



# TLC Topics and Trends

Summer 2004

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## School is Out

School is Out!!! When teachers and students are rejoicing next week that school is out for the summer, I will be looking forward to school being out...FOREVER! Imagine the feeling. After working at a school or a school district administrative office since I was 20 years old, here I am at 59, making that final step towards retirement.

Oddly enough, that step makes one look back—to the beginning of the journey. It all started in Tampa (Hillsborough County), Florida, where I began my career on a very temporary basis. I had a degree in Mathematics and never intended to be a teacher – it was only a first stop until I found a “real” job. So I became an “alternative certified” teacher, although at the time there was no ACE to support me in my first struggles to control and to teach in my classroom full of middle school students. In fact, there was no alternative certification, only formal coursework available over a three-year period to gain professional credentials. And there certainly was no inservice training to help me along. As I look back, it was quite a miracle that I made it. Not to mention the students? How did they do? I would like to think that my knowledge of subject matter made up for my lack of expertise in classroom management and instructional methodology.

I think those days we sort of expected the kids to learn in spite of the teacher’s preparation not as a result of their expertise. That theory has been proven wrong by research that clearly states that the teacher is the single most direct factor affecting student achievement.

As it turned out, regardless of my

background, I discovered that my love for the kids made teaching my chosen profession after all and I stopped looking for a “real” job. So after teaching in Virginia and Kentucky I settled in Broward for my teaching career. How lucky I was to land in a school district that recognizes that staff development is the way to make sure teachers obtain the support needed to gain the knowledge to get the job done. The leadership of Dr. Robert Parks, who as a School Board member brought forth the Professional Pathways policy, has nurtured that belief. Principals and administrators in every department have endorsed it and classroom teachers throughout Broward County have benefited from access to enriching staff development. Even despite some of the paperwork and systems barriers to have it happen – and believe me, I have seen many of these over the years - teachers, principals, and administrators still put frustration aside to do the job, thanks to our common goal of making every student successful, regardless of how difficult it can be at times.

So this summer, while school is out, continue growing. Pick up a book, explore online, work through a CD, or listen to a tape. Whatever you do, take some time to learn and to get ready for next year, when school is in and the kids are back. But also, take a lot of time to enjoy your family, renew your spirit, and pat yourself in on the back for a job well done. And when you do, think of me. I will be doing that full time!!!!

*Margarita Cruz Sasse*

## Celebration of Diversity

“What a life-changing experience.” “The seminars, lectures and visitations to the various colleges truly have given me direction in life.” “I feel so privileged to have been given the opportunity to learn about the leadership role of a teacher and about who I am and who I want to be.” Students participating in the Sun-Sentinel Diversity grant project with TLC made these comments.

TLC in partnership with the Urban Teacher Academies and Broward Community College has provided academic and mentoring support to prospective teachers both at the high school and community college level to increase the number of teachers from diverse backgrounds in the Broward County School System. The culminating lecture of the 2003-04 series was entitled, *A Celebration of Diversity* held at Broward Community College on April 14, 2004.

Throughout the year high school students from Stranahan, Nova's Urban Teacher Academy (UTAP), and community college students at BCC interested in pursuing teaching as a career learned about the role of a teacher. These students were given experiences to acquaint them with the joys and challenges of teaching. Students who successfully complete the UTAP will be eligible for full-time scholarships at BCC, FAU, or Nova Southeastern University. These scholarships have been initiated through the Broward Education Foundation under the leadership of Dr Robert Parks.

