

For the Brock Prize: James R. Vivian

Introduction

It is a privilege on this occasion to support my nomination of James R. Vivian for the 2019 Brock International Prize in Education. Since 1978 Jim has been Director of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, of the National Demonstration Project (1999-2002) to demonstrate the feasibility of founding Institutes in other and variously circumstanced locations, and of the Yale National Initiative to strengthen teaching in public schools® (2004-present) to continue the work of the Demonstration Project by sponsoring and organizing seminars in summer Intensive Sessions on the Yale campus in New Haven.

During these Intensive Sessions, returning and first-time teachers from Institute locations (at present New Haven, Philadelphia, Delaware, and Tulsa, formerly Pittsburgh, Houston, and Charlotte) and teachers from locations with Institutes in the early or advanced planning stage (at present Richmond, Chicago, the Diné Nation of the Navajo, San José, the San Francisco Bay Area, a resurgent Pittsburgh, and Washington, D. C.), are introduced to the Teachers Institute model. To be described more fully below, this model facilitates content-based and collegial seminars led by college faculty and participated in by K-12 public school teachers with classrooms in environments that are, for the most part, under-represented: high-need, high-minority school districts. New Haven works with Yale, Philadelphia with Penn, several school districts in Delaware with the University of Delaware, and Tulsa with Tulsa University. Virginia Commonwealth, Loyola of Chicago, Northern Arizona University, San José State, Chatham College with Carnegie Mellon, and Trinity Washington are projected for future collaborations.

In all Institutes, Teacher Representatives choose seminar topics every year after canvassing teachers in their district for topics of interest, at which point the Director helps the Representatives seek out university faculty members to lead seminars on those topics. For each seminar a teacher is also chosen by the Institute's Teacher Representative to serve as the Coordinator-the liaison, that is, between teachers in the seminar, called Fellows, and the seminar leader. In every possible way teachers are engaged as colleagues to enliven the conversational atmosphere of the seminar. For forty years this nationwide effort has inspired thousands of teachers through the print and

electronic dissemination of the substantial curriculum units written by teachers in all seminars both national and local, and its leader has been my candidate for the Brock Prize, Director Jim Vivian.

Biography



James R. Vivian is founding director of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, a joint effort of Yale University and the New Haven Public Schools to improve teaching and learning in the local public schools and, by example, in schools across the country. He was director of the Institute's National Demonstration Project, a five-year undertaking to show that the approach the Institute had taken for more than twenty years in New Haven could be tailored to establish similar educational partnerships under different circumstances in other cities. In 2004 he became director of the Yale National Initiative to strengthen teaching in public schools®, a long-term endeavor to influence public policy on teacher professional development, in part by establishing exemplary new Teachers Institutes around the country. He is Executive Editor of *On Common Ground*®, a periodical publication with a nationwide circulation on strengthening teaching through school-university partnership.

A leading educator in the area of collaborative programs between schools and universities, Jim has been director of the Institute since he headed the creation of the program in 1978. Recognized as a path-breaking model of university-school collaboration, the Institute focuses on strengthening teaching and learning of the humanities, the social sciences, the sciences and math in the schools. It is the first such program to be endowed as a permanent unit of a university. Through the Institute University faculty members and public school teachers work together as colleagues to deepen the teachers' knowledge of their subjects and to develop curricular material to engage and educate their students. Since 1978, 125 Yale faculty members have led one or more of its New Haven Institute or National Initiative seminars.

Jim was born in Clovis, New Mexico, where he attended the Clovis Public Schools. He received his B.A. degree in 1968, his M.A. degree in 1974 and his Master of Philosophy degree in 1975, all from Yale. As an undergraduate he received the John C. Schroeder Prize and wrote a biography of United States Senator Dennis Chavez, the first Hispanic-American Senator. His publications include biographies of Hispanic Americans and an essay on the Chicano liberation movement in the *Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West*. He also has written and spoken widely on his experience with university-school collaboration.

In 1968-1969, Jim was executive assistant of Education Associates, Inc., Washington, D.C., and later an education program specialist in the U.S. Office of Education responsible for administration and development of Upward Bound Programs in the West Coast region. When in 1970 he was legislative assistant to Congressman John Brademas (since NYU President and activist supporter of the Teachers Institute), his assignments included research and writing on the role of the Federal government in education. From 1971 to 1972 he was Curator of Education, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. As Curator, he developed a new education program in American history for elementary and secondary school students, in particular those from the District of Columbia Public Schools, and arranged special exhibitions and publications for school students. These included exhibitions on the history of African Americans in the District of Columbia, the music and poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, and the lives and times of James Weldon Johnson and Mary McLeod Bethune.

