

Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training:

A Summit of the Americas Initiative

Advisory Committee Meeting #1

Ronald Reagan Building
International Gateway Conference
August 13-14, 2001
Washington, DC

Chair: David Evans
Facilitator: Janet Robb

Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity

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**CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING:
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8:30 – 9:00

The members of the Advisory Committee took care of administrative details with CAII's personnel.

9:00 – 10:00

- Letitia Butler welcomed the Advisory Committee. Ms. Butler explained how the creation of three subregional centers of excellence in teacher training is an initiative of the last Summit of the Americas. She reminded the audience how passionately the President and the First Lady feel about education and elaborated on how the creation of three subregional centers would contribute to building strategic alliances among governments corporate world, and institutions. Ms. Butler stressed how important it is that children learn to learn, and how education is the most important thing to do in the Hemisphere. She expressed her hope that the Committee will bring their advice and coaching to the execution of this project.

- Ambassador Noriega welcomed everybody. He gave a summary of his experience working for USAID and how in 1990 he started an AID mission in Nicaragua and how exciting it was. He described how real change came with democratic change and the introduction of textbooks, and how reading is the new civil right. Ambassador Noriega confirmed the commitment of the President and the First Lady, and how teacher training has a multiplying effect and how it will bring an opportunity to improve lives and enforce the President's vision.

- Lenore Garcia reminded everybody of DOE's domestic mission and how, increasingly, they need to engage in international collaborations. Ms. Garcia stressed how we can learn from other countries to improve our education system, and how it has become imperative to work with other countries in the Hemisphere because of the local population changes. She reminded the audience of the great hopes and expectations that summits inspire, and the great commitments they entail. She also underlined the common purpose of the 34 hemispheric presidents.

- Letitia Butler commented on how summits inspire great optimism and cynicism. Nevertheless, she stressed, in this particular case, she has been working since April and reporting on a monthly bases to the NSC. Following she invited everybody around the table to introduce themselves, and introduced Janet Robb as the facilitator, Don Graybill and Antonieta Harwood, from CAII, and David Evans as chairperson of the meeting.

