

# North Lawndale



Angela Mojekwu, former Consortium Coordinator, with cohort members at a potluck celebrating the beginning of the 07-08 school year

The North Lawndale Consortium began in 2003 as a project of ACORN, funded by local foundations and providing summer classes in math in a local setting to paraprofessionals and others who aspired to become teachers. The project received state grants for planning and implementation of a full-fledged Grow Your Own Teachers consortium in the first round of funding in 2006 aimed at preparing candidates for certification in Elementary Education.

The partner organizations are:

ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now)  
Northeastern Illinois University  
Richard J. Daley College (City Colleges of Chicago)  
Chicago Public Schools

The university is the fiscal agent on the grant.

**The Cohort:** The North Lawndale cohort has 38 active participants, of whom 3 are men. All but two African-American; their median age is 36. Half of the candidates had some college experience before entering the program. Thirty-two are employed, 24 full-time; 10 work in the schools. Five have dependent children in their households.

We are most proud of the many relationships we've built in order to ensure the success of our teacher candidates. The consortium members have the common goal of developing well-rounded committed teaching professionals and all consortium members have contributed substantially to the ongoing educational, intellectual, and emotional support.

Perhaps the most significant example of this is our teacher mentor program, which provides an opportunity for candidates to establish relationships with veteran teachers in two North Lawndale Schools – Lawndale Academy and Henson Elementary - whose principals have been members of the project steering committee from the beginning. Although the program has been in place for only a short time, participants are enthusiastic. “It prepares the mentees for their roles as teachers which can eliminate fear or thoughts of inadequacies as new teachers,” said Linda Flannigan, a participating mentor from Henson School. “It was a good opportunity to work with a future teacher. Although she is supposed to be learning from me, it was helpful to me to hear about teaching from another person.” Marie Anderson says of her mentor, Pamela Longstreet, “I am blessed to have her. I thank ACORN for presenting her into my life. I truly believe I will learn a great deal from her.”

In most cases, teacher mentors maintain weekly contact with their mentees by phone, email, or in person. Some mentors have allowed candidates into their classrooms for observation. “For the last couple of weeks of the summer session, I was able to sit in on some of Mrs. Deanna Mitchell’s 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class at Henson School. By giving me the opportunity of some in-class experience, I was able to see the relationship between teacher and student and how important that relationship really is,” said GYO participant Danielle Gray.



Latrell Smith of ACORN leading a discussion with cohort members at the College for Success Seminar at Daley College, Summer 07