He is past chairman of the board of directors, Ulysses S. Grant Foundation, a program founded in 1954 through which Yale students teach minority and low-income New Haven public school students in small classes throughout the year. As a Yale undergraduate, Jim Vivian himself was such a teacher and was student director of the Grant program. Prior to assuming the Directorship of the Teachers Institute, which he had guided through the planning stage for two years, Jim directed Yale's History Education Project, founded 1970, a collaboration in seminars between history professors and school teachers that was in many ways a prototype, within a narrower field, for the Institute to come. He is past president of the Connecticut Committee of the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History; and past chairman of the Historic District Commission, Town of Clinton, Connecticut.¹

The Teachers Institute Model: Why the Director is the Key Factor

In order fully to understand the importance of the Teachers Institute model outlined in the document called *Understandings and Procedures*, 2007, to which all Institutes conform their practices, some descriptive evocation of it is in order; but it is crucial at the outset to emphasize its sustainable longevity. As a trained historian, Jim is skilled at weighing the evidence of experience and deciding what works and what doesn't work; while as a born administrator, he knows how to implement and codify what he has learned from observation. The perdurability of the Institute model, now flourishing in its fortieth year, has depended on the rigor of its guidelines and its constructive repetition of procedures from year to year. "Nothing hurts university involvement with the schools more than the teachers' suspicion that the professors regard their part as a short-term charity."² It is a short-term temptation to value spontaneity of procedure; it has been Jim's wisdom and insight, however, to liberate the Institute model from the ephemerality of charisma. Spellbinding mentors, enthusiastic and galvanizing college administrators, school district representatives and teacher team leaders all come and go; all are easily displaced and their focus of attention may shift even if they remain in place. Hence without a strong Director devoted to the long term, partnerships similar to ours between

¹This bio is reproduced, with small changes, from a document provided to the author by Mr. Vivian himself.

²Fred M. Hechinger, "Promoting 'Subversion,'" *New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1986, C1. **Nearly all documents referenced in this portfolio can be consulted in the archive of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute website, URL given below, p. 9.**

universities and public school teachers will probably last two or three years, as the organizational powers of key players--none of them squarely accountable for minding the shop--are gradually devoted to new endeavors. “The history of education reform efforts is that they are too often episodic and short-lived,” says Vivian.”³ This is one reason why the Director is appointed, after a painstaking search, by no less a person than the President of the partnering university.

The former Teachers Institute in Pittsburgh offers a cautionary tale in this regard. Under the devoted and inspirational leadership of its late Director Helen Faison, a career educator, former school superintendent and chair of the education faculty at Chatham College, Pittsburgh flourished in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon and Chatham for many years. On her retirement, however, at a time when ill health prevented her assistance in searching for a new Director, Pittsburgh discovered no successor, lost its way and soon foundered. No one but the Director can assure and enforce the continuities without which all institutions soon melt away, and Jim Vivian has succeeded in this effort with extraordinary foresight and attention to detail. As early as 1984, in an article called “Yale University: The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute,” Jim insisted on four essential principles:

(1) our belief in the fundamental importance of the classroom teacher and of teacher-developed materials for effective learning; 2) our insistence that teachers of students at different levels interact as colleagues, addressing the common problems of teaching their disciplines; (3) our conviction that any effort to improve teaching must be teacher-centered and our consequent dependence on the institute coordinators, teachers in each school who meet weekly with the director and who constitute an essential part of the program's leadership; and (4) our certainty that the university can assist in improving the public schools only if we make a significant and long-term commitment to do so.⁴

Especially of note here is the emphasis on the long-term commitment of a given university, which can be secured contractually--once the university's good will towards the program is in place--by securing the long-term matching support of outside funders. This Jim has accomplished brilliantly from the beginning until now. Well-endowed for the Humanities from very early on, for

³Erin Overbey, “James Vivian,” *Humanities* 13, 6 (1992), 36.

⁴<http://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/articles/T1.html>

many years the Institute sought to secure a comparable permanent endowment for the STEM subjects that were increasingly in demand and that we were in a position to teach very well, both in the local and national settings; just this last year a contractual arrangement for this purpose was established by agreement between Yale and outside funders, owing to the persistence and fundraising skill of Jim Vivian.

What then is a Teachers Institute seminar? Simply put, it is a form of Professional Development (PD) that emphasizes improved understanding of a subject matter rather than refinement of the teaching techniques that are promoted by education schools. But right away in practice this way of describing our focus is subject to qualification. In the collegial atmosphere of the seminars all of us, the seminar leader included, will soon enough be thinking about the best way to teach the content we're learning. (I speak having been the leader of fourteen seminars, four local and ten national.) The substantial 7,500-12,500 word curriculum units each teacher writes in descriptive paragraphs are organized in three main sections: the first and largest is "content objectives" (which already implies a pedagogical interest in the subject matter), and then come "teaching strategies" and "classroom activities." It's in the latter two of these sections that the teachers dictate their own course of direction; they discuss these parts of the unit too with their seminar leaders, but after all they're the experts. They already possess the skills that typical PD keeps reinforcing, and they build on those skills while getting ready to teach an enhanced and more nuanced subject matter, always in conformance with District, State and National Standards (they devote an appendix to explaining the connection of their unit to these standards), but now with the exhilaration of mastery that's lacking when one teaches scripted materials by rote, oriented exclusively toward mandated tests, frequently in subject areas that one may not have studied at all or may at most have merely glanced at in college.

To reiterate the role of teachers in the administration and steering of an Institute: Teacher Representatives propose topics for these seminars by collating the wishes of teachers in their school district(s). The Director then helps them find professors suitable to be seminar leaders on these topics. The Representatives, with the help of their Directors, then accept teacher applicants into the seminars of their choice and assign the role of Coordinator to one of the teachers accepted in each seminar. Enrolled teachers are called Fellows and given ID's and all privileges on the campus of the participating college—library and IT with access to all online resources, gym, dining hall, etc. That is to say, they are empowered as colleagues and full participants in the life of their local university. As collaborative learners, they are not graded or in any

way assessed, apart from the obligation to attend seminars and complete their curriculum units satisfactorily. All of this is coordinated through Jim Vivian's office, which also funds the Planning Phase of all new Institutes while urging upon them the importance of autonomous fundraising in conjunction with matching university support.



Visiting Fellows, Summer Intensive Session, 2018

The balance of emphasis between content focus and a conversational, collegial atmosphere in our seminars, a balance that in recent years has been recognized for its value in studies of Professional Development best practices (as Ellen Kisker documents in a forthcoming article⁵), **was in effect invented by Jim Vivian**. He had the encouragement in 1978 of Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti and of future Yale President Howard Lamar (with the continued support of Presidents Benno Schmidt, Richard Levin and Peter Salovey ever since); and as early as 1986, on the convening of Yale's second education conference on "Strengthening Teaching Through Collaboration," the visionary *New York Times* education columnist and editor Fred Hechinger had this to say: "the college-school connection many experts consider crucial to

⁵ Cf. Kisker, "Updating the Theory of Change," *On Common Ground*, #16, October 2018), 7.

school reform is turning into a movement.”⁶ Together with Ernest Boyer, Richard Ekman, Gordon Ambach, and later David Warren among others, Hechinger soon joined the National Advisory Committee to YNHTI, and after he retired from the *Times* he wrote for *On Common Ground*, #3 (1994): “University-school partnership cannot work unless it is taken seriously as a permanent academic enterprise, not as a minor dabbling in doing good works at the fringes. . . the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute is ready to serve as a model for other universities in other cities, and the many teachers waiting to be admitted to a truly professional partnership” (*Ibid.*).

The advantages for teachers in a program such as this are attested to in countless testimonials (you’ll find some further on and I hope to show you more in video clips in October) and in the solid evidence amassed in evaluation studies by Rogers Smith and Ellen Kisker, but one should not pass over the benefits for the seminar leaders who are, by profession, college teachers. One of the first and most successful Yale seminar leaders, historian Robin Winks, declared in 1982, “The seminars help me grow as a teacher. . . . Furthermore, I’ve learned about the practical problems of teaching in high school.”⁷ The mention of “high school” here reminds us that until 1989 the Institute offered seminars only to middle and high school teachers, then made the daring leap to K-12. This decision increased the challenge for seminar leaders in obvious ways. If the twelve Fellows in the room range from, say, first grade to 12th grade AP, it is not difficult to imagine the challenge of getting everyone on the same page when approaching biochemistry or modern poetry and guiding curriculum units on such subjects. Yet this is what is accomplished again and again, the solvent among us being the common goal of teaching, of finding a way to make a subject matter interesting. Seeking such common ground is far indeed from a professor’s ordinary task in teaching a roomful of self-selecting undergraduates (although there too sensitivity towards differences in interest and aptitude is helpful, and deepened by Teachers Institute experience) or professionalized graduate students. Collegiality in an Institute seminar depends on getting everyone talking and involved, and here too the need to curb one’s inclination to lecture is invaluable back in the college classroom.

The Director ensures continuity in part by ensuring continuity in funding. In the early years of the Institute, Jim Vivian established the cornerstone of what could be built on repeatedly and from many sources when

⁶ Quoted in James R. Vivian, “Fred M. Hechinger, 1920-1995,” *OCG*, #6 (Spring 1996), 30.

