

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Teachers Gather to Discuss How Classroom Practice Can Help Improve Education Policy and Benefit Students

Wilmington, DE, October 31, 2005: Seventy educators affiliated with the Teachers Network Leadership Institute (TNLI) assembled in Wilmington, Delaware this past weekend to help bridge the education policy gap between the schoolhouse and the statehouse. All of these educators—from K-12 schools, universities, state education departments, and foundations—are interested in building the teachers’ voice in education policy by conducting action research in their classrooms and meeting with policy makers about needed reforms. They came to the conference, hosted by the Rodel Foundation of Delaware, from San Francisco, Chicago, Delaware, New York City, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Virginia, and represented hundreds of the teachers involved in the 12 nationwide affiliates of TNLI. Major funding for the Teachers Network Leadership Institute nationwide is provided by MetLife Foundation.

The teachers examined research findings and discussed policy implications around a number of topics, including professional development, curriculum implementation, classroom management, school climate, student assessment, and parental involvement. They examined research produced by the program, looked at ways in which that research could be used to influence policy changes, and worked on advocacy and communications tools that they can use in their cities and states to push for policy improvements.

In her opening remarks, Delaware Secretary of Education Valerie Woodruff discussed her desire to strengthen communications among those involved in education reform. She then challenged the teachers “to find ways that we can hear each other better.” Throughout the weekend other guest speakers, including Dr. Katherine Merseth, Director of the teacher education program at Harvard University, and Adam Kernan-Schloss from KSA-Plus Communications in Arlington, VA, guided discussions about how the attendees could connect education research to policy and practice in order to improve student achievement.

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Candice Hopkins of Delaware described the conference as the “ultimate professional development experience.” This forum “helped me realize that my little piece of research on my own classroom practices can be very powerful when linked to research in California, Illinois, and elsewhere.” “Gathering as a nationwide organization made me realize that our research goes beyond our own four walls and lends strong support to policy changes that will better meet the needs of students,” said Aneesha Jacko from New York City. At the end of the weekend, TNLI affiliate director Mark Triplett from San Francisco noted that his affiliate is “now more empowered to adopt a clear, concise message to advocate for policy changes.”

The Teachers Network Leadership Institute (TNLI), a project of the national Teachers Network, was established to improve student achievement by bringing the teachers’ voice to education policymaking. Through classroom research, TNLI teachers seek to bring their experience and expertise to current debates on education policy. More information about the Teachers Network can be found at www.teachersnetwork.org.

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