



EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CENTER, INC.

**CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD LEARNING NETWORK
YEAR FOUR EVALUATION REPORT
May 31, 2001**

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Acknowledgments

In our role as evaluators, we deeply appreciate the cooperation and assistance we have received from the project director and other stakeholders of the Chicago Neighborhood Learning Network. Respondents to our interviews were open and thoughtful about the many complex issues involved in the CNLN project, and provided rich information for our analyses, conclusions, and recommendations. They deserve our thanks.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chicago Neighborhood Learning Network (CNLN) project is a five-year undertaking of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Although CNLN is now at the end of fourth year, the grant has only had the opportunity to carry out the intent of the grant for the past 15 months. Due to well-documented start-up issues (see Education Development Center's CNLN Evaluation Reports), the project did not get on course until considerable time was spent in putting in a new management structure and completing a corrective action plan. The critical milestone for the project getting on track was a February 24, 2000 meeting held at CPS to define CNLN Year Three goals. These goals address the technology infrastructure, professional development, community building, project management, and project vision.

Technology infrastructure: The first strategic planning meeting in March 2000 identified construction of a www.cnln.org website as a priority. It also set an easily achievable target date of May 2000 for the project to complete the CNLN website as well as to provide technical assistance to all school and community sites so that links to CNLN are established and information about CNLN are posted on their individual websites. A year has passed beyond this deadline without this goal being reached. The fact that CNLN has not developed a website has severely hampered the ability of CNLN to disseminate information about itself and leaves a vacuum in terms of a central digital place where exchanges between sites could be made and products developed by school and community sites could be shared.

Professional Development: The goal of professional development is to train and support teachers to integrate productivity tools and Internet resources into their regular instruction. In the short time that professional development has taken place, the preliminary indication is that it requires much time and nurturing to get interested teachers and community instructors to share ideas and plan the kinds of collaborative learning activities described in the proposal. It is equally clear that careful planning of professional development and support must be given to cross-sector teams in order for them to succeed. Moreover, professional development in integrating technology is not a one-time event, but a continuous process of supportive activities. Given the start-up issues that CNLN has faced, the progress in professional development and general satisfaction among the teachers and community instructors who received the training is a welcome change.

Community Building: While individual sites have extensive connections and collaborative relationship with business and community partners as well other CNLN sites in its area, the CNLN project has had only limited success in defining, establishing, or fostering relationships between and among all its sites. Each school and community site has its own successful network. However, the leveraging of the resources of all the CNLN sites into a learning community that is the potential of this grant remains unfulfilled. Outcomes anticipated for CNLN depend on developing a functioning “learning community” through the collaboration and networking of school and neighborhood organizations. The absence of a CNLN website and a technology infrastructure undermine this goal.

Project Management: Project management changes continue to improve communication and interaction. The creation of an Executive Committee in year 2000 allowed top level managers from sites to interact and participate in CNLN. There is a sustained process for exchanges of information, ideas, and programming strategies through the monthly site meetings, strategic planning meetings to determine annual goals and project activities, and the Executive Committee to discuss the major project issues. Sites agree that an important achievement of the project is putting a structure in place for communication, coordination, and collaboration. However, many also state that there is an absence of leadership, direction, and energy from CNLN in moving the grant goals forward. Some also expressed frustration with CNLN management on the operational level. They said that project management needs to focus on specific tasks and get them accomplished with a singleness of purpose.

Project Vision: Lacking a central grant vision, CNLN is viewed by sites as a grant source to implement important activities. Sites do not see themselