

*Transforming Education
by Sharing Success*



**Project for School Innovation
2004/5 Annual Report**

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Project for School Innovation
2004/5 Annual Report

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Mission

The Project for School Innovation cultivates grassroot networks that help educators share their successes and drive school change.

Vision

One day, all educators will be part of a **supportive, innovative profession**. They will **learn what works** from their talented colleagues. They will **gain confidence** because they are **respected as professionals**. They will thoughtfully implement the **most effective practices** available and help one another to **continually improve** the quality of teaching.

Letter from the Founders



The 2004/5 year has been one of new achievements for the Project for School Innovation. The year began with PSI becoming an independent nonprofit organization. Though still closely tied to its founders at the Neighborhood House Charter School, PSI now has its own distinct status that reflects its national reach and impact far beyond the walls of one school.

By the middle of the year, this new independent organization had raised money from three of the most significant foundations supporting urban education in Boston. We are grateful to these funders and others who have supported us through their shared commitment to improving education by finding the best in public schools.

As we have spent the year working with a growing number of teachers and reaching thousands of children in the greater Boston area, we continue to get inquiries from others who recognize the value of our model and seek to learn how they can do the same in California, New York, Chicago, and elsewhere.

We close the year with exciting change as Michael Rothman transitions out of his role as Executive Director, having achieved his goal of turning the seed of the PSI idea into the reality that it is today. Ruth Feldman, the organization's new Director, has come on board as of August and brings years of experience in group facilitation, leadership development, and nonprofit/entrepreneurial consulting, and promises to help it grow from the foundation we helped build.

Kevin Andrews
Co-Founder and Trustee

Michael Rothman
Co-Founder and Executive Director



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Highlights and Progress



PSI Receives Nonprofit Status (September 2004)

After incubating PSI as a pilot program for four years, the Neighborhood House Board of Directors voted to spin off PSI as an independent entity. In September, PSI received 501(c)3 status from the IRS to form a legal trust, which operates in concert with, but independent of, the Neighborhood House Charter School. By maintaining its close affiliation with Neighborhood House, PSI has the stability and support of this well-respected public school. At the same time, through its independent status, the nonprofit will be able to grow and reach well beyond Neighborhood House.

New Nonprofit Brings in New Funders (December 2004)

With its new independent status (see above), PSI received a series of grants from major new funders interested in building and supporting this new entity. Starting in December, grants from the Herman and Freida Miller Foundation, Social Venture Partners Boston, and two anonymous funders together brought the new organization \$430,000.

First Seven Videos Released (January 2005)

In January, we released our first seven videos, designed to accompany the highly successful books in our By Teachers For Teachers series. These videos provide an inside peek at the actual practices in use at our model schools, along with interviews with children and parents and descriptions from the teachers who helped produce the books. [Video clips can be viewed on our website.]

Program in School Improvement Launched (April 2005)

March saw the launching of our newest and most ambitious effort. The Program in School Improvement harnesses the knowledge from all of our model schools through teacher peer coaching that helps selected schools to improve what they do and make lasting change. The program was launched with teams from four Boston schools in March, and their work continues next year.

New Executive Director Hired (June 2005)

After five years of developing and growing Project for School Innovation, co-founder Michael Rothman is leaving to pursue other endeavors abroad. Having achieved his goals of turning the idea of teacher-led education reform into a reality, Michael is succeeded by Ruth Feldman, our new executive director, who will bring the organization to a new level of sustainability and growth. Michael will continue to interface with PSI during the 2005/6 year in order to insure a seamless transition and guarantee that the history and organizational infrastructure that makes it so successful, continues into the future.



Overview

In 2004/5, PSI's work had a dramatic impact on the education of hundreds of teachers and thousands of children. We measure our success against five goals, each central to the mission, vision, and success of our organization:

Driving Change

As a result of change in schools driven by PSI's work, 4,788 children benefited from more effective practices and 3,272 benefited from more effective educators.

Developing Leaders

PSI brought a greater sense of professionalism to 168 public school educators, 28 of whom served as leaders to their colleagues while another 140 developed skills as leaders in school change.

Harnessing Wisdom

PSI published three new books and a set of seven instructional videos documenting and sharing the effective practices of public school educators.

Building Collaboration

This year, 75 educators from district public schools came together with 42 educators from charter public schools, breaking down political barriers in education reform.

Maintaining Quality

Ninety-seven percent of participants in PSI's sessions gave them a high satisfaction rating, while 80 percent declared PSI better than most other professional development available.

Driving Change in Schools

The education industry is not structured to absorb innovations. Instead, the large district structure, created to provide stability and guarantee education for more than 50 million children, tends to slow the pace of change. Ten years ago, the U.S. charter school movement was founded to address this problem. Conceived as “laboratories of innovation,” these schools were granted greater autonomy to experiment with new ideas in education. There are now more than 3000 of these laboratories nationwide. Yet there are virtually no mechanisms to bring the results of their experiments to the larger public education system or for a deliberate mutual flow of communication and knowledge sharing. PSI exists as a conduit to insure that the great practices in the field are being shared and replicated as appropriate.

4,788 More Children Reached by Effective Practices

In 2004/5, 4,788 children were reached by effective practices that would have never touched them without PSI. This includes:

1,026 children reached by effective education practices that teachers had put in place in previous years through direct support from PSI.

3,543 children reached by effective practices that educators learned from books published in our By Teachers For Teachers series. We conservatively estimate that one of every 10 educators who chose to receive a book through PSI in 2004/5 used that book to bring effective practices to 20 students.

219 children reached by effective practices that educators learned from conference presentations given by our PSI Associates. We conservatively estimate that 1 of every 10 educators attending a conferences uses the information learned there to bring more effective practices to 20 students.

