulted in policy changes and dollar shifts by the City's department of housing and the willingness of the tax assessor's office to listen to CRN. The Affordable Housing Fund program has resulted in families in Pilsen rehabbing their properties with Near West Side families about

to begin rehabbing. Commercial Development projects have had mixed success. While the Near West Side Community Development Corporation's Madison Street Project, despite a temporary delay, has been going according to schedule, the Pilsen project has lost its university partner. The CityLab project in Pilsen has demonstrated the value of combining architecture and urban planning students in a single project according to the clients for this project. Their dissemination of the project on the CityLab Website is a major step that could be a useful model for other UICNI projects. UICNI projects have involved over 45 graduate students and 6 undergraduate students this year. The number of faculty involved has remained steady.

It seems clear that UICNI personnel know how to create partnerships and to select projects that utilize the resources the university has to offer. Students gain valuable experience and new kinds of knowledge about the community context. They have clearly contributed to development and development planning in the Pilsen and Near West neighborhoods. That this is the case is evidenced by the absence of discussions about "trust" and "top down-bottom up" planning. The partnership process has been institutionalized--and this was one of the major goals put forward by UICNI directors Weiwel and Alpern in 1996. But in achieving this goal, there is a curious paradox. UICNI appears to enjoy a national reputation as one of the top five university programs in the United States, according to outside evaluators of the Great Cities Institute. Yet it is barely known outside the walls of 412 S. Peoria St. Steering Committee members have discussed this issue in the past as a matter of weak public relations efforts. This is only partly true. What is it, after all, that the director, the coordinators, and the committee should be publicizing?

While there is not unanimity among those who founded the Neighborhoods Initiative on the original vision, there is a common thread of agreement. UICNI was envisioned as a combination of a clearinghouse for information about partnerships and collaborative projects on campus and a forum for sharing information and experiences between community members and UIC faculty--a place where academics and people working in their communities would engage one another in common cause. One may call this vision naive or fanciful, but it was compelling and for some it remains so. The original Planning Committee was to have been the body where this could happen, and indeed, that amorphous body did have its moments. But it is clear that that vision has not been achieved, although the groundwork of partnership and collaboration from which it was to be built has been achieved. What we have is a set of partnerships, collaborative projects, coordinate activities (such as coursework and the UICNI Update), and a Steering Committee that has functioned at the advisory and supervisory levels efficiently. Faculty and community partners have presented materials on projects at national meetings and have published some findings. There is a Newsletter. But these are all sets of activities done under a rubric. UICNI has not developed a distinctive identity. With regard to the original vision, this is surely frustrating, but is it a bad thing?

The question that the Steering Committee members and the UICNI coordinators must answer is what they think the Neighborhoods Initiative is and what they want the Neighborhoods Initiative to be. Are there pieces of the original vision that can or should be developed? Are there things that UICNI does not do now but should be doing? Is there some less grand, but integrated vision for UICNI that we should develop such that we do it very well, perhaps better than most? At this point, the collective vision for UICNI is probably more important than what projects will be

started next. This is probably best done by querying individuals about their personal visions of UICNI and building from there.