

October 2008

Collaboratively Speaking

Planning for the future!!!!

Autumn unfolds outside our windows with its majestic color and splendor; we are so fortunate to live and work in a region in which the seasons change with such drama. Many come from all over the world to witness, celebrate, and appreciate that which we inherit annually.

Autumn marks a transitional phase in our annual calendar. Soon, the glories of summer will fade, dashed by the harshness of winter. Our forebears marked this season as an important time to build domestic capacity by jarring preserves, taking in the hay, and pursuing other rituals to endure the scarcity of winter and survive until the spring. In many respects our regional character is shaped by those colder days of winter when life was hard and resources scarce. New Englanders have always recognized the importance of capacity building and provisioning for the future. To them it was matter of survival!

I am reminded of those hardy folk as I plan and anticipate our general membership meeting next Monday, October 20 at the Bi-County Collaborative. We are honored to have our long-time, highly esteemed colleague and friend Karla Brooks Baehr, now our Deputy Commissioner, as our guest. Karla, a veteran superintendent and educational leader, has witnessed much change on the educational landscape over the past several decades. I imagine her message to us will be about change and capacity building. Like those hardy New Englanders of years gone by, we too need to identify our needs, provision and marshal our resources, and expand our capacities to meet the new realities of the coming years. Anne Booth wrote to you several weeks ago about her excitement at attending a recent Rennie Center Forum. All the panelists identified educational collaboratives as the logical choice to assist the Commonwealth in responding to the needs of many of its underperforming school districts. The time is ripe for us to step forward and take advantage of this opportunity to play a broader and deeper role on the educational stage. Are we willing and prepared to assume these greater responsibilities? Following Karla's comments, we will have an opportunity to continue this discussion of capacity building. I believe there are several questions we will need to address:

What does capacity building mean on an individual collaborative, regional, and statewide level?

How is it different from my collaborative's traditional role?

What are the needs that must be identified and met among school districts?

What will it take to build this capacity?

These are significant questions that we must address if we are to meet the challenges that lay ahead. It is important that your individual and collective voice be heard as we begin to strategize and design our response. Please make every effort to attend this most important member meeting as we begin to describe better the need and understand our capacity to respond. The hardy New England farmers recognized the need to develop that capacity as a method to anticipate and provide for the future. For them it included the identification of needs and goals, the preservation and conservation of resources, and a plan to marshal those resources strategically. For us it is no different!!! With these thoughts in mind I look forward to our continued work together!!!

Meeting Reminders General Membership
October 20
Bi-County Collaborative
397 Central Street, Franklin

Dr Robert Evans, Executive Director, The Human Relations
Service
“Surviving and Thriving In Challenging Times”
December 10
The Education Cooperative
1112 High Street, Dedham