

FirstSchool

UNITING THE BEST OF EARLY CHILDHOOD,
ELEMENTARY, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Last Month in FirstSchool

December 2012



Mural by Leo Rucker

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Fond Farewells

Throughout the six plus years of this project we have benefitted from the knowledge, experience, talent, humor and forbearance of a team of incredible people. Many of these people will be leaving FirstSchool, surely in body, but hopefully not in spirit. Dick Clifford conceived of, initiated, and shepherded FirstSchool. Marvin McKinney ensured funding and important linkages. Diane Early made certain we had a solid and comprehensive data base and helped us to think in meaningful ways about what we have learned. Iheoma Iruka focused us and prodded us to be our best selves. Carolyn Cobb provided historical and current views of policy and practice in the state and across the nation. Sandra Garcia and Karlin Tichenor helped us with details both great and small. We send our thanks for their huge contributions to FirstSchool. Suffice it to say we will miss them in every possible way.

North Carolina Schools

In November, the FS Leadership Teams from each of our four NC partner schools met in Chapel Hill for a full day of professional development. Twenty-five principals and teachers convened with the FS team of Sam Oertwig, Cristina Gillanders, Sharon Ritchie, Jenille Morgan, and Adam

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Holland to explore oral language and vocabulary development for dual language learners. The focus was on the use of read-aloud and how it can be used to support literacy comprehension and skills in this specific group of students.

North Carolina's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant

State Superintendent, June Atkinson, sent a letter of invitation in November to eight school districts as potential partners with FirstSchool as part of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. This partnership will involve three years of technical assistance for one district with the purpose of strengthening Pre K through 3rd grade educational practices throughout the district. We were pleased that five districts expressed interest. A selection process has been underway, part of which involved Sam Oertwig organizing and conducting in-district presentations. The selection of our partner district is expected to be completed before the winter break begins.

Michigan

Adam Holland spent an entire day with the Leadership Team in November sharing research and practice about student motivation and engagement. Understanding the role of motivation is key to understanding children, increasing achievement, and decreasing educator stress levels. Adam worked with the group to deepen our understanding about the various aspects of developing a quality classroom environment and applying motivational theory to classroom practice. He challenged us to think critically about the role of motivation in instructional practices and student engagement and to use knowledge learned during the session to make



concrete changes to classroom and school practices. Much positive interest was generated and we are planning on continuing the work with Adam in the next several months.

We wish you very happy holidays and an excellent New Year.