3,272 Children Reached by More Effective Educators

In 2004/5, 3,272 children were reached by educators who were more effective because of intensive participation in PSI. These educators, empowered by PSI’s sense of professionalism and support, and better informed through at least 8 hours of professional development with PSI, are able to provide a better education to their students. Out of this total:

We estimate that **852 children** were taught by the 44 teachers who received over 8 hours of professional development from PSI in 2004/5.

We estimate that **2,420 children** were affected by the 20 principals who received over 8 hours of professional development from PSI in 2004/5.



Developing Leaders

The teaching profession is such a large and standardized mechanism that it is not necessarily structured to promote excellence. Research into the culture of schools finds that all too often teachers are treated more like unskilled workers than professionals. If teachers are to bring effective practices to more children, they need an environment that is not oppressive but instead supportive and empowering. Yet, more often than not, policymakers overlook the vast expertise present in schools, and instead treat the latest great idea as either the last great idea that will ever be needed or as a threat to the 'proven' status quo.

PSI's model is needed to promote excellence among educators. PSI provides opportunities for leadership development for teachers. Too often, innovation fails in schools because teachers are neither empowered nor motivated to carry through ideas that have been imposed upon them. At PSI, we treat teachers as professionals because we recognize that it is they who can and must enact the change we hope to see in education.

In 2004/5, our work to empower educators continued, reflected in the professionals we worked with and the professional development we provided:

28 educators received a total of 174 hours of leadership development from us and, in turn, provided a significant amount of professional development to their colleagues, sharing with them their effective practices.

140 educators received a total of 1,361 hours of professional development through PSI.

97 percent of participants said they learned something useful in PSI sessions they attended, and 95 percent indicated that their confidence increased as a result of this work.

72 educators spent more than 8 hours in professional development with PSI, the amount necessary for this work to have a significant impact on their practice.

Harnessing Wisdom

Effective practices in education are often isolated instead of shared. National data shows that only about one in seven teachers engage in collaboration with colleagues outside their own school. Even within schools, collaboration and learning among colleagues is a rarity. Yet research on businesses, and more recently on school reform in Chicago, shows that organizational change has been most effective when it is based on trusting relationships and mechanisms that harness the wisdom and expertise already residing within organizations. Effective communities of practice bring people together based on the simple recognition that intelligent people often know how to do their job well, but without avenues for such sharing, knowledge and innovation never develops beyond the individual.

PSI's model fosters collaboration and knowledge sharing. PSI helps school faculty and staff to share effective education practices. By employing processes carefully structured to build trusting relationships and open communication among colleagues, PSI helps schools to develop an environment in which innovation is seen as a continuous process. Furthermore, by providing tools for action planning and by offering publications based on the expertise within schools, PSI helps school faculty, staff and administrators to thoughtfully and strategically implement new practices. PSI is breaking new ground by forming intentional networks of educators, which can provide the sorts of opportunities for knowledge sharing that are typically leveraged in other professions.

PSI has developed a collection of **157 effective education practices**, of which 26 are new this year.

2,601 books and videos highlighting and explaining effective education practices were sold nationwide.

Those accessing knowledge from PSI came from a variety of organizations, from public schools to universities. Our books and videos have been purchased by 64 different public school districts, by far the most common organizational affiliation, and by 45 different district public schools. Thirty-one different charter public schools from across the country have gotten the books and videos we offer, as have 17 other K-12 organizations, ranging from professional associations to school-service organizations.

The knowledge of effective education practices that we have collected is also making its way into other venues. Seventeen different colleges and universities have used our materials — with known uses ranging from assigned reading in courses to training for school liaisons. Ten state and local government agencies — many of which are working with the education system in some manner — also count among those who have accessed our collection of effective education practices.



Fostering Charter–District Collaboration

PSI's model is based on cultivating and sustaining innovation throughout the public education system. PSI connects autonomous schools with their district counterparts, thereby building a bridge between the experimentation afforded by flexibility and the experience afforded by stability. This helps the public education system to more effectively share and expand innovations across the entire system, regardless of organizational structure.

In 2004/5, PSI continued to achieve this shared experience by connecting semi-autonomous charter public schools with their district-based counterparts in genuine, collaborative learning:

Peer-to-peer learning sessions brought together 42 educators from charter schools with 75 colleagues from district schools.

Through books and presentations, educators from 69 district schools learned effective practices from charter schools.

Using PSI action plans, 8 district public schools have replicated effective charter school practices and 5 charter public schools have replicated effective district school practices.

Quality and Satisfaction

None of what we do will be successful, none of our goals will be accomplished, if the people we work with are not satisfied. While quality and satisfaction are not necessarily inscribed in our mission, they are implied in our aspiration for PSI to be the best and most valuable program of its kind.

Towards this goal, we collect evaluations from every participant in every PSI session offered. From this information we know that:

97 percent of PSI participants gave a high satisfaction rating to sessions they attended.

80 percent of PSI participants felt that the programming was better than most other professional development sessions offered, while virtually none thought it was worse.

In addition, quotes from those who have participated in PSI sessions in 2004/5 reveal the high quality of our services:

“One of the best parts about PSI is that it is done well. There is a level of professionalism, there is follow through, there is respect for educators. They really get it.”

“ School reform is not going to happen when everyone’s in their own little world.”

“ PSI has built a trusting relationship with us. We can rely on them and contact them throughout the year. We think of them as an addition to our school as opposed to being a separate program being imposed on our school.”



Overview

The three sections below list PSI's programs divided into three major categories, each of which corresponds to particular areas of social impact, as described on the previous pages, and elements of the PSI strategic plan, described later in this report.

In facilitated learning communities, educators reflect on practice...