- Josie Tinajero introduced herself as the Acting Dean of the College of Education, University of Texas at El Paso, her focus being on second language learners and bilingual education. She's in the Advisory Committee of Reading First, in a cooperation with Children's TV Workshop. She has been an active part in the development of the Reading Academies, which have trained 52,000 teachers, and how the Reading Academies were meant for Spanish speaking teachers. The University of Texas has participated in a USAID program funded in El Salvador. Dr. Tinajero described UT as a university with a great outreach component at all levels.
- Dr. Douglas Carnine introduced himself as a Professor at the University of Oregon, Regional Center to Improve Tools for Educators. The purpose of the center is to bring research to schools and implementing reading initiatives. The states of Florida, New York, Washington, Hawaii, California have implemented and used the Center's programs. These programs try to translate policy into practice. Dr. Carnine stressed the value of good research at the early stages of assessments and confirmed that one of the great concerns in this kind of initiative is fidelity. The programs are particularly targeted to disadvantaged children in the US.
- Denise Vaillant introduced herself as a directive of the Department of Public Education Administration in Uruguay, dedicated to the implementation and evaluation of teacher training centers. She has professional experience en the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Costa Rica, Peru, Chile, Brazil, and French speaking Africa. She created the design of regional teacher training centers in Uruguay in 1997, a very successful innovation. For the first time, sub regional centers were created, where teachers coming from different parts of the country lived in campus. Since 1998 she has been working on a bi-national initiative between Uruguay and Spain, implementing three different programs involved in mentoring teachers during their first 5 years of their teacher experience.
- Letitia Butler reminded everybody of how important it is the different existing experiences that everybody is bringing to this meeting.
- Jose Carleton Corrales introduced himself as the President of a teacher training institution and having devoted his whole career to teacher training. He has worked in different projects with the World Bank, IDB, InterAmerican Dialogue, PREAL, etc. He summarized the thrust of his career as teaching teachers to help themselves. Dr. Corrales admitted what a great problem prevails, because teachers are not well trained nor paid.
- Dr. Carol Keller introduced himself as the director of the School of Education and Deputy Director for Programming and Planning at the University of West Indies. His whole experience is in teacher education and has served in the education task force of CARICOM.
- Janet Robb spoke about her career in education and curriculum development. Most of her professional experience has been in Africa and has very little information on Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Don Graybill introduced CAII's role providing technical assistance to USAID under the BEPS project, and to the creation of the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training. His professional experience has been in international education and development during 20 years, mostly in LAC, but he has no experience in the teacher training, except in two opportunities.
- Antonieta Harwood introduced herself as the team coordinator and expressed her satisfaction for this opportunity to have experts from the region and put together all their experience with the US experience.
- Arthur Richardson introduced himself as the Director of the School of Education, University of West Indies. He is in charge of overseeing all teacher training and teacher development activities in the Caribbean. He is also a professor of teacher education. Dr. Richardson has also experience in developmental work. He reminded everybody of another similar presidential initiative from the mid 80s in which he also participated.
- Ernesto Schiefelbein expressed his discouragement in front of the IDB comparative surveys from different regions showing that 40% of students in Latin America cannot read in 4th. grade. Teachers don't know the minimum they should be teaching. 80% of the population could not perform a minimum task. Regretfully, education has not accumulated knowledge. Doctors, lawyers have accumulated knowledge together, but not educators. He reminded the audience of previous experiences carried out by PREAL in 7 Latin American countries, which confirmed that teachers were preaching, but not teaching. An effort was set up to teach to read, but the necessary change among teachers was very difficult. He is pleased to see the opportunity to build on best processes that are being used in the sub-continent, put the research in a data base and make it available.
- Clemencia Chiappe presented her experience in education, communication, and teacher training in Latin America and Africa. She works now for the city of Bogota in a joint project with the Ministry of Education, and is professor of education and sociology, as well as director of IDEP. The Institute produces civics education TV program stressing pedagogical input, with different series for teachers and for adolescent students. This effort has analyzed what goes on in the classroom, how does the teacher go from one point to the other, and has evaluated the results through tests and other pedagogical concepts. The institute has also developed a way for teachers and teacher schools to work together.
- Beatrice Rangel presented herself as the Senior Advisor to the Cisneros Group Chairman, and she is in charge of the corporate responsibility programs. The involvement of the company in educational programs began 5 years ago when the qualified personnel necessary to establish Direct TV in Latin and Central America became so difficult to recruit. The company realized that the difficulties would only increase in the years to come, and began to consider how would this affect the future investment in the region. This is how a 24-hour educational channel was born. The channel is used in 30,000 primary schools in all of Latin America. When they focused on teacher training difficulties with Ministries of Education, unions and teachers began to

arise. Their assessments proved the difficult circumstance teachers have to work under; no teaching materials, constant changes in the programs, being the last ones to know, no support, etc.

- Rebecca Adams introduced herself as a schoolteacher from Florida, with experience in rural disadvantaged areas. She is also a certified school principal and the topic of her Ph.D. was education in the Caribbean. She is now the project manager for USAID.
- Terry Tracy explained that her role was to provide the political aspect of the project. To keep the timeline the NSC has set and review funds and sustainability. Her purpose is to maintain the time line without sacrificing the quality in order to keep the presence of the President. She is also interested in funding and resources and how to develop future cooperations in order to maintain the sustainability. For this purpose, she believes that each center should have a person trained in fundraising.
- David Evans is the Chief of Education with USAID. He is an economist and has worked for the Government for 27 years. He's a specialist in project design and evaluation and has served in Egypt, Jamaica, and South Africa. He then proceeded to present an overview of the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training.

10:20 – 12:00 Overview of the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training. Dialogue

The idea of creating these three regional Centers of Excellence was born when the Western Hemisphere office asked for proposals for what could be done, how to capture already existing resources, in order to fill in the Summit of the Americas initiative. For this purpose, we have developed a partnership with DOE, OAS, the WHA of the Department of State, ECA, etc. When we reviewed the existing data to identify the needs of the region, we realized that between 10-40% of the teachers in the region are not well trained, most of them work under very poor conditions, with no materials or resources. Teachers, especially those in the early grades, are the most inexperienced; they work in almost complete isolation from regional and central governments or teaching practices. That's how we conceived a project with three components: First, improve practices of first three grade teachers in reading by upgrading their training. Second improve productivity in the classroom. And third, develop an Internet portal where teachers could communicate with other teachers and teacher training institutions, and where isolated teachers could go for virtual courses. Nonetheless, this is not a blueprint, and our task here is to look at these elements and add or subtract. We will soon realize how common the problems we are facing are, in the US and in Latin America, and how much they all have to learn from each other. The Government funds available for the project should act as a catalyst to attract the cooperation from the countries in Latin America and the private sector, foundations, universities. We already have the commitment from the President of the U.S. and the First Lady, and it will be sealed with an event in November. We have an impressive group here, and we need your best professional advice on how to attract private sector interest, how best encourage cooperation among the countries, how to

contact not only multinationals, but also the local industry. We are interested in attracting companies with a commitment, with social conscience.