⁷ Winks, quoted by Gene I. Maeroff, “Cooperation Grows Between Yale and City Teachers,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1982, C4.

through his efforts the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund gave \$2 million dollars as an endowment challenge grant and Yale soon agreed to match it. Also awarding substantial and often renewed grants over the years, among others, were Aetna Life, the Atlantic-Richfield Foundation, the Carolyn Foundation, the Connecticut Humanities Council, the Edward W. Hazen Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Although Press Conferences have often been called on these occasions, with high officials in attendance, Jim Vivian is not one to announce things of this sort in his own name. At our Intensive Sessions and annual conferences in late October, for example, these latter being reunions for the summer's Fellows and occasions for school officials from interested locations to visit and learn about the program, Jim always makes a few introductory remarks and then moves to the background, empowering teachers in this way too by inviting them to speak at workshops, chair round tables, and assume other prominent roles alongside the seminar leaders. From his position in the background, Jim stays firmly in control, meeting with all city and regional teams and keeping in constant touch with teacher and seminar leaders while in the visible foreground a complex sequence of events goes ahead smoothly, owing to his meticulous advance planning. But he dislikes seeming to be the center of things, believing that, with its director laying the groundwork and providing continuity, the heart and soul of an Institute is the genuine empowerment of the teachers who find themselves cast as its leaders.

Disseminating the Message

A visit to the Teachers Institute and National Initiative websites (<http://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/>; <http://teachers.yale.edu/>) will provide some of the atmosphere of this endeavor. The National is indeed "intensive": a weekend in May with two two-hour seminars, two weeks in July with two-hour seminars five days a week and many additional meetings together with the writing of the curriculum unit due the second Wednesday of the July session. The Local seminars meet on some variant of a once-a-week format, in some cases during the school year and--for the teachers' convenience--at the end of the day; this more protracted schedule makes it much easier to write a curriculum unit while perhaps missing out on some of the intensity of togetherness featured in the National. All these seminar experiences are in a certain sense self-contained, hence word gets spread largely owing to the

teachers' infectious enthusiasm, some of which I hope to convey by audio-visual means when I address you in October.

Beyond word of mouth, however, and beyond the attractiveness of the experience that we hope to communicate on the website, we extend our influence in two ways: first, there is Jim's periodical *On Common Ground* which I have already cited, all the issues of which from the beginning can be viewed and read through on the National Initiative website.



As you see, this journal is handsome in appearance, with visual accompaniments carefully chosen for the most part from the American art tradition, with artists representing indigenous and other minority perspectives as well as the mainstream.

Second, and much more important from the standpoint of teachers everywhere, there is the archive of curriculum units, dating back to the beginning, from both local and national seminars, which can also be browsed and read on the website. At first of course the units were printed only in hard copy. Each seminar's units were bound in a volume (for the first year, 1978, four volumes were bound) and distributed across the New Haven school district. In 1996 Yale architect Kent Bloomer, who had led several seminars, designed and placed Centers for Curriculum and Professional Development, where the bound curriculum units were shelved as a library, in

many of New Haven's schools (eleven by 1999); it was in these Centers, too, that some of the first computers for school use were installed, partly for the purpose of browsing Institute activities.



Fellows at the Center for Curriculum and Professional Development, Davis Street School, June 12, 2003

The electronic age, however, brought with it the opportunity to advance our work nationally, as soon enough the units could be published online. This took place in 1995, on the Institute's first website. Google Analytics has shown that today the Institute and Initiative websites receive millions of worldwide visits. **To be precise, in 2017 we had 4,922,944 page-views and 2,062,493 users. Of all the websites available in the Yale University system, the Institute's is the second most frequently visited.** As our evaluation consultant Ellen Kisker of Twin Peaks Associates cautions, however, it is very difficult to pin down the actual number of teachers not directly involved in seminars who have made use of our curriculum units in their own teaching. She is nevertheless able to write: "A web pop-up survey, even with a very low response rate, documented use by more than two thousand teachers over a 17-month period."⁸ Surely the tip of the iceberg, **this shows how far beyond the Institute School Districts the**

⁸ Kisker, "Study of Teachers Institute Curriculum Units," *OCG*, #16 forthcoming, 13

Institute model has spread its influence. Teachers interviewed have also testified that they prefer Institute units to “commercial curriculum” (Kisker, *Ibid.*), and that means that our approaches to curriculum, **written by teachers for teachers**, are preferable to for-profit curriculum made available for mass circulation.

Jim Vivian has done as much as is humanly possible to extend our influence, and he has done extraordinarily well, but his efforts have been hindered by deepening nationwide attitudes towards public schools, one of the very few issues, alas, on which there appears to be agreement across the political spectrum. Imperative reading on this subject is the cover article in the forthcoming *OCG* by our Philadelphia colleague Rogers M. Smith, Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania and President of the American Political Science Association, “Strengthening a Nation Through Strengthening Teaching: The Promise of America’s Teachers Institutes.”⁹ Here Smith documents in detail the steep decline in worldwide educational ranking of countries—including even Sweden, not to mention the United States—that have invested in the privatization of secondary schooling, while showing also that top-ranked countries like Finland, South Korea and Singapore are also at the top “in teacher professional development, teacher salaries, and teacher recognition” (“*Ibid.*,” 4). In view of Asian leadership in public education, especially in mathematics, the New Haven Institute and National Initiative are fortunate to have regular seminars led by Yale mathematician Roger Howe, whose pioneering work in the improvement of elementary arithmetic and algebra teaching—with some measure of frustration, he was on the national committee to establish Common Core standards--is based in part on professional development models offered by the leading Asian exemplars of public education.

As Smith writes in any case, we must learn to avoid the temptations of a “quick-fix”: “the quest for a quick-fix is in fact a main reason why the Teachers Institute approach and related educational initiatives have had real but limited positive impacts on this nation’s educational challenges thus far” (“*Ibid.*”). He continues: “Teachers Institutes are a bit like Dorothy’s slippers:

⁹ *Op. cit.*, 1, 4, 32. Smith is the author of our first important evaluation study, “To Motivate My Students,” 2004, on the YNHTI website, which rigorously established that Institute participation dramatically improves teacher retention in school districts. (As is well known, a leading source of public school malfunction is teacher attrition.)

they are an answer to our problems we have had all along, while failing to recognize their potential” (“Ibid.,” 32).

For some years Jim Vivian worked with congressional supporters to introduce legislation to fund a Teachers Institute on the New Haven model in every state in the country, with the assumption that the incremental spread of the model from that point forward would have irreversible momentum. Introduced by Connecticut’s influential Representative Rosa De Lauro, this legislation did in fact have bipartisan support, and there was reasonable hope for its success some ten years ago, but even then the privatization and “choice” mantra threatening the dignity and independence of today’s public school teachers (the “quick-fix” referred to by Smith, proven again and again in too many cases to fail) was a siren call for legislators across the political spectrum; and since then the political climate concerning public education has only worsened, making any attempt at legislation at this point quixotic and pointless. Nonetheless, recent successes spearheaded by teachers in the red states of Oklahoma, where there is an Institute, and Arizona, where there will soon be an Institute, gives us reason to hope that a groundswell in the other direction may be at hand; and if this happens, the tipping point in favor of the Teachers Institute model will finally have arrived, and what many of us have long known will finally be apparent to all: **the true pioneer in the improvement of American public education, especially the improvement of the underserved school districts now under siege, is Jim Vivian.**

Moments in the Institute, Demonstration Project, and Initiative histories

In 1980, when Jim and President Giamatti sought and obtained a two-year, \$25,000 development grant from the Atlantic-Richfield Foundation, the President declared that it was “to launch a sustained effort to make known the work, the obvious value, of the Institute and seek collaboration with colleagues from other institutions.”¹⁰ Also in this year, Jim created an important overseeing body for New Haven, to be replicated in all Institutes to come: the University Advisory Council. This is a large body made up of prominent faculty members and administrators, not all with direct ties to the Institute, to meet once a year, with the President in attendance, to give

¹⁰ Giamatti, quoted in “A Timeline of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute and Yale National Initiative,” made available to the author August 13, 2018, 3.

advice on issues proposed in advance by the Institute's Executive Council, a small body of persons active in the Institute. Members of both bodies are chosen by the Director and invited to serve by the University President. The Co-chairs of the Executive Council, who work closely with the Director, chair the annual Advisory Council meeting, a feature of which at Yale is Jim's report on the year's work. And finally in the banner year of 1980, the Teachers Institute approach was adopted by the Connecticut Coordinating Committee on the Promotion of History for the teaching of Connecticut history, marking the first time the Institute brought teachers from outside New Haven to the Yale campus during the summer for an intensive seminar.

In 1983 at Jim's behest, Yale hosted the first important conference of which the Institute was the cornerstone, "Excellence in Teaching: A Common Goal," which Chief State School Officers of thirty-eight states and more than forty College and University Presidents attended. Here the Institute was featured as a potential national model for school-college collaboration. The proceedings of this conference were published by the College Board as a 1984 book, *Teaching in America: The Common Ground: A Report of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute*. In this book, especially in Jim Vivian's Introduction, the reasons why the Teachers Institute model was unique and pioneering—as it still is—are made clear: other college-school partnerships, like Stanford's, have made contact primarily with school district administrators and have relatively little contact with teachers; or they may involve professors lecturing teachers on their subject matters; or they may involve the community outreach of University Education Schools that emphasize teaching, not content; or they may be—are likely to be—transitory, at best "pilot programs," not sustainable resources. As Carnegie Foundation President Ernest L. Boyer wrote in his report of 1983, citing the Institute as a model, "Every college and university should establish a partnership with one or more school districts to provide educational and cultural enrichment as determined by principals and teachers of the schools" ("Timeline," 7).

