

Rowland Unified School District and The Ball Foundation Collaborate To Increase Student Literacy Achievement

In September, 2008, the Board of Education of Rowland Unified School District (RUSD) and the Board of Directors of the Ball Foundation approved an agreement regarding the RUSD-Ball Partnership. The agreement represents a commitment between RUSD and the Ball Foundation to collaborate to increase student achievement in literacy over the next three years (2008-2011). The district and the foundation are eager to build on the excellent work that has been done in the first two years of partnership: a district-wide assessment of assets and aspirations related to student literacy and the development of RUSD's new strategic plan.

What Is the Work?

During the 2008-2009 school year, the district and the foundation will do the following:

- Begin to build the capacity of RUSD staff and other stakeholders to fully implement the Rowland Literacy Initiative
- Begin to build the capacity of RUSD staff and other stakeholders to fully implement the District's Strategic Plan adopted in July 2008
- Connect the work of the Rowland Literacy Initiative and the Strategic Plan in a coherent way so that together these two major bodies of work begin to become the "way the District" fulfills its mission.

Furthermore, the Ball Foundation will incorporate, teach and model a set of seven interconnected design principles as it collaborates with RUSD to accomplish the above goals. The design principles are listed and described in Appendix 1. For reference, RUSD's mission statement and the eight strategies in the strategic plan are listed in Appendix 2.

Over the life of the mutual work of the district and the foundation, major cornerstones of practice and adult learning will emerge. We believe that every action step that we take should reflect the presence of one or more of these cornerstones. The list of partnership cornerstones includes the following:

- Engage every staff member as a learner.
- Build common understanding and agreements about literacy.

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- Increase awareness and understanding of RUSD as a complex system.
 - Engage parents as full partners in their students' learning journey.
 - Ensure rich and diverse professional learning for all staff.
 - Create a leaderful environment where each person holds himself/herself accountable.
 - Use inquiry to develop common understanding and agreements about practice.
 - Create networks of staff to bridge the knowing-doing gap.
 - Use a new social architecture for engaging RUSD staff and stakeholders.
 - Develop and use feedback loops for all staff in information-rich environments.

An Invitation to the Work

We invite all RUSD staff to participate in the work of the Rowland Literacy Initiative and the implementation of the RUSD Strategic Plan. All staff members will engage at one of the following levels:

- Information and knowledge exchange level: Maintain awareness, support colleagues through two-way communication and feedback. Everyone will participate at this level, starting with an “immersion day” for creating common ground district-wide.
- Network engagement level: Serve as a member of one or more learning networks with the goal of developing communities of practice. This year, we anticipate convening three or four full-day formal learning events for each network. Network membership is self-selected and open to all.
- Leaderful level: Serve as a member of a learning network and serve as a member of a Partnership Team in order to assure coherence among all networks and levels of engagement. The Partnership Team will be comprised of district and foundation representatives. It will be empowered to establish and guide the strategic direction of the collaboration between RUSD and the Ball Foundation, to construct and review the associated budget, to communicate with all stakeholders, and to make decisions about the mutual work.

About Networks

The district, with the foundation's support, will create at least three learning networks that hold the potential to develop into communities of practice. A learning network is simply a group of people that come together to find others engaged in similar work; it connects educators with shared interests or shared roles together to learn and deepen their understanding about literacy teaching and learning. A community of practice is a group of people who make a commitment to

one another to refine and develop shared practices and deepen their collective expertise in a specific area. Our intent is for networks eventually to mature into and/or spin-off multiple communities of practice. The three networks we anticipate supporting during 2008-2009 are listed below:

- A network of teachers and administrative staff that will generate knowledge about best practices in literacy instruction that can be implemented across the district. This network will inform its earliest work with the baseline asset assessment and information generated in district-wide literacy conversations that occurred in the spring of 2008
- A network of district stakeholders that will begin implementation of Strategy 2, Action Step 1 of the Strategic Plan (identify teaching principles that will guide all teaching and learning)
- A network composed of members of the District Leadership Team that will generate knowledge about best organizational and leadership practices that can be implemented across the district

Learning opportunities for these networks will be based upon recognition and support of the belief that the district already possesses collective wisdom and expertise. Learning networks will be designed and supported so that participants will ask and answer four questions with one another:

- What are we doing? (shared understanding of goals and outcomes)
- How are we doing it? (understanding of and deepening expertise around shared practices)
- How will we know we are doing it? (understanding of and deepening expertise around ways to gather evidence for decision-making, including artifacts of student learning)
- Who else needs to be in the conversation? (understanding and honoring the wisdom that resides in the system)

The Ball Foundation and RUSD look forward to an exciting and challenging three years. We believe that learning is the pathway to change. Our collaboration will connect district stakeholders to each other and to the information generated in their mutual work in order to ensure a culture in which instructional, leadership, and organizational practices change in fundamental ways in and across all levels of the system in order to support high literacy achievement for all students.

Appendix 1: Ball Foundation Design Principles for Organizational Learning and Change

Design Principles	Implications for Working with Partners
<i>Build shared purpose</i>	Bring people together to discover what they really care about, to determine their highest aspirations for students, and invite them into something larger than themselves
<i>Create adaptive solutions</i>	Co-create with partners ways to acquire, share and use information that generate new relationships and connections to solve problems
<i>Use inquiry to guide practice</i>	Bring people together in dialogue, in learning and reflection where they ask questions that matter, seek relevant information and data, and plan and implement actions with ongoing feedback
<i>Build on assets</i>	Identify and build on strengths, values, traditions, practices and accomplishments
<i>Access the capacity of stakeholders</i>	Engage staff, students, parents and community members in learning about the district, sharing what is important and making choices about what is best for the school district
<i>Work in systemic ways</i>	Engage people in ways that help them gain access to each other and to information and see interconnections among grade levels, subject areas, schools, families, neighborhoods, processes and relationships
<i>Attend to content and process</i>	Create learning processes that make meaning and find connections among ideas, people and situations

Appendix 2: RUSD Strategic Plan

Mission Statement	Strategies
The mission of Rowland Unified School District, the progressive international community united in learning, is to empower students so that each actualizes his or her unique potential and responsibly contributes to a global society, through a system distinguished by rigorous academics, innovative use of technology, creative exploration, and nurturing learning experiences.	<p>Strategy I: We will ensure that each student’s individual learning plan actualizes his/her multi-dimensional potential.</p> <p>Strategy II: We will transform teaching and learning to ensure the actualization of each student’s unique potential.</p> <p>Strategy III: We will ensure optimal learning environments that nurture the actualization of each student’s potential.</p> <p>Strategy IV: We will provide all students with an array of learning experiences in a global context.</p> <p>Strategy V: We will ensure superior classified and certificated staff.</p> <p>Strategy VI: We will engage all families as active participants in student learning.</p> <p>Strategy VII: We will ensure the district has a reciprocal relationship with the community.</p> <p>Strategy VIII: We will ensure a coherent, constantly emerging system.</p>