Model School Study Groups. Teachers from a successful public school explore the practices that lead to that success.

Support Networks for Innovative Principals. Principals from charter and district schools share successes and challenges.

Support Networks for Innovative Classrooms. Teachers from charter and district schools share and test teaching strategies.

Educators' effective practices are shared in instructive books and videos...

By Teachers For Teachers series. Books and videos provide step-by-step instructions on effective practices of successful schools.

Wisdom of Educators series. Books provide case studies and guides on effective practices of innovative principals and teachers.

PSI Net. An Internet-based bulletin allows teachers to keep learning from each other after learning communities are over.

Educators teach their effective practices to their colleagues to adapt them to their schools...

Program in School Improvement. A 15-month, 3-credit program in which school principals send teams to learn effective practices.

PSI Associates. Consulting, conference presentations, and coaching provided by teachers with effective practices.

Online Tools. Web-based guides and needs assessments for educators to strategically adapt effective practices to their schools.

Learning Communities: Overview

In these facilitated learning communities, educators come together to reflect on practice and learn from one another.

Model School Study Group

In 2004/5, our Model School Study Group brought together a group of four schools serving at-risk high school students. They participated in five sessions, receiving 66 hours of professional development, and giving the experience a 100 percent satisfaction rating.

Support Network for Innovative Principals

Our 2004/5 Support Network for Innovative Principals brought together 9 principals for 90 hours of professional development. They participated in six monthly sessions which they gave outstanding satisfaction ratings. (In addition, this year some of our SNIP participants served as PSI Associates, providing support to graduate students in Harvard University's School Leadership program.)

Support Network for Innovative Classrooms

Our 2004/5 Support Network for Innovative Classrooms brought together 5 art teachers serving 6 schools. They participated in six monthly sessions, receiving 52 hours of professional development and giving a 100 percent satisfaction rating [further detail].



Model School Study Group

“PSI helps people think about all the pieces of the process.... I was impressed with the amount of time they put into the school and the process they used to be sure they really understood and captured what was going on.” — Model School Study Group participant

Though isolated in individual classrooms and individual school buildings, great successes are being experienced in public schools every day. Schools that show a track record of success in improving student achievement and generating community satisfaction can be designated “model schools” by PSI. A core group of educators at these schools receive leadership development from PSI. Teachers from these schools engage in discussion groups where they reflect thoughtfully on their own effective practices.

By helping these educators take extra time to explore what they do and how they do it, we help them to be more effective not only as teachers, but as leaders in their profession. At the same time, by better understanding what works at these schools, we hope to help the entire public education system improve. Participants in these Model School Study Groups (MSSG) are then involved in documenting their practices in the By Teachers For Teachers series, and are then available for further teacher-to-teacher mentoring and presentations as PSI Associates.

In this year’s model school study group, instead of one model school, PSI brought together a combination of four schools that have collaborated successfully in the past. Because of their common mission to serve at-risk youth, Boston Day and Evening Academy, Amesbury Academy of Strategic Learning, Lowell Middlesex Academy, and Champion Charter School, came together to discuss their response to the high school dropout problem.

Five school leaders from the four schools got together during the course of the 2004/5 school year for 8-10 hours of sessions and follow-ups. The group talked about their curricular and professional practices and brainstormed how the Horace Mann charter status allows them the autonomy to best serve at-risk youth. In an effort to disseminate information on Horace Mann schools to the wider public, and also to encourage and support the development of more high-quality Horace Mann schools, PSI organized a roundtable discussion, created a technical assistance network that will be expanded in the coming year, and is in the midst of completing a manual on how the Horace Mann schools successfully serve at-risk youth.

The Model School Study Group was made possible in part through support from the following funder the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Support Network for Innovative Principals

“It’s unreal to think certification is good enough preparation to be a principal. In SNIP, theory is connected to practice.” — SNIP 2004/5 participant

In the Support Network for Innovative Principals program (SNIP), a group of 8-12 school leaders comes together once a month after school to share their own successes and challenges and to provide advice to one another in a therapeutic and consultative environment. Participating school leaders come from both charter and district schools; some are new while others have served in the principal role for ten, fifteen, or twenty years. SNIP sessions use facilitated storytelling and analysis as a method of reflection and leadership development. Principals in these sessions have called them “the best two hours I spend each month” and “a great opportunity to reflect on what we’re doing.”

“SNIP led to many “Aha!” moments... it makes you reconsider what it means to be a leader. SNIP is a highlight on my calendar.”

A third cohort of PSI’s Support Network for Innovative Principals (SNIP) met for six sessions over the course of the 2004-2005 year [comparison against goals]. This cohort included nine principals and three mentor principals from a diverse array of urban, suburban, charter and district schools and with a range of experience—from one to thirty-six years. The sessions were held monthly from January through June in downtown Boston conference space donated by Eastern Bank.

After beginning with a “check in” so each principal could share successes and challenges, each meeting progressed to explore one to two case studies in depth, allowing the group to construct a rich body of shared knowledge. The principals discussed their own successful practices, and learned from each others’ mistakes, taking away new ideas, a sense of professionalism and collegiality, and a renewed commitment to their often taxing jobs. Calling their SNIP experience “an unusual opportunity” and “a highlight on the calendar,” the cohort is eager to reconvene informally to maintain the personal and professional connections fostered in the group.

This work was made possible with support from the following funders: Massachusetts Department of Education (through a grant to the Neighborhood House Charter School) and two anonymous funders.



