

Dissemination

1. *Supporting New Teachers Through Mentoring*

LFDCS designed a comprehensive new teacher induction and mentoring program in partnership with TEACHERS ²¹ of Wellesley, MA and Simmons College to strengthen a school culture to best support professional growth of all staff and to establish best practices to recruit, attract and retain excellent teachers at our school.

Year one of this partnership concentrated on identification and training of highly-qualified veteran teachers who would mentor and support new colleagues either new to the profession or to our school through paired confidential relationships. Veteran staff modeled reflective teaching practices and decision making central to professional growth and practiced collegial coaching through ongoing meetings, journal reflection, classroom observations and use of the conferencing protocol.

At the request of TEACHERS ²¹, staff at LFDCS assisted in the dissemination of educational videos capturing best practices in the use of the conferencing protocol, encouraging thoughtful directed questioning and reflection among mentor teams. A mentor team participated in an actual classroom lesson framed by pre- and post-conferencing demonstrating focused collegial conversations. The DVD "Encouraging Reflection: an Elementary School Mentor and New Teacher Discuss Time Management," filmed during the 2007-2008 school year will be used by TEACHERS ²¹ and Simmons College in their professional work with graduate students and school districts and will be commercially available to public schools and teacher training programs as an example of best practices in supporting teacher growth.

2. *Encouraging Interest – Building Skills – Increasing Knowledge Students and Science: Starlogo TNG@MIT*

LFDCS, in seeking to expand opportunities for staff and students to acquire greater skills, knowledge and capacity for inquiry-based scientific thinking, formed a partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology of Cambridge, MA. MIT @ Lawrence, the initial university outreach, connected our eighth grade students to a rotating monthly program on the MIT campus, introducing them to a range of science disciplines and learning resources—strongly encouraging awareness, interest and attention to science.

This multi-year, multi-outcome partnership has expanded to regular instruction at the Lawrence Family Development Charter School, including one of our Upper School science teachers in MIT's educator program and a summer initiative for twenty talented incoming eighth graders using Starlogo TNG, an educational software package, designed at MIT that uses visual programming language. LFDCS students selected for this project will be introduced to powerful new technologies to learn science inquiry through using and building simulation models, will develop problem solving and logical thinking skills and deepen their understanding of curricular concepts in mathematics and science.

Participating students are anticipated to evidence increased interest and understanding of science as measured on informal, regular assessments using MCAS-type problems and internal assessments at LFDCS. Student interest, participation and focus groups will assist MIT, LFDCS and the broader educator community, on how to better understand how students learn science.