



A Letter from our Executive Director...

Dear Friends,

As I come to the end of my first year at PassageWorks, I want to introduce our inaugural newsletter with a few personal reflections.

Regardless of how you voted in the recent election, I think we were all reminded of a critical aspect of human nature: **We can change.** I believe this moment in American history, including the many crises we face and the emerging spirit of bi-partisanship, has offered an unprecedented opportunity in the school reform movement. Never before has there been this level of openness to shift approaches. The time for debates over false dichotomies has ended. As President elect Barack Obama recently said: "When it comes to giving every child a world-class education so they can compete in this global economy for the jobs of the 21st century, the choice is not between more money and more reform – because our schools need both." Many educational leaders from the right, middle, and left are finding common ground in implementing proven sensible methods that improve test scores and create safe schools.

Our work at the PassageWorks Institute (PWI) has always been rooted in bridging ideological divides. In her book, the *Soul of Education*, Rachael presented a view of educational reform that offered practical solutions grounded in experience to help students find "connection, compassion and character at school"

without violating the separation of church and state or the deeply held beliefs of families and students.

"This practical and inspirational sourcebook will support school communities that are committed to preventing violence and alienation and producing responsible, caring citizens." —Parker Palmer on the Soul of Education

The predominant educational research of today emphasizes that students succeed when teachers and other adults set high expectations, create meaningful opportunities for involvement, AND genuinely care for young people. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation with the partnership of the federal government, have synthesized these principles into the "new three R's" — **Rigor, Relevance, and Relationship.** Drawing on the linkages between these components of education has been a foundation of the PWI model for decades, and we are thrilled to continue to build on this alignment with teachers, schools, districts, funders, and policy makers from across the country.



West High School, Denver, CO.

Over the last months, Rachael has taken periodic medical leaves, but has

remained intimately involved in all of our work. She has been particularly instrumental in each of the major steps in our urban school project at West HS in Denver. I am continually inspired by her dedication to this movement and her skills and enthusiasm. I know Rachael feels extremely grateful for the outpouring of caring and support that she has received from so many friends and colleagues.

I joined this organization because it offers practical tools to mainstream educators who want to make a difference in the lives of young people. We are excited about this coming year at PWI and plan to offer our resources and support to teachers and schools across the U.S. that are seeking to invest in and transform the ways that they inspire and educate the next generation of American leaders.

On behalf of the PWI team, thank you for your continued interest and support of Passageworks! I hope you find the following newsletter interesting and informative, and we invite you to join us this year in this important effort – in any way that you can.

Cheers,

Mark Wilding
Executive
Director



West High School 9th Grade Advisory program: Denver, CO



Pat Sanchez, Principal of West High School

In May 2008, PassageWorks realized a key 2008 goal of launching an urban high school pilot. The West High School pilot site has a student population that is 90% Latino, 5% African-American and 5% Asian-American and Anglo. 86% of students participate

in the free and reduced lunch program. The Passageworks Transitions Advisory Program (PTAP), serving 300 incoming 9th graders, combines our Journey into High School curriculum with our New-comers Curriculum—giving this high school transition program a unique emphasis on students' heritage, culture and background. PTAP is part of a larger restructuring project at West, involving a variety of integrated initiatives designed to meet the school's goals of supporting Rigor, Relevance and Relationship. Through our partnership, these vital interlinking goals have been expanded

to include Resilience as well. As part of our urban pilot project, PassageWorks has partnered with an evaluation team at the University of Colorado at Denver. This team will gather quantitative and qualitative information from both teachers and students related to the PassageWorks program, allowing us to refine our curriculum, professional development model, and implementation plan.



Launch of PassageWorks First Steps Kindergarten Program at Think College Now Elementary in Oakland, CA

In August 2008, PassageWorks launched a second urban pilot site in Oakland elementary school Think College Now (TCN)—a public school dedicated to “closing the achievement gap and giving all students an equal opportunity to attend college and pursue their dreams.”. The TCN student population is 73% Latino, 20% African-American, and 7% Asian-American. 68% of the students are English Language Learners and 91% of students receive subsidized or reduced-price lunches. In August 2008, two TCN kindergarten teachers began implementing the PassageWorks First

Steps curriculum in their classes. Professional development has included an immersion in the PassageWorks model through our Foundation Course and ongoing consulting with the PWI Kindergarten specialist through telephone, email and a site visit. This school-based rite of passage program for children and families was first piloted in 2007 with four classrooms in a rural Missouri school with high rates of poverty and in three classrooms in Boulder, CO. Now serving 40-50 families in an urban setting, the PassageWorks-TCN project will give us essential feedback as we

refine the Kindergarten curriculum for broad use with diverse populations of students.