- Don Graybill presented how BEPS is located in the structure of USAID, and how CAII, in association with CARE and GWU, has a 5 year contract to support basic education, including education policy reform, child labor, education with countries in crisis, etc. This activity would fall under this structure, this Task Order, within the Latin American bureau. There are other activities operating in parallel, evaluation of PREAL, of Falconbridge, provide technical assistance to USAID El Salvador, etc. We are here to support you and to bring the Centers of Excellence in Teacher Training to life, to support the coordination needs among you, and to support the regional assessment teams.

- Antonieta Harwood expanded on how the Centers of Excellence are a process, and how this meeting is the first step of the project. It will then evolve into other activities. In this the first Advisory Committee meeting we have to define the roles of the Committee and prepare the Caribbean Team. At the 2nd. meeting we will review the report from the Caribbean Team and study the existing resources in the U.S. At the 3rd. meeting we will review the Central American, DR and Mexico reports and prepare the Andean team. At the 4th. meeting we will review the Andean report, analyze the subregional institutional capacities, and the design and implementation of the centers.

The sub-regional assessments should provide us with a documented review based on the visit to the field, where the information has been collected on topics such as availability of the private sector, available institutions. Once the right institutions have been identified, we will send another team to make an institutional analysis. The U.S. team will have to report on which institutions and which projects could better suit as partners with institutions in Latin America. Our first team is bound for the Caribbean region in two weeks, and the Central America assessment team will be in the field in September.

- David Evans added that although the Advisory Committee will be necessary through the implementation process, its most important role would be during the creation of the Centers.

- Janet Robb emphasized that our purpose was to share the existing riches and how to make them extensive to the required areas, regionalize. Janet asked the members to envision how to finish the sentence “a Center of Excellence will offer...” At the end of the session we will collect your thoughts and they will give us the framework of what the Centers of Excellence will be.

- David Evans reminded everybody that every region is different, that probably the centers serving each region will be different, and that they will be serving different beneficiaries. He also responded to the question of why Brazil is not included in the project. USAID does not have an education project in this country due to the magnitude of the population, as there are not enough resources to support such a large country, and there are other organizations, like the IDB and the World Bank with huge programs.

- Janet Robb framed the discussion around what should a Center of Excellence include: a center for teacher training, a materials resource center, and an Internet portal, keeping in mind equity and service to disadvantaged areas.

The discussion went on about how better serve the most needed teachers, those who right now are not cared for, who work in the slums, subject to changes and challenges, how can we reach them where they are, at the schools. Once they have received the right training, they should be able to access resources. We should provide them with teaching materials easily found in their communities, where there's no running water or electricity. The purpose should be to create the basics of human development, to create curiosity to learn. The formula should support teachers and administrators to involve the community. The most common technological instrument in Latin America is the TV. As Dr. Carleton Corrales added, teachers are often intimidated by computers. The contradiction that the world has suffered a drastic change with Internet but teachers are still trained with old paradigms was stressed. We have to learn how to learn. The Centers of Excellence should remedy this. They should be centers for innovation, that is the school of the future. The idea of a new paradigm was seconded by Dr. Keller. It includes not asking for different things, but asking that they be different, and the COE should represent that. The new models should engage all the different elements of the community from very early on, have a good sense of the context where people are operating.

As Dr. Vaillant stressed, surveys in Latin America show that students enrolling in teacher training courses are normally less successful than in other fields. The Centers of Excellence should not only provide with a cognitive education, but also with basic does of personality, cultural capacities, etc., because future teachers must develop very diverse skills, like problem solving, skills to work in teams, to operate within a cultural context. The Centers should generate knowledge, basic skills for the future teachers.

In Dr. Carnine's opinion, the adopted criteria should be one that would enable success, focusing on achievement. For this we should define success, and for this purpose, we should use materials already available based on rigorous research.

