



Highlights of Upcoming Events!

September 4, 11, 18, 25, October 2, 9, 16, and 23
NBC Pre-candidacy Class

September 6-7
Learning Focused Presenting

September 10-12
Leading for Sustainability and Capacity Building

September 24-26, December 6-7
Critical Friends

October 4, 11, 18, 25 and November 1
Technology Integration: Podcasting

Leading for Sustainability and Capacity Building

When: September 10-12, 2008

Where: Radisson Fort McDowell Resort

Times: September 10 (1:00pm) through
September 12 (11:45am)

Cost: \$300.00

Deadline: 8/24/2007

Notes: Price includes training, materials, overnight lodging (September 10 and 11, 2007), and meals (excluding dinner on Tuesday and lunch on Wednesday).

National and state leaders will address building collaborative environments, developing and supporting mentoring and induction, and using data to drive professional development. In addition, we will hold a five separate breakout sessions in Business and Finance, Personnel Recruitment, Data Collection and Analysis, the New Teacher Center site-based mentoring model, and technology. Experts and administrator practitioners in their field will lead all of these sessions.

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

AzTEP In Action: A Geography of Effectiveness

In 2003, Arizona was awarded a federally funded Teacher Quality Grant. Out of that grant, the Arizona Teacher Excellence Plan (AzTEP) was created to develop a corps of highly qualified teachers to staff Arizona's underserved schools on Arizona's Indian reservations and previous Federal Enterprise Communities. Specifically, the grant's objectives were to achieve greater retention of new and existing teachers, recruit additional new teachers and improve data collection. The Arizona K-12 Center manages the grant in conjunction with the Governor's office, working with partners and sub-grantees to fulfill the objectives under AzTEP.

"When Governor Napolitano first met with tribal leaders, one concern brought to her attention was recruiting and retaining teachers," recalls Marnie Hodahkwen, Indian Affairs Policy Advisor for the Governor. "The solution was to grow their own. It's been incredibly successful. We'll have several dozen people about to get certified who will go back to home communities and teach."

One of these is Vonnie Atene, a native of Tuba City on the Navajo Reservation. Atene had been a Navajo language culture instructor there. Through an AzTEP scholarship, she gained the opportunity to study for her teaching certificate from Arizona State University. She'll graduate in May of 2008 and return to Tuba City to teach third, fourth and fifth graders.

A mother of eight, Atene's journey has been a challenging one. Her children live with their father on the reservation while Atene pursues her studies. "I miss them very much," she says "but I have to do this to set an example and be a role model for them."

Atene knows from experience how tenuous opportunities for higher education can be. In 1993 she had enrolled at Northern Arizona University, but had to drop out to care for her kids and to work. Through AzTEP, she's gotten a second opportunity and is determined to make the most of it.

"This is the one chance I have and I've got to do it," she says. "You have to challenge yourself and follow through. You have to focus and just do it."

TEACHERS STAYING IN SOMERTON

Another major priority for AzTEP has been keeping the teachers that are already in the classroom. As Lauren Kielsmeier, Education Policy Advisor for Governor Napolitano, notes: "The Governor recognizes the importance of mentoring and retaining teachers. That's why Master Teachers and AzTEP are very critical."

Two years ago, an induction and retention program was launched in Somerton Middle School, in Somerton Arizona, outside of Yuma. The goal was to lower a turnover rate reaching 50% annually.

Located just a few miles from the Mexican border, Somerton Middle School is almost entirely Hispanic, with a very high population of English Language Learners (ELL). This means teachers must cover content, while also promoting English language development. Another difficulty teachers faced is that many had been recruited from other regions of the country, such as the Upper Mid-West and New England. So they had culture shock to overcome as well.

AzTEP funds helped the school hire two full time teachers to become Master Teacher Mentors. They received training through the Arizona K-12 Center with the goal of preparing them to help retain the teachers getting hired and advance them more quickly towards excellence in their profession.

"It's been a real blessing to the school," says Master Teacher Dale Singer, who along with Master Teacher Liz Navarro, founded the program. "We've kept all our new teacher candidates in education." Instead of quitting, these new teachers are becoming "team leaders and school leaders. They have taken real ownership in the school," Singer observes.

Significantly, the District has begun to recruit locally through a scholarship program funded by AzTEP. 75% of teachers hired this year have lived or grown up in Yuma County.

Not surprisingly, as the teaching ranks have stabilized, student performance has increased. Students meeting or exceeding AIMS reading standards went up 9% from the 05-06 year. And substantial gains have been achieved in math and writing as well.

The induction and mentoring program is considered so successful it is being expanded to the entire district.