Support Network for Innovative Classrooms

“As a teacher... the work itself is so time consuming that reflecting on your work gets pushed out of the way. In SNIC, we can really think about what we do and how to do it better.” — 2004/5 SNIC Participant

In Support Network for Innovative Classrooms (SNIC), a small group of teachers from within the same subject area (for instance, high school math teachers) come together once a month after school to discuss, test, and report on teaching strategies they are using in their classrooms. SNIC sessions use a “double-loop” approach to action research in which participants experimentally implement teaching strategies in their classrooms, discuss the results with their peers, then re-implement the strategies. SNIC participants come from both charter and district schools and bring different levels of experience.

“When PSI came along it was a godsend for me, because I really believe that as you grow as a teacher you need to grow professionally and think hard about improving your teaching. You can’t just stay the same or else it will be incredibly boring and you will burn out and be bad as a teacher ultimately. You always need to push yourself, and that’s what PSI does.” — SNIC Participant

The 2004/2005 school year marked the second year of the Support Networks for Innovative Classrooms (SNIC) program. This year, SNIC brought together five visual art teachers from Boston and Cambridge, representing three district public schools, two pilot public schools, and one charter public school. Over the course of the year, the teachers identified learning standards with which they felt challenged and wanted to see improvement.

The group then met six times to generate and discuss a personal research question based upon the identified challenges. Together, the teachers talked about ways to teach perspective drawing using math and geometry; the process of connecting students with their work through portfolios; how to encourage meaningful multiculturalism in art for students from all different backgrounds; methods for creating cross-disciplinary art projects; balancing the need for personal expression with the need to teach specific techniques; and strategies for crafting artwork and self portrait projects that are meaningful and highly personal to the student.

This year’s SNIC group was made possible with support from two anonymous funders.



Publishing: Overview

As a publisher of books and videos, PSI shares knowledge of effective practices from model public schools.

By Teachers For Teachers Series

In 2004/5, we published two new books and our first collection of videos in our *By Teachers For Teachers* series, and distributed more than 2,500 copies of our books and videos to educators nationwide.

Wisdom of Educators Series

2004/5 brought the release of the first book in our new *Wisdom of Educators* series and the development of new titles to be released in 2005/6.

PSI Net

PSI Net is a new service we launched in 2004/5, an Internet-based network that allows educators to be connected to PSI electronically. In 2004/5, 29 issues of PSI Net highlight effective practices in the world of education.



PSI Net

PSI has received consistent strong reviews from teachers and principals highly satisfied with the professional development we provide. From these educators, we have regularly heard only one complaint: they want more with less. *More* opportunities to remain connected to and involved in PSI's unique educator-led network, but with *less* time required on the part of participants.

In response to these requests, in 2004/5, we launched **PSI Net** with funding, in part, from an anonymous funder and the Herman and Freida L. Miller Foundation. PSI Net integrates a variety of features based on a series of focus groups held with our participating educators at the beginning of the year.

It is an Internet-based network that allows educators to be connected to PSI electronically.

Weekly issues of PSI Net each highlight one particular practice or insight in the world of education.

A brief, clear, and instructive format encourages follow-up action and connection.

Distribution is targeted only to those educators who have previously participated regularly in PSI face-to-face sessions (a total of 273 educators) — our intention being not to establish new contact with educators in such an impersonal format, but rather to maintain contact with those who already know PSI well.

The intention of **PSI Net** is to sustain the vitality and interconnectedness that PSI has begun to build through its other programming. By bringing our corps of educators together through an ongoing forum, we hope to continue to leverage and build a grassroots network of leaders in education reform.

PSI Net was launched with the support of the following funders: Herman and Freida L. Miller Foundation, Social Venture Partners Boston, and two anonymous funders.



By Teachers For Teachers Series

“By creating a product that is professionally done, I think it has an impact on us as professionals both as teachers and principals.... It says that what we are doing is valuable and that people are valuing us as well. The book creates a level of pride.” — Principal of a model school highlighted in the By Teachers For Teachers series

PSI staff document the discussion that takes place in each Model School Study Group and help model schools turn their exploration of effective practices into a high-quality, instructive book in the *By Teachers For Teachers* series. These books are unlike anything else available in the education industry. They provide step-by-step, nuts-and-bolts instruction based on the experience of real teachers in real schools. Clear, easy-to-follow layout helps teachers identify what they want to do and how they can do it.

In 2004/5, we published two new books and our first collection of videos:

Becoming a Community School: A Step-by-Step Guide to Bridging the School-Family Gap based on the effective practices of the Robert L. Ford School (released November 15, 2004). Publication made possible through support from the following funder: Social Venture Partners Boston.

Creating Professional Learning Communities: A Step-by-Step Guide to Improving Student Achievement through Teacher Collaboration based on the effective practices of the Richard J. Murphy School (released January 12, 2005). Publication made possible through support from the following funder: Herman and Fredia L. Miller Foundation.

Collection of seven instructional videos to accompany the books in the *By Teachers For Teachers* series. Based on the effective practices of Neighborhood House Charter School, Patrick O’Hearn Elementary School, Academy of the Pacific Rim, and Lowell Middlesex Academy (released January 12, 2005). Video release made possible through support from two anonymous funders.

Additional highlights from the year included our January showcase event, which brought together nearly 100 educators to highlight our new books and videos, and the distribution of more than 2,000 books to educators nationwide.



Wisdom of Educators Series

In 2005, PSI published the first title in a new series of how-to books. The *Wisdom of Educators* series represents successful classroom practices drawn from expert teachers in PSI's Support Network for Innovative Classrooms and Support Network for Innovative Principals. By discussing their strategies for effective teaching in the classroom and leadership in their school, teachers and principals are able to explore their challenges and illuminate their successes. They can then share this knowledge with others in educator-created sourcebooks.

We are pleased to announce *Making Inferences from Text: A Teacher Sourcebook for Enhancing Reading Comprehension in the Middle Grades*, based upon the wisdom of literacy teachers. *Making Inferences from Text* is organized around three case studies that represent composites of the real classroom experiences of seven literacy teachers. In addition to each study, a study guide highlights specific guiding concepts, teaching strategies, and teaching tools designed to be applicable to anyone seeking to teach inference-making skills in the middle grades.

In addition to the above title, we are pleased to announce the following forthcoming titles in the *Wisdom of Educators* series that are based on practices explored in the 2004/5 year and will be published in the 2005/6 year:

Taking a Stand: Principled School Leadership Case Studies from the Experience of School Principals, Wisdom of Educators | Principals, based on our 2004/5 Support Network for Innovative Principals

Art in Many Contexts: Using Visual Art as a Vehicle for Learning and Expression, Wisdom of Educators | Art Teachers, based on our 2004/5 Support Network for Innovative Classrooms



School Change: Overview

At each model school that has worked with PSI, a small group of faculty serve as PSI Associates, talented teachers who share their successes with peers. By providing educators with support from peers and tools to turn good ideas into practice in their own schools, we help them replicate effective practices and take the lead in school improvement.

In 2004/5, PSI Associates provided a total of **753 hours** of professional development to **198 colleagues**:

Program in School Improvement. In 2004/5, four public schools sent teams to participate in our newest program, a 15-month, graduate course. Participants have posted more than 200 hours of professional development in spring and summer sessions and give the program a 98 percent satisfaction rating.

Aspiring Principals. In collaboration with Harvard University's School Developers Program, principals working with PSI provided support to 15 graduate students studying to become school leaders.

Robert Ford School. Through PSI-sponsored sessions, PSI Associates from our new model school, Robert Ford Elementary, provided 114 hours of professional development to their colleagues at three local public schools.

Richard Murphy School. Through PSI-sponsored sessions, PSI Associates from our new model school, Richard Murphy Elementary, provided 98 hours of professional development to colleagues at three local public schools.

Education Conferences. In five different conference presentations, they provided more than 300 hours of professional development to 138 of their colleagues at schools and districts across the country.

Online Toole. In addition, this year we released a set of online tools to help educators turn the effective practices in our books and videos into improvements in their schools.



Program in School Improvement

“PSI makes our goals seem do-able and reminds us to be realistic in our expectations at the same time. There is no anxiety because they have built a trusting relationship with us.” — Participant in Program in School Improvement

Since the founding of our pilot five years ago, we have always sought to ensure that sharing of practices did not only mean thoughtful exploration and discussion, but also action: the development and implementation of real plans to drive change in participating schools.

In 2004/5, we launched a new effort by building upon five years of lessons of how to best help school action planning to take root. The Program in School Improvement builds on past PSI accomplishments and learnings. As a more thorough screening process, in order to participate, a school principal must apply, submit their school's improvement plan, and explain to us in an interview how participation can help their improvement plan. A team of 3-5 educators from the school must then participate in an interview for their application to be complete.

Once a school's application is accepted in March, their participation begins. A team of 3-5 educators participates in four sessions in the spring in which they meet with cohort teams from other public schools to discuss theories of school change and conduct needs assessments in their own school. They then participate in three Action Planning summer sessions, in which they are matched up with PSI Associates from our model schools based on the effective practices the team has identified as most relevant to their needed school change. During the summer, they develop an action plan to implement new practices at their school. Finally, this is followed by ten monthly sessions held over the course of the next school year, during which school teams report to one another and provide critical feedback about the practices they have adapted from our model schools.

This 15-month program is not only designed to lead to real change in the public schools that participate, but also earns participants three graduate course credits towards a Masters degree or towards professional development points. A wonderful bonus is the benefit to model school (teacher) coaches who, through this process, refine their leadership skills and hone their ability to learn, teach and reflect.

In 2004/5, four public schools sent teams to participate in our first Program in School Improvement. After four spring sessions and initial summer sessions, participants in the 2004/5 Program in School Improvement have posted more than 200 hours of professional development and given a 98 percent satisfaction rating.

Launching of the Program in School Improvement was achieved with the generous support of the following funders: Herman and Freida L. Miller Foundation and two anonymous funders.



PSI Associates

Support to Harvard School Developers Program

In 2004/5, four principals took the reflective lessons they had learned through participation in discussions in our Support Network for Innovative Principals and shared them through two facilitated case-study discussions with graduate students in Harvard University's School Developers and Principal Certification Programs.

A total of 15 participants engaged in these case-study discussions, drawing upon the experience of public school principals to inform their own planning for the future. We had initially planned (and offered) additional one-on-one coaching to follow these sessions. However, due to a timing conflict, we were unable to arrange this coaching prior for graduate students who were leaving for an early summer vacation and unsure of their plans for next year. Based on the high degree of satisfaction with the sessions and continuing interest from the students and faculty at Harvard, however, we will continue this offering in 2005/6 and will provide one-on-one coaching in follow up beginning in September of that year.

Presentations at Five Major Conferences

In 2004/5, five PSI Associates from two of PSI's model schools presented on their practices at five different conferences.

On July 22, 2004, PSI Associates John Roberts and Lisa Bryant, from Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School, presented on the topic of supporting at-risk students at the national conference of the Middle College National Consortium. Eleven people were in attendance at their two-hour session in which they used their book and video from the *By Teachers For Teachers* Series, along with interactive discussion to share effective practices from their school.

Similar presentations were provided to 23 attendees on August 9 at the Summer Institute of Diploma Plus, to 46 attendees at the October 30 annual conference of the National Dropout Prevention Network (NDPN), and to 35 attendees at the November 12 annual conference of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES).

In addition, PSI Associates Kate Murray and Stephen Costello, from Boston Collegiate Charter School, presented to 23 attendees at the annual conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) on April 4. They used their book and video from the *By Teachers For Teachers* Series.

Support for these efforts was provided by the Massachusetts Department of Education, through grants to Neighborhood House Charter School and Amesbury Academy for Strategic Learning.



Online Tools

With support from two anonymous funders to further our work sharing the effective practices of our model schools, PSI began a process this year of making a variety of tools available to educators on-line via our website. These tools, in conjunction with the newly launched Program in School Improvement, are making PSI's unique model of teacher-to-teacher learning and change more accessible for more teachers and schools in Boston and across the country.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment Tool Now Available On-Line

Every book and video in PSI's By Teachers For Teachers series, and every PSI Associate who works with us, can help schools and the teachers they work with to address particular needs. To help educators better identify who and what will be of most help to them, we have posted on our website a comprehensive needs assessment. In less than 15 minutes, educators can answer the questions in this assessment and receive a recommendation of which book in our By Teachers For Teachers series would best meet their needs.

Planning Guides and Needs Assessment Tools Available On-Line

When educators know what change they are interested in making in their school, they now have an easy interface on our website through which they can download the tools they need to make that change happen. For instance, an educator interested in teaching students critical thinking skills can select this topic, then get the following from the PSI website:

Needs Assessment Tool. A simple, one-page tool with questions for educators to determine where professional development will be most valuable.

Action Plan Guide. A tool for educators to take their hopes for change from idea to action. The tools include structured questions to set goals for improved teaching and learning, benchmarks for implementation, and assignment of roles and responsibilities to complete necessary tasks.

Searchable Index in Development

A searchable index for educators to search all 157 topics in our books and videos will soon be available on-line as well. With this index, users will be able to search by book title or school, or by keyword. For instance, by typing "literacy," a user would find all practices that we offer related to literacy. He could then decide whether to download on-line tools or order a book or video with the related information.



Affiliates

As PSI has become known nationally for our work in sharing practices among charter and district public schools, we have received increasing numbers of requests from other organizations interested in replicating our model. In California, New York, Chicago, Indianapolis, and other places, major education organizations and schools have contacted us in hopes of learning from our experience. In response to these requests, we have set internal benchmarks for developing a system to provide training and technical assistance to affiliate programs outside of the Boston area.

Because of the strength of our unique model, and the clear need for more effective sharing of successful practices among public schools and charter schools everywhere, this extension of PSI's success shows great promise for the future. However, in the interest of developing and strongest possible foundation of a program, we are currently focusing on the structure and depth of our projects within the Boston area. In 2004/5, we piloted efforts with two potential affiliates.

Massachusetts Charter School Association

The Massachusetts Charter School Association is a membership organization serving charter schools across the state. This year, MCSA contracted with PSI in collaboration with Child Care Circuit to provide training and support for teams from seven charter schools to explore and share their effective practices. We began our work with MCSA in 2004 and have worked with two groups of teams during the 2004/5 year — one group including participants from eight schools and the other with participants from seven schools. In total, we worked with 31 participants from 15 schools, providing a total of 294 hours of professional development. Our contract has not included data on the extent to which these educators have then helped others to implement practices in their own schools.

Diploma Plus

Diploma Plus, a division of the nonprofit Commonwealth Corporation, is a curriculum model for high schools that serve former dropouts. The model is currently in use in 17 schools across Massachusetts and in Providence, RI, and New York City. The organization received a significant grant from the Gates Foundation to multiply the impact of their model by expanding it to more schools, leading to the work in New York as well as plans to expand into California. Recognizing the need to better document their model in order to facilitate this expansion, they contacted PSI. We engaged in a set of three pilot consulting sessions, providing 9 participants with a total of 76 hours of professional development. These initial exploratory sessions proved most valuable in helping both parties decide that it was best not to move forward until Diploma Plus had more time to assess and develop their own strategy.



Organizational Capacity

Overview

The work of the Project for School Innovation would not be possible without a broad range of resources highlighted in the following pages. These include:

Strategic Plan

A comprehensive strategic plan which guides our planning and decision-making.

Model Schools

Ten model public schools whose effective education practices form the core of our offerings and whose talented staff serve as our PSI Associates.

Staff, Consultants, and Interns

The people who have put in the time and energy to make the organization work.

Board of Trustees

Our governing body with fiduciary responsibility for the organization.

Advisory Board

A board of talented professionals who provide guidance and recommendations.

Contributors and Contracts

Organizations that have provided valuable financial support for our work.

Finances

A breakdown of where our revenues have come from and where our expenditures have gone.



Strategic Plan Overview

In September 2004, after six months of discussions among PSI staff, clientele, and advisors, we approved a five-year strategic plan that continues to be the guiding document for our work. At the same time, this is a living document that we continually re-assess and revise as our work progresses.

The plan is structured around six goals:

- Goal 1.** Cultivate reflection among educators in the Boston area.
- Goal 2.** Disseminate information on effective practices in model schools.
- Goal 3.** Expand our model for sharing knowledge and effecting change in schools.
- Goal 4.** Support affiliates of PSI model.
- Goal 5.** Diversify funding base.
- Goal 6.** Ensure staffing, systems, and partnerships.



Goal 1. Cultivate Support Networks in Boston

PSI strives to connect educators to educators through a supportive and dynamic system of peer learning and through respectful and professional forums for exchange of ideas and practices. One of the most consistent positive reviews for PSI is in its development of a face-to-face network for teachers, as professionals, to support one another. This remains a critical component of our work and central to what we do.

Relevant areas of impact:

Through our networks, we strive to develop leaders in education (see, p. 9)

Our networks foster collaboration between charter and district schools (see, p. 11).

In our networks, we aim for the highest quality and satisfaction (see, p. 12).

Relevant programming:

Model School Study Groups (see, p. 15).

