**School improvement hub to improve writing instruction in Dallas**

*Mica Jochim*
*Editorial committee chair*

The Institute for Learning (IFL) in partnership with the Center for Urban Education (CUE) and the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and Dallas Independent School District will serve as a hub for a network of 12 Dallas ISD secondary schools serving predominantly African American, Latino, and low-income students with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In collaboration with Dallas ISD leadership, IFL and CUE will support teams of teachers and leadership from six high schools and six of their feeder middle schools to use continuous improvement methods to increase the number of African American, Latino, English learners, and low-income students who are on track for high school graduation at the end of 9th grade. The work funded by the $7.5 million grant will occur over 5 years and initially focus on English language arts and writing.

Research has shown that writing is a foundational skill that is critical to success in other courses and in college. A clear set of research-based writing strategies is now available for supporting struggling students to improve their writing.

IFL and CUE will use our knowledge and resources and draw on the expertise of the school teams to address the network’s problem of practice in the context of their school and particular students. We have extensive experience in supporting and building capacity within schools to improve student outcomes.

Learn more about this exciting partnership on the IFL’s website and check out the following links to read national coverage on networks for school improvement.


**New IFL interim director named**

*Mica Jochim*
*Editorial committee chair*

Rosa E. (Rosita) Apodaca, a nationally recognized leader in education and an author with expertise in improving instructional systems focused on equitable outcomes for under-served students, has been named executive director (interim) of the Institute for Learning (IFL) at the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh.

Apodaca held a variety of leadership roles in major urban school districts, including teacher, professional developer, and cabinet-level leader; she also worked as principal of a language school. Most recently Rosita served as a senior fellow and director of outreach and development at the IFL.

Rosita has worked to improve leadership effectiveness by collaborating with school districts to strengthen instructional leadership, develop high-quality teacher practice, and advance exceptional coaching practice. Rosita, who was born in Texas and educated in Mexico and the United States, is committed to strengthening the equity lens in the IFL work and supporting our partnerships through high-leverage and culturally appropriate practices. She thinks the IFL’s partnership with the University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Urban Education bolsters the strength of the IFL’s efforts.

Apodaca was appointed an IFL fellow at the University of Pittsburgh in 2002. Prior to joining the IFL, she served as a senior cabinet-level officer in large urban school districts and held teaching and other intermediary line and staff posts. She also led bilingual education/ESL programs for three major urban districts, served as an expert witness in federal court on the teaching and learning of English learners, and chaired the National Advisory and Coordinating Council on Bilingual Education.

With a background in consulting to international, national, and local education agencies, Rosita is frequently invited to speak at conferences on a variety of educational issues, including raising the achievement of English learners.

Rosita exemplifies the bold thinking and action needed to ensure that every child receives the best educational opportunities. Her combined deep expertise developed as a district leader and as an IFL senior fellow provides assurance that “Under her leadership the IFL will continue its important work in urban schools while growing its national and international presence,” said Anthony Petrosky, co-director of the IFL and former associate dean of the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. “Rosita brings sophisticated executive experience to our daily operations and our ongoing outreach to districts, national organizations, and international venues. We are fortunate and grateful for her acceptance of this position.”

Rosita received her BA from the College of Saint Joseph in Albuquerque, New Mexico; an MA from the University of Texas at El Paso; and she holds master’s and doctoral degrees in Educational Leadership from Teachers College, Columbia University.

Please join us in welcoming Rosita to this new role at the Institute for Learning.