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AzTEP In Action: A Geography of Effectiveness

Continued from front

ENHANCED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH PHOENIX

Lowell School, located across the street from the Marcos de Niza Housing Project in south Phoenix, seems an unlikely place to find educational excellence. Between 60% and 70% of its students are ELL and 84% receive free or reduced lunch. Yet the school has reached and maintained “performance plus” standards.

Part of the credit can be attributed to the Professional Development Leadership Academy (PDLA), coordinated by the Arizona Department of Education. PDLA trains teacher-leaders to go back to their schools and apply insights for improved professional development. Lowell School sent teachers Kathy Marston and Rosanna Hidalgo, who attended over a three year period.

“PDLA changed our views on what we considered professional development,” says Hidalgo, who has since become the school’s principal. One major shift was away from one-shot workshops to a more sustained model. “We realized we needed to follow through, to make sure what we talked about was being applied,” Hidalgo says. Another significant change has been to organize teachers into teams by grade level.

“The teachers share responsibility for each others’ kids,” says Marston, who now implements professional development district-wide. “They want test scores viewed together.” Teachers work as a grade level with a coach, meeting two hours a week during the school day. The idea of making this professional development job-embedded was also inspired by PDLA.

Lowell has also learned to individualize professional development. “We needed to differentiate who

needs what,” says Hidalgo. “Not everyone needs computer training (for example). Like special education, you don’t think of professional development in that area, but it’s crucial for student achievement.”

As one might expect, student achievement and teacher retention at Lowell have both been strengthened. 94% of teachers remain at Lowell annually. The Arizona Education Foundation rated Lowell an A+ School of Excellence for overall factors contributing to a well-rounded education. A K-8 school, Lowell was also named an Arizona Department of Education Benchmark School for 8th grade for its demographic statewide. The school’s reputation has grown so strong that 250 of their 650 students come from other neighborhoods for the educational opportunity.

NAVAJO NATION GAINS FIRST NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER

Through an AzTEP scholarship, Tammy Smith became the first teacher on the Navajo nation here in Arizona to attain National Board Certification in December of 2006. “It’s quite an honor to hold certification and to use it to recruit other teachers to the program,” Smith says.

In addition to the scholarship, Smith was paired with a mentor who helped guide her through the demanding certification process. This proved to be crucial. “I wouldn’t have been able to do it without someone to give me some pointers,” recalls Smith.

While Certification taught Smith many things, she was made particularly aware of the importance of gearing curriculum towards student needs. “A lot of the teaching we do is more on the content, but teaching really needs to focus on the child,” she says.

As librarian at Chinle Jr. High School on the Navajo Reservation, Smith now feels “better able to

collaborate with teachers to plan lessons that include all the students.” This is a particular priority in a school where most students are ELL. Smith’s impact is not limited to the library. Currently, another 14 teachers from the Navajo Reservation are pursuing National Board Certification. Thanks to Tammy Smith, they have a clear path to follow.

“It’s exciting to start seeing the positive impact of AzTEP on both teachers and students,” says Kathy Wiebke, the Executive Director of the Arizona K-12 Center, “and we’re looking forward to achieving long-term improvement in classroom performance by continuing to implement AzTEP throughout Arizona.”

did you know?



As part of the tribal gaming pact with the State, approximately **55%** of tribal revenue dollars are committed to education in particular, teacher salary increases and classroom size reduction. This tribal commitment translated to approximately **\$27 million** in 2004 and **\$32 million** in 2005. These compacts extend for the next twenty-three years.

Source: <http://www.governor.state.az.us/aztep/Background.asp>

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Josie Arredondo
Associate Director, Operations

“I love coming to work and seeing the difference that we can make.”



Josie Arredondo oversees business and operations for the AZ K-12 Center. She makes sure the Center is achieving a maximum return on its investment on behalf of Arizona teachers and students.

She has two sons, one starting fifth grade the other beginning second grade. So she takes her work and the Center’s mission very much to heart.

“I love coming to work and seeing the difference that we can make,” she says. “I have kids in school and I’m looking for those teachers who have quality professional development. It affects all of our futures.”

Josie grew up in the small copper mining town of Superior, just east of the Valley. She has a personal appreciation for the Center’s statewide focus. Josie went on to the University of Arizona in Tucson where she graduated with a degree in Accounting and Finance.

Josie started working at the AZ K-12 Center in 2003. This makes her the longest standing employee of the Center. During these years, she has helped the Center undergo a considerable change, from being primarily a conduit for state allocated funds, to becoming a sponsor and creator of professional development for Arizona.

“It’s been an amazing transformation,” Josie says. “I used to see this more as a job, now it’s so much more passionate for me.”