Antonieta Harwood reminded the group that the stakeholders should include government, because in Latin America it is usually a responsibility of the government to provide in-service training. Ms. Rangel added that stakeholders should also include the business community. The availability of qualified manpower is an advantage for companies investing in those countries.

David Evans redressed the discussion toward the roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee. He excused Sharon Vaughn who could not be here today. The existing Advisory Committee is the result of an effort to balance the three regions involved, combining the knowledge of the US, Latin America and Central America, and the Caribbean. There is an idea of what the Advisory Committee should be, but we would like to have your input. It is expected that the Advisory Committee should provide technical advise, knowledge and experience. We anticipate a series of meetings during the preparatory phase and, perhaps a couple of meetings during the next year. He then

read the proposed roles and responsibilities and, after a long discussion, the following was agreed:

Roles and Responsibilities of the Advisory Committee

- To identify essential areas and needs that sub-regional assessment teams will have to address.
- To review and comment on in-coming assessments made by sub-regional teams and fine-tune the strategic approach.
- To review and provide feedback on proposals coming from institutions wishing to participate in the project.
- To make recommendations regarding the adoption of educational policies derived from the design and management of the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training.
- To provide advice on long-term sustainability of the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training.
- To provide technical advice and feedback on a continuous bases over the life of the project.
- To receive and read materials in advance of scheduled meetings in order to participate in all necessary dialogue and decision-making.
- To stay connected with other members of the advisory team, USAID, and the Creative Associates support team between scheduled meetings.
- To provide continuous input at a fast pace in order to meet the tight timeframe set for this project.
- To make site visits to selected Center locations and provide practical guidance as required.

At the time, USAID's and CAII's responsibilities were also agreed as follows:

USAID's Responsibilities

- To convene and chair meetings
- To provide continuous and timely communication among advisory committee members.
- To keep the process moving.

CAII's Responsibilities

- To establish an effective communication link to and among all advisory committee members.
- To prepare and conduct all assessments and provide accurate reports of the assessment findings.
- To organize and facilitate Advisory Committee meetings.

A discussion ensued about exactly how would the Advisory Committee be supporting the effort at this stage, and Rebecca Adams suggested that the representatives from the Caribbean bring their knowledge and experience to the preparation of the Caribbean assessment, which is supposed to start in two weeks. She launched the idea that Advisory Committee members should also play the role of Ambassadors in their own sub-region. Don Graybill expanded this idea, continuing with the Caribbean sub-region, by asking the Caribbean representatives to identify significant individuals, who to meet that would more easily open doors.

1:45 – 2:45

The afternoon session started with a presentation of the US experience. Dr. Douglas Carnine began describing his experience. Dr. Carnine has been involved in how to teach children at risk to read for six years. In the US illiteracy is a public health issue, along with teen pregnancy and similar issues. The question was the criteria on how to best use the available resources. This is easy for policy makers, who are usually more interested in research for revenues, but in education we do not have this tradition. Therefore, we had to focus on what do we know on how to teach children. Research based actions will have to be accepted by teachers, principals, and teacher trainers.

The method used is based on phonemic awareness. This program provides teachers with specifics, with activities and specific tasks including role playing, etc, not only lecturing. Research proves that early reading skills are closely related to the student's comprehension, and it is a very potent predictor of reading ability. It also provides the student with a set of skills, not only reading, that makes children literate, because students who cannot effortlessly read, cannot comprehend. The research has been conducted with teachers of English and Spanish, and many parallels have surfaced in the findings. Our vision is based on research and rigorous research. There are several thousand articles on Central America, but very few are research based and even less on methodology.

Dr. Josie Tinajero introduced the Reading Academies program, which is now preparing its 3rd. grade and is now introducing the Mathematics Academies. The objective of the program is that all students be able to read at grade level or higher by the end of the third grade. The basic components of the method are oral language, phonological awareness,

print and book knowledge, the alphabetical principle, fluency in reading, comprehension, and written expression, and all of these elements are related to a set of different activities carried out in the classroom. Each one of the components addresses the student expectations, a set of strategies and activities to encourage development, and resources to monitor the student's progress. For this purpose, every teacher went through training in methodology on how to do a continuous assessment of the students. Stressing the importance of the oral language, which include phonology, vocabulary, grammar and pragmatics, the teachers were also given a set of strategies and hands on activities, working in groups, one on one, to achieve the set goals. The program provides the teacher with a basic set of knowledge that has to be taught with methodology, but there is also room for their creativity. This program also exists in Spanish.