Press release : 2013 : 08 : 08 : USF St. Petersburg hosts breakfast for Concerned Organizations for Quality Education for Black Students

Tom Scherberger
For the fourth year in a row, USF St. Petersburg hosted a breakfast on Wednesday for leaders of the Concerned Organizations for Quality Education for Black Students (COQEBs) to discuss their ongoing collaboration to improve student readiness in Pinellas County schools.

COQEBs is a coalition of community organizations and individuals working to ensure the Pinellas County School District is providing quality education for black students. James McHale,
Ph.D., USFSP psychology professor and director of the Family Study Center, is a member of COQEBS and works closely with the group’s School Readiness Committee.

Regional Chancellor Sophia Wisniewska welcomed the group to the breakfast and discussed her commitment to student success and the importance of community partners such as COQEBS. “With a sound education, you can accomplish anything,” she said.

COQEBS President Ricardo Davis thanked Dr. Wisniewska and USFSP for its ongoing support of the coalition’s work and Dr. McHale for the work he has done to promote infant child readiness.

Dr. McHale discussed the success of the Baby Talk workshops the Family Study Center has conducted in partnership with the COQEBS School Readiness Committee for the past three years.

Getting children socially and emotionally ready for school starts when the child is an infant, McHale said. He said the aims of the Baby Talk workshops are to help child-care providers make changes in the way they approach and work with infants and toddlers, to help them become “safe, secure and powerful” children ready to learn when they are old enough for school.
He also discussed an innovative prenatal co-parenting program for African-American parents called Figuring It Out for the Child (FIOC), which has to date served two dozen families in south Pinellas County. The program helps moms and dads find ways to work together to raise their child even if they are not married or romantically involved. Every expectant father who has completed the 10-session program so far has remained committed to the baby and mom at post-natal follow-up, he said.

Figuring It Out for the Child is the subject of a new publication by McHale and Vikki Gaskin-Butler, USFSP psychology instructor and Co-Investigator for the FIOC project. The article, in the July issue of the Zero to Three journal, published by the National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families, details one remarkable family’s successful journey through the FIOC program.

Family Study Center research has been funded since 2003 by a series of grants from the National Institute of Child Health and Development and by the Brady Education Foundation.
Roger Plata, co-counsel in the Pinellas County Schools desegregation case, speaks with College of Arts and Sciences Dean Frank Biaty.
Urban League CEO Sterling Watson (left) Regional Chancellor Sophia Wisniewska and Goliath Davis.
Kevin Gordon (left), St. Petersburg College Provost Downtown/Midtown, Regional Chancellor Sophia Wisniewska and Nikki Gaskin-Capehart, Pinellas Urban League Director of Communications and External Affairs.
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