

## **Making the Argument for Depth Instead of Breadth in K-12 Outreach** *, Stone Center for Latin American Studies, Tulane University*

Over the past ten years outreach professionals have increasingly been told to increase their numbers in order to increase quantitative impact. The implications have been to increase the number of events and the number of attendees in order that the Congress can see the “measurable impact” of our funding on K-12 education. The pros to this approach are obvious: Title VI NRCs and LRCs reach many constituents, in many parts of the U.S., many K-12 teachers around the U.S. receive our message and, it is implied, our programs impact a large number of students. The downside to this approach has been that the deep impact, or intense curricular change, is difficult to achieve with this results. Quite a few NRCs have chosen to split their efforts between the encouraged approach to programming and intensive relationships developed with a few schools. But is this going to impact outreach scores? Or will legislators only see that our numbers decrease and therefore imply that our funding should decrease? In this discussion, I will explore two of the questions posed to us as panelists:

2. Why would it make sense for a university to partner with an individual school, rather than spread its outreach resources more broadly? How can an IEPS grantee make the case that deep impact is more important, effective, and successful?
4. [sic] What impact would such a focus have on future applications for renewal of Title VI programs, since often the number, size, and scope of outreach programs seems to be a *de facto* priority within the grant competition?

### ***Why Partner with an Individual School?***

In K-12 outreach we would like to see our work influence K-12 education at all levels: student, teacher, school site, district, and state. Since each state individually determines its standards and curriculum, it only makes sense that ultimately a NRC would like to exert influence at that level. With the current approach, I would argue that we only have the most intense impact at the teacher level – particularly with our absolutely priority focused on K-12 professional development for educators. The big question is: How can we measure intense impact at those different levels? First I would like to discuss how partnering with an individual school can potentially impact these levels.

*At the student-level, school-site outreach programming potentially could:*

- increase the level of student engagement in international content across the curriculum, not just in one subject;
- encourage articulation of international content between grades and possible schools in a system (i.e. elementary to middle to high);
- increase the demand for the study of languages of the region;

- prepare more students at higher levels of area studies content knowledge and potentially encourage higher levels of proficiency in a second or third language.

*At the teacher-level, the focus on an individual school could:*

- unite teachers to plan their curriculum across the subjects areas therefore encourage cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching;
- encourage sustainability in curricular planning and programming year after year by working with the same cohort of teachers;
- increase the numbers of “highly qualified” or master teachers by encouraging them to continue study in disciplinary or interdisciplinary departments at higher education institutions;
- encourage the production of research in K-12 international education by training and funding teachers to conduct action research in their own schools and classrooms.

*At the school-site level, this individual attention could:*

- promote engagement by the administration of the school therefore increasing the likelihood of the success of the outreach programming;
- increase matching funds from school districts and other funding sources by focusing grant-writers on such programming;
- energize a primary or secondary faculty with a university and school-site administrative supported program;
- increase press coverage of NRCs and partner schools.

*At the state-level, the focus on school-site programming could:*

- facilitate the recognition of the NRC as an official continuing education or professional development provider for teachers in a district or state-wide;
- increase the international content in assessment materials – state tests, graduation exit exams, etc. . .
- increase the visibility of the NRC as a quality curriculum provider for other schools and districts in the state.

A school-centered focus helps us focus our efforts on the integration of international education themes at a number of levels: deep curricular change, long-term engagement of the student and teacher population, assessment reflective of international education content, and addressing the K-12/post-secondary partnership at a deep and sustained level. I do not believe there is any person who would argue that every NRC attempts to achieve the above objectives, but if an NRC would be allowed to focus exclusively on school-site programming without being penalized, we would be more likely to approach sustained and meaningful success for all of the objectives.

***What Impact Would Individual School Focus Have on Future Title VI Applications?***

First and foremost, the entire system of assessing the impact of outreach activities would need to be redesigned to address such a radical change in the focus of K-12 outreach activities. Such a re-evaluation of the system, would require the involvement of grantees who are recommended to have already focused on individual, school-site outreach programming and developed assessment instruments which measure the effectiveness of such programming.

One key improvement to the outreach activity measurement system would be the ability to conduct long-term assessments or even assessments which are developed to measure the effectiveness of a program for the grant period (now four years for both NRCs and LRCs). The yearly performance reports only asks grantees to report on the hard numbers of activities during the previous year, not over successive years.

Another improvement to such an evaluation system would be the ability of the outreach programming partners to report on the activity (i.e. teachers and/or administrators of the individual school). Such reporting is already in effect for the Fulbright Hays Group Study Abroad Projects and could be implemented for NRC and LRC projects that are school-site focused.

Second, an investment in individual school programming would require an NRC to develop long-term relationships with the school administration and personnel which also implies an investment in the NRC's own outreach personnel. School-site programming requires close working relationships between all parties participating in the programming – individual, one-off professional development workshops do not require such close attention. The lack of attention to a continuous cohort of teachers and administrators counteracts the attempt to effect long-term change in the international content of a state, district or individual school's curriculum.

Finally, such a shift to individual school programming would require an NRC to more effectively plan it's K-12 outreach projects. Working with a school-site requires attention to the student population, teachers and administrators, and also to the curriculum in place at the school or district. Attention to these factors would encourage the personnel of the outreach program to develop activities with the school, not for the school, therefore encouraging expertise and deep knowledge of the content presented on the part of the school-site participants, and deeper knowledge of the curriculum for the NRC outreach personnel.

### ***Model K-12 Schools to Partner With***

On a final note, I have been asked to comment on the types of schools with international focus and which schools might be looking for partners.

First and foremost I would like to encourage each and every NRC to consider working closely with a charter school or multiple charter schools if they exist in

your state (or it's equivalent). Charter school laws in each state vary widely but basically charter schools are independent, yet public, schools which are allowed to operate independently from the district or state curriculum and very often are tailored to meet the needs of the community. Some charter schools have an international or immersion language focus making them natural partners for an area studies center. But there are other schools with administrators, teachers and boards that are equally willing and able to work with NRCs or LRCs even though they may not exclusively be focused on international themes or immersion education.

Obviously any school, in any district or even any private school could be a viable partner for an NRC or LRC. An area studies or language resource center who partners with a school must be willing to make a long-term commitment and vice-versa with the school. The most vital factor to the success of any outreach or educational programming project is the commitment of it's partners – the students, teachers, administrators, and even parents – to make the project a success over the long-term.