Support Network for Innovative Principals (see, p. 16).

Support Network for Innovative Classrooms (see, p. 17).

PSI Net (see, p. 19).



Goal 2. Disseminate Information on Effective Education Practices

PSI expands the reach of model public schools by developing products, by serving as a vehicle for peer coaching and information sharing, and by reaching out to more schools and educators. We strive to build greater depth to our offerings, to ensure that members of school staff are able to translate the lessons they learn into actual change in their schools.

Relevant areas of impact:

We harness wisdom of effective practices (see, p. 10).

We produce knowledge products that drive change in schools (see, p. 8).

Through dissemination, we foster collaboration among schools (see, p. 11).

Relevant programming:

By Teachers For Teachers Series (see, p. 20).

Wisdom of Educators Series (see, p. 21).

Online Tools (see, p. 25).



Goal 3. Facilitate School Improvement

After five years, our model for sharing knowledge has proven itself effective, and we have had enough time to learn lessons that can be shared with others. At the same time, we remain committed to further developing the depth and expertise of what we do while dialoguing with interested parties about expanding the breadth of PSI's reach.

The 47 teachers who have become PSI Associates—leaders in sharing their effective practices with others—get consistent rave reviews from everyone who learns from them. To date, they have a nearly perfect satisfaction rating from presentations at conferences and workshops. Although we do not need to continue to grow this group as aggressively as we have in the past, 47 teachers and the 12 effective practices they can offer simply is not enough. We will continue to slowly build our offerings, while ensuring that we maintain a continuing connection with at least 2 teacher leaders at each of our model schools.

While we build our offerings, we will also develop our ability to respond effectively and constructively to the response they generate. Having distributed more than 4,000 of our books to date, we are increasing awareness of PSI and the By Teachers For Teachers program nationwide. These are easily our “lead” products, and by following up effectively on initial inquiries and sales, we can build connections within and beyond Boston.

Relevant areas of impact:

We strive to drive change in schools through our programming (see, p. 8).

Through our work with PSI Associates, we are developing leaders in education (see, p. 9).

We aim for the highest quality and satisfaction (see, p. 12).

Relevant programming:

Program in School Improvement (see, p. 23).

PSI Associates (see, p. 24).

Goal 4. Develop Training for Affiliates to Replicate PSI Model

In order to build professionalism and capacity among educators in Boston and elsewhere in the country, PSI communicates regularly with interested parties nationally to determine best possible models for replication and/or expansion.

Future Plans

Future plans for furthering this strategic goal include:

Offer Training. Pilot training with one partner for future expansion.

Quality Control. Develop quality control measures and incorporate into technical assistance package.

Communication Systems. Develop on-line community for affiliates to interact.



Organizational Capacity: Strategic Plan

Goal 5. Diversity Funding Base

Initially, PSI was primarily funded by the government. We were able to leverage this to secure a growing number of contracts with schools and private funding. With the establishment of an independent 501(c)(3) that makes us independent of Neighborhood House Charter School, we are able to seek funding from more private funders. We have seen increasing sales of our books, with more than \$20,000 in sales in recent months. PSI has also developed a menu of fee-for-service programs that contribute to the sustainable revenue that creates some level of social venture initiative.

Relevant Sections in this Annual Report

Funders who have supported PSI in 2004/5 (see, p. 39).

Financial reports for 2004/5 (see, p. 40).



Goal 6. Maintain and Build Capacity

In order to achieve our other five goals, we are committed to ensuring appropriate staffing, systems, and partnerships to support growth. Commensurate with our new 501(c)(3) status, this has included the establishment of our Board of Trustees and expansion of our Board of Advisors, as well as the hiring of a highly talented new executive director who will transition into the leadership role as Michael steps down from the strong role he has played as co-founder and director of PSI and onto other opportunities. A database system for tracking participants and levels of participation in PSI was developed last year and continues to be used regularly as a part of programming.

Relevant Sections in this Annual Report

Board of Trustees (see, p. 37)

Advisory board (see, p. 38).

Staff, consultants, and interns (see, p. 36).



Model Schools

At the heart of PSI's program are our model schools. These are nine public schools — six of which are charter public schools and four of which are district public schools — all of which share a track record of success based on effective practices that have helped student in inner cities succeed. Each model school has participated in a Model School Study Group in the past, has at least one book in the By Teachers For Teachers series, and offers its practices to other schools through our Program in School Improvement.

Below is a list of our model schools. Each detail page includes further information on the school as well as its list of current PSI Associates:

2001 Model Schools

Neighborhood House Charter School (Dorchester, MA)

Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School (Dorchester, MA)

2002 Model Schools

Academy of the Pacific Rim (Hyde Park, MA)

City on a Hill Charter School (Boston, MA)

2003 Model Schools

Boston Collegiate Charter School (Dorchester, MA)*

Cambridgeport Public School (Cambridge, MA)

Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School (Lowell, MA)

Roxbury Preparatory Charter School (Roxbury, MA)

2004 Model Schools

Robert L. Ford School (Lynn, MA)

Richard J. Murphy School (Dorchester, MA)

* Boston Collegiate Charter School formerly known as South Boston Harbor Academy



Staff, Consultants, and Interns

In 2004/5, PSI's operations were conducted by a dedicated and talented group of full-time staff, consultants, and student interns.