To learn more about West High School, TCN, and all the schools we serve, [click here](#).



Children working in a dyad

Parent Engagement Network - A Presentation by Rachael Kessler and Batya Greenwald at Naropa University - December 10, 2008

The Parent Engagement Network (PEN) is a Boulder Valley district-wide collaboration to engage parents in fostering healthy choices among all youth and increase awareness of available resources for parents and families. Over the last several years, PEN has sponsored forums and workshops on a variety of topics of interest to parents. PEN has engaged Rachael Kessler to speak on her ground-breaking work of nurturing the “inner life” of students in a presentation titled The Soul of Education: Helping Students find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School. This talk is free and open to the public.

December 10, 2008. 9:00am. Naropa University. visit www.parentengagement.com

PassageWorks Upcoming Courses

Foundation Course: February 20-22, 2009. Maui, HI with Facilitators Rachael Kessler and Laura Weaver

Foundation Course: March 6-8, 2009. Boulder/Denver, CO with Facilitators John McCluskey and Carrie Simpson

Second Annual Summer Institute June 19-28, 2009 including:

- Foundation Course (Level I) June 19-21, 2009,
- Teaching Presence (Level II) June 22-24, 2009, and
- School-based Rites of Passage (Level III) June 26-28, 2009

Our Foundation Course offers an introduction to the core practices and principles of the PassageWorks model of Social and Emotional Learning. This course is designed for K-12 educators and administrators working in both public and private settings, youth development specialists, counselors and parents interested in the

PassageWorks model. Methods learned in this course prepare participants to implement any of our K-12 transitions curricula and provide tools which educators and youth advocates can integrate into any classroom, content area, team, or youth group.

The Foundation Course is a prerequisite for purchasing our cur-

ricula and for attending our Level Two Teaching Presence Course and Level Three School-based Rites of Passage Course. Both of these advanced courses will be offered as part of our Second Annual Summer Institute in 2009.

For more information, [click here](#).



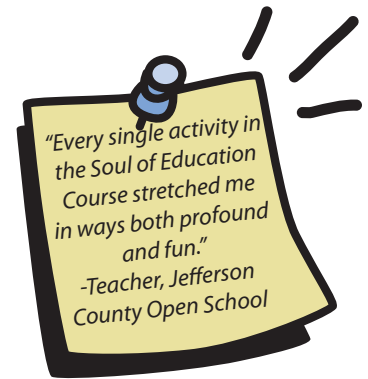
PassageWorks staff consult with teachers at West High School

New Curricula Now Available!

We now have several new curricula available for purchase and implementation:

- **First Steps Into Elementary School:** a 16-week Curriculum to Support the Transition into the Kindergarten Year. Through play, verbal and artistic sharing, and reflective practices, this curriculum supports Kindergarten students in developing self-awareness and meaningful interpersonal connections.
- **Senior Passages:** a 32-week Curriculum to support students with the completion of high school, a time often characterized by both deep anxiety and exquisite awakening.
- **Newcomers Transition Curriculum:** a 32 week program that serves students who are recent immigrants, a population at especially high risk for alienation from school, school failure and self-destructive behaviors.

To learn more, [click here](#).



Customized Foundation Course School-based Trainings

Our Customized Foundation Course (22-hours) is tailored to meet your school's specific needs and population of teachers. Methods learned in this course prepare participants to implement each of our K-12 transitions curricula and provide tools that educators can integrate into any classroom or content area to enhance student engagement, build community, and improve academic outcomes. In addition, this customized course offers faculty members the opportunity to strengthen collegial bonds and build community—both of which are vital to enriching school climate and culture.

To learn more, [click here](#).

School Transition Program

Our school transition program includes five integrated components designed to support teachers in the classroom and positively impact school culture.

- Curriculum
- Professional development
- Design team approach
- Consulting
- Evaluation