

Coming Together: Democratic Inquiry for Teachers and Community Educators

A Professional Development Series for Community-Classroom Learning Exchange

"...different walks of life, different experiences, charter, public, what have you...as long as we're in the room and we're talking, that's what reform is for me."

--Ky Adderly, participant in April 2011 NLU Forum: What Keeps School Reformers Going?

Introduction: This seminar series was inspired by, and designed as a means of continuing, the conversations begun in the NLU Forums about education held in the spring of 2011 (*Chicago in These Times*). **Coming Together** supports bridge-building between in school and out of school learning through deep-reaching inquiry processes. The series aims to strengthen relationships between community, school, and museum partners, nurturing a vibrant democratic educational community in Chicago.

Seminar Objective: Teachers and community educators will reflect on practice through participation in structured group inquiry processes that can be used in academic disciplines, arts experiences, community life, and other areas of formal and informal learning. Participants will share and develop common resources in a cross-disciplinary setting.

Overview: Collaborative reflection challenges educators to attend to the multitude of factors that impact student learning, from student-student and student-teacher relationships to the influence of out-of-school contexts on differing learning styles. Structured inquiry develops the ability to observe and assess these factors and fosters more conscious learning and teaching. The descriptive methods involved in inquiry highlight the capacities and uniqueness of each student while engaging educators in research, close study, and structured communication about their own and their students' work. Participants' ideas, questions, and concerns help shape the series focus over the course of the year. The hope is that out of the series will grow new documentation and sets of resources to be disseminated beyond the life of the series.

Seminar Facilitators: The series will be facilitated by Joan Bradbury and Shanti Elliott from Teachers' Inquiry Project and Tina Nolan from National Louis University. The Teachers' Inquiry Project (TIP) is devoted to active, impassioned learning and considering teachers as leaders and stewards of democratic life. With this goal in mind, the Project offers opportunities for teachers to share voice, vision, and practice. TIP is a resource for teachers in their growth as practitioners of democracy and as they guide young people toward becoming thoughtful and engaged participants in our city, our country, and the world.

Meeting Sequence Tuesdays 6:00-9:00 pm (*First meeting at Francis Parker School -- subsequent meetings to be held in different locations, to enable participants to experience different school and museum settings together.*)

November 1: *Engaged Learning in School and Community Settings.*

December 6: *Looking at a learner's work: explorations of individual and collaborative work in different settings.*

January 24: *Considering Dewey's concepts of education in light of today's realities.*

March 6: *Grit and Resilience: Using Theater of the Oppressed exercises to inquire into the "Catch 22's" of Public Education.*

May 1: *Defining success in our own terms: creating resources and documentation to sustain the work.*

Series cost: \$175. Scholarships available

Please contact Joan Bradbury joanbradbury@gmail.com or visit The Project on Civic Reflection (http://www.civicreflection.org/what_is_civic_reflection/audiences/teachers/) for more information and to register.