In 1985 another means of broadening the Institute's impact and gaining the input of some of the prominent figures in the education world was created with Jim's inspiration by President Giamatti: the Institute's National Advisory Committee, in effect a governing board that is carefully consulted to this day when the Planning Director of a new college-school site has submitted an application to become an Institute. The roll call of the National Advisory Committee's initial members reads (as it does to this day) like a Who's Who in American education: Gordon Ambach, President of the

Council of Chief State Officers; Alberta Arthurs of the Rockefeller Foundation; Leon Botstein, then as now President of Bard College; Ernest Boyer; Richard Ekman, head of the NEH education programs; Norman Francis, President of Xavier University of Louisiana; Fred Hechinger; Claire List of the Andrew Mellon Foundation; Fred Nelson of Atlantic-Richfield; Robert Roggeveen of Aetna; Theodore Sizer, Chair of the Brown University Education Department; and Glegg L. Watson, Head of University Affairs at Xerox.

In 1985, at the behest of Dale Bumpers (R, Arkansas), Jim testified before the U. S. Senate’s Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities to support “A Bill to Provide a National Program for Improving the Quality of Instruction in the Humanities in Public and Private Elementary Schools.” I mention this occasion in part to emphasize that there has always been bipartisan interest in the Institute model.



Dale Bumpers with Jim Vivian to his right

Jim knew Washington, having worked with John Brademas there, and this moment marks the beginning of his efforts there in behalf of the Institute, efforts that have continued until as recently as 2015.

April of 1986 marked a visit to the Institute by Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers. *The Boston Globe* reported, “Shanker called the Yale institute ‘wonderful’” (“Timeline,” 11). In November of this year, Yale hosted a second conference, “Strengthening Teaching Through Collaboration: A National Conference of Teachers and Administrators from Schools and Colleges,” enthusiastically reported on by Fred Hechinger in the *Times*. 1988-89 saw the publication, by the Trustees of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, of *An Imperiled Generation: Saving Urban Schools*, which recommended that “colleges should have summer and year-long institutes, following the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute model which asks the teachers themselves to shape the content of the program” (“Timeline,” 13).

In 1991, on the occasion of celebrating “the permanence and promise” of the Institute, James Herbert of the NEH remarked, “the principles and practice of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute—the insight, seriousness, steadfastness, with which it has held to these principles—have transcended many transient waves of reform in American education” (“Timeline,” 16). This year too witnessed the next conference, “School-College Collaboration: Preparing Teachers and Curricula for Public Schools,” attended by representative of twenty-seven programs in which school and faculty members collaborate. At this time the Institute published a collection of exemplary curriculum units in book form, *Teaching in New Haven*.

1993 saw the first issue of *On Common Ground*, featuring an article by Secretary of Education Richard Riley. The third issue in 1994 was to feature an article, “Creating New Paths to the Middle Class,” by Secretary of Labor Robert Reich. I hope to bring copies of the latest issue, the sixteenth, to Tulsa in October. In 1995, Yale with Richard Levin at the helm permanently endowed the Institute by matching challenges having been awarded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund, represented at the announcement ceremony by its President M. Christine De Vita, and the NEH, represented by its Chairman Sheldon Hackney. The Institute had already come to stand out as a model program for the long haul, but its financial security--now established through the tireless work of Jim Vivian over many years—made it possible for Jim to turn his attention to the *practical* goal, no longer a recommendation in the abstract, of creating new Institutes elsewhere.

One challenge that was now confronted—and this was a key topic during that period for the University Advisory Council—was to demonstrate that the Institute model could be adapted to fit constituencies of different sizes, as at one time it had been assumed that the model would work only in cities the size of New Haven, such as Durham or Chapel Hill, N. C., for example, where there were also prominent universities. Jim needed now to prove that Institutes could be sustained in cities of differing sizes, notably larger ones such as Pittsburgh and Houston; with partnerships involving more than one college, such as Carnegie Mellon and Chatham in Pittsburgh, more than one school district, such as the eventual grouping in northern Delaware, and ultimately in under-represented rural areas with more than one school district, such as the Diné Nation of the Navajo, or perhaps the Appalachian region of Kentucky and West Virginia. To this end, the National Demonstration Project was launched in 1998. Teachers from the five sites awarded Planning Grants attended a July Intensive Session to participate in three seminars that would prove to be the prototype for the National Initiative. In this year the Pittsburgh Institute was founded under the Directorship of Helen Faison; and in 1999 the Houston Teachers Institute began its work. The National Demonstration project continued its mission through 2002, the year in which Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro offered remarks to the House “honoring the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute on their 25th anniversary,” adding that it “has been recognized at every level of government as a model for all communities” (“Timeline,” 30).

In 2004, while launching the National Initiative, Jim began the efforts at legislation that continued through 2011. The bills then on the floor were “The Teacher Professional Development Institutes Act” and the companion measure (H. R. 2663) in the House of Representatives. There was never a shortage of bipartisan support, and these bills were sponsored by Joseph Lieberman (who wrote an article for *OCG*, #10, 2005), Christopher Dodd, Rosa DeLauro, Chaka Fattah, Rush D. Holt, Nancy L. Johnson, John B. Larson, Christopher Shays, and Rob Simmons. The first fruit of the National Initiative was the founding of today’s Philadelphia Institute in 2007. In 2009, Rogers Smith updated his “To Motivate My Students” with his evaluative report, “To Strengthen Teaching: An Evaluation of Teachers Institute Experiences.” Because evaluative data is the first concern of funders, this important document remained the most important “evidence” of our success until the exhaustive current work of Ellen Kisker, distilled in the two forthcoming *OCG* articles (#16, October 2018). This year also marked the founding of the Charlotte Teachers Institute, and in 2010 today’s

Delaware Institute was founded and ably directed until his retirement by the late Ray Theilacker, a former National Fellow. Tulsa in 2017 rounds out this group, soon to be joined, we hope, by Richmond, Chicago, and the Diné Nation, which is in fact already experimenting with seminars.

2010 saw the continued efforts of legislators, as Senator Richard Blumenthal joined Lieberman, DeLauro and Fattah to introduce S. 3498 and H. R. 5556, meant to create a competitive grants program to establish Teachers Institutes throughout the nation. This effort was repeated with fresh legislation in 2011. In the 2010 Report to the President by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, the Teachers Institute model is singled out as a model for learning in the STEM subject area. A 2012 book on education by Thomas L. Friedman and Michael E. Mandelbaum, *That Used to Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World it Invented and How We Can Come Back*, calls attention to what is of central importance in the Institute model, a program "that is led in crucial respects by the teachers themselves. This not only improves the teachers' classroom performance; it also serves a purpose as important as recruiting and training good teachers: keeping them" ("Timeline," 41).

In 2015, the Yale National Initiative Invitational Conference was held conjointly with the Initiative's annual October conference, fulfilling a commitment made by the Institute at the 2014 White House Summit on college opportunity. Representatives of colleges and universities from twenty-four states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia attended. Together with case studies presented by the Institutes in Delaware and Philadelphia, the highlight of the conference was a conversation between Ted Mitchell, U. S. Undersecretary of Education, and Thomas Toth of the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University, the video of which can be viewed on the YNI website. Mitchell called the Institute a "national model," and stressed the importance of content-based development for teachers.

What the teacher leaders say

Sydney Coffin, English teacher at Thomas Alva Edison High School, Philadelphia:



At both Penn and Yale, where I met with Jim Vivian directly year around in conjunction with the steering committee of city representatives from all over the United States and the Navajo Nation, I was able to participate as a leader. Dr. Vivian included teachers in every decision making process and we reached nearly every aspect of every decision with consensus, always leaving time to explore challenges and concerns that either we or our participating teachers raised. Under James Vivian's mentorship in this position I came to value him not simply as a Director of a summer professional program, but as a guide to understanding how I and others learned, and most particularly how I might develop content to teach the young people I cared about so dearly, and for whom I was professionally responsible. What surprised me was that Jim saw my students with a degree of compassion that honored them for who they are: the bearers of our intellectual heritage, the carriers of our society's mission into the future, and in essence future leaders to whom we owe our work and whom we all should respect with the gravitas of our best efforts; He felt for them as much as I, even though he had never met them individually. . . . Dr. James Vivian has supported me consistently for all of the past 7 years, offering words of encouragement, asking provocative questions, stimulating me to become

better and still better, and by extension Jim came to mentor my students through me as I learned from him and grew under his wise tutelage.

Jolene Smith, Fifth-Grade Teacher, Kayenta Middle School, Kayenta, Arisona:



Ya'at'eeh Paul,

I wrote more than one or two sentences. It is impossible to write a short brief about Jim because he has done so much for us on the Dine.

I met James Vivian during May of 2011. It is a great honor to know Jim and his passion for helping teachers who work in the classroom. If it were not for his Yale National Initiative model, the Dine Nation would not be planning a teachers institute today. I would have quit many years ago and so would have other teachers on the Dine. Thank you, Jim, for reaching out to us on the Dine Nation. Ahe Hee, Jolene (Dine teacher on the Navajo Reservation).

Krista Waldron, Phoenix Rising Alternative School, Tulsa:



Jim has encouraged other teachers from Tulsa and me to be leaders and scholars at the local and national level. From public speaking--which I hate, but which he has encouraged me to do often--to collaborating with other teachers and university faculty, I've become a more professional and effective teacher and leader. He's had faith in us when our team faced challenges locally, knowing that among us, we would find our successes. From his offices at Yale, he manages to influence so many teachers, and consequently students in some of our most struggling schools.

Brandon Barr, Sixth-Grade Teacher, Mark Twain Elementary School, Chicago:



Rather than look for quick solutions to deep-seated problems associated with public school education, Jim has dedicated his life to partnering with and empowering public school teachers to use the Institute model to improve their personal teaching practice as well as district professional development. Jim believes that teachers should always have a seat at the table, working with both the leadership of higher education communities and local school districts to create sustained partnerships using the Institute model. These grassroots efforts that Jim encourages result in real teacher leadership, teacher leadership that allows teachers to make a difference in their profession and remain in the classroom. The success of the YNI model, spanning forty years, speaks to Jim's steadfast support of teachers and to the potential of the Institute model as a school improvement method for cities throughout the country.

Carol Boynton, Second-grade Teacher, Edgewood School, New Haven:



Jim Vivian created a professional development experience that gives public school teachers the opportunity to continue to grow as thoughtful and prepared educators. The Institute model uniquely blends groups of teachers from all grade levels and content areas who, through a challenging, rewarding seminar led by a university faculty member, are prepared to stand before their students with a new, intensely-researched curriculum unit. Reflecting on my own 12 years of experience as a participant, I have not only become a better teacher with exciting new content for my students, I have had opportunities to serve in a variety of teacher leadership roles within the Institute. Jim has provided a gift of professional respect to teachers across the country and we, and our students, are grateful.

Valerie Schwarz, Second-fifth grade teacher, Mary Munford School, Richmond:



Jim Vivian is a humble, quiet man, but he is an innovative, bold advocate committed to teachers and students in high-needs school districts. His work is so innovative and brilliant that it not only stood the test of time, but it is more relevant every day. Imagine being a public school teacher with the recent attacks on the profession, then attend Jim Vivian's program: You and eleven other teachers engaging in seminar with a Pulitzer prize winning professor and create your own timely curriculum unit about school to prison pipeline, or you work with a world-renowned professor in another field.

Barbara Prillaman, Alexis I. DePont High School, Wilmington, DE:



I remember how Jim conducted his meetings at the beginning of my time working with the Initiative. At the end of each of our meetings Jim would go around the table and ensure that each individual had a final opportunity to add something to the conversation. This enabled those who remained quiet to feel welcome to add to the discussion as well as for all to share any final thoughts they may have had. I saw how it empowered many people at the table – allowed them to find their voice and develop their leadership skills. This practice is one that I emulate here locally at our steering committee meetings as well as when I use the Socratic seminar method in my classroom.

Michael McClellan, Castellero Middle School, San José:



Having been a part of several district-level efforts to plan and organize professional development over the past several years, I was so fortunate to have the opportunity to be a part of the Yale National Initiative. Under the visionary leadership of James Vivian, this program surpasses all of our well-intentioned but scattered efforts at improving teacher performance. The main success of the program is that it places the onus on the educators to determine what their students need to succeed. And in doing so, they have the unsurpassed opportunity to block out a couple weeks of their summer and completely immerse themselves in their seminar topic under the guidance of Yale professors, some of the finest minds in American education. Encouraging us to produce a curriculum unit that is well-researched and so far beyond anything that one would get in an in-service environment, what Jim Vivian has created is unique in all of the American education system and provides a model that all local districts would do well to emulate.

Conclusion

Not impossibly, readers of this portfolio will detect, at times, a note of wistful regret. Jim Vivian deserves by now to be recognized nationally as a savior in the revival of public education, the Teachers Institute model having been adopted in every state, extending into every community with a college and high-need schools. Yet the prospects for public education keep getting worse, and, as Rogers Smith points out, “skeptics may reasonably ask: if the Teachers Institute approach has been around for roughly forty years, during the same era in which the performances of Americas K-12 public schools, and American confidence in their schools, have declined along many dimensions, how can it be a significant part of the solution to the nation’s education problems today?”¹¹ As I indicated above, Smith goes on to answer this question, with his own note of wistful regret, even bitterness. The Institute, he says, is like Dorothy’s slippers: it has been there all along, its value unappreciated. The nation’s concerted attack on its own teachers, degrading them with scripted lessons, forcing them to “teach to the test,” scolding them for their role--helpless and unassisted though it is--in the decline of student performance, and finally closing their schools, having paid them a pittance and enlarged their classes until their schools do close, has not lent itself to an atmosphere in which teachers’ empowerment and revitalization is the focus of many persons in places of authority. This is still Jim Vivian’s determined focus after forty years, however, and with proper recognition he will yet become the hero of America’s educational recovery.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul H. Fry

William Lampson Professor of English, Emeritus, Yale University
Co-Chair, Executive Council, Yale National Initiative
Chair, Editorial Board, *On Common Ground*

¹¹ Smith, forthcoming *OCG* #16, Oct. 2018, 4.