Staff and Consultants

Kevin Andrews, Consultant
Lauren Bessen, Graphic Designer
Lisa Bryant, Facilitator
Elizabeth Castellana, Program Coordinator (joined PSI in April)
Tom Chen, Program Coordinator (worked with PSI from October to January)
Jennifer Cunningham, Manager of Product Development
Ruth Feldman, Incoming Executive Director (will join PSI in July 2005)
Joanne Franklin, Graphic Designer
Carolyn Obel-Omia, Researcher
Derek Roth Gordon, Web Designer
Michael Rothman, Executive Director
U.T. Saunders, Facilitator
Ron Walker, Consultant
Darol Ware, Web Designer

Interns

Robin Gamrath, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Luke Janka, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Patrick Kim, Tufts University
Devon Lake, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Catalina Saenz, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Michael Sempert, Tufts University
Imelda Unibe, Harvard Graduate School of Education



Board of Trustees

On September 18, 2004, the Project for School Innovation was granted 501(c)(3) nonprofit status by the federal government. Under the bylaws of this new Trust, PSI's Board of Trustees is composed initially of three members, including one from the Neighborhood House Charter School Board of Directors. Following are the members of PSI's governing Board of Trustees.

Sherry Leventhal, Chair

Chair, Neighborhood House Charter School Board of Directors

Kevin Andrews, Vice-Chair

PSI Co-Founder and Advisor

Ron Walker, Treasurer

PSI Advisor



Advisory Board

PSI is advised by a group of experts in education and organizational management. This body meets quarterly and provides recommendations to the Board of Trustees and executive director concerning the organization's strategic plan, identification and selection of model schools, fund development, and hiring and evaluation of the executive director.

Bill Henderson (founding advisor, resigned: March 2004)
Model School Principal, Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School

Kevin Andrews (founding advisor)
Model School Headmaster, Neighborhood House Charter School

Martha Cook (founding advisor)
COO, The Women's Union

Claire Crane (nomination under consideration for 2005/6)
Model School Principal, Robert L. Ford Elementary School

Kate Murray (confirmed: September 2004)
PSI Associate, Boston Collegiate Charter School

Adam Newman (confirmed: September 2004)
Vice-President, Eduventures

Dan Rothman (confirmed: September 2004)
Senior Vice-President, Lehman Brothers

Lee Teitel (nomination under consideration for 2005/6)
Professor, University of Massachusetts Boston

Ron Walker (founding advisor)
Associate Director, ATLAS Communities

Richard Weissbourd (founding advisor)
Professor Harvard Graduate School of Education



Contributors and Contracts of \$25,000+

Each of the following six organizations contributed \$25,000 or more to the Project for School Innovation in 2004/5. We are grateful to these and other supporters whose financial support helps us to achieve our mission. Funders are listed in order by the amount of their contribution.

Anonymous Funder

We are grateful to an anonymous funder for their support for the Program in School Improvement, development of Online Tools and PSI Net, and publication of *Making Inferences from Text*, the newest book in our Wisdom of Educators series.

Anonymous Funder

We are grateful to an anonymous funder for their support for the Program in School Improvement, Online Tools, PSI Associates and the Support Network for Innovative Classrooms.

Herman and Freida L. Miller Foundation

We are grateful to the Herman and Freida L. Miller Foundation for their support for the Program in School Improvement, PSI Net, and the new book on *Creating Professional Learning Communities* and new videos in the By Teachers For Teachers series.

Neighborhood House Charter School with The Massachusetts Department of Education

We are grateful to the Neighborhood House Charter School, which contracted with us using funding from the Massachusetts Department of Education, to support the Support Network for Innovative Principals.

Social Venture Partners Boston

We are grateful to the partners of Social Venture Partners Boston for their support for our general operating budget as well as the new book on *Becoming a Community School* and new videos in the By Teachers For Teachers series.

Amesbury Academy of Strategic Learning with The Massachusetts Department of Education

We are grateful to the Amesbury Academy of Strategic Learning, which contracted with us with funding from the Massachusetts Department of Education, to support our newest Model School Study Group and work of our PSI Associates in relation to high schools for at-risk youth.



Finances

Revenues and Expenditures* For the Period from July 1, 2004, to June 30, 2005

REVENUE

Government Grants	-
Private Grants	280,000
Contracts	124,693
Revenue from Sales	32,046
Individual Giving	11,000

Total Revenue	477,739
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EXPENDITURES

Salaries & Staffing	159,853
Salaries	113,318
Payments to Teachers & Schools	34,988
Fringe Benefits	10,618
Administrative Contracts	604
Staff Recruitment & Development	325

Consulting Services	35,489
Facilitation	19,087
Graphic Design	7,442
Video Production	2,300
Web Design	6,660

Supplies, Materials & Services	37,739
Office Supplies	8,163
Printing & Copying	22,073
Postage & Courier Fees	718
Conferences & Dues	1,306
Teacher & Staff Travel	1,410
Equipment Leases	3,665
Computer & Telephone Services	171
Subscriptions	234

Indirect Costs	35,000
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Total Expenditures	268,081
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FUND BALANCE

Surplus in FY05**	179,658
Fund Balance from FY04	56,950

Total Fund Balance	236,608
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* Figures represent revenues and expenditures prior to audit of fiscal agent.

** Surplus in FY05 was greater than originally budgeted due to a decision to maintain a reduced staffing level during the change in leadership at the organization, in order to allow for more flexibility in hiring to appropriately meet goals under new leadership in FY06.

Transforming Education by Sharing Success

**Project for School Innovation
2004/5 Annual Report**

Edited by
Ruth Feldman

Additional Writing & Research by
Stephanie Bielas
Annie Hatch

Designed by
Michael Rothman

*This complete report is also available with additional detail at:
www.psinnovation.org/rept05*

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The Project for School Innovation is a 501(c)(3) Trust organization with nonprofit tax-exempt status. PSI was founded by the Neighborhood House Charter School.

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*Transforming Education by Sharing Success
Project for School Innovation
2004/5 Annual Report*

*This complete report is also available with additional detail at:
www.psinnovation.org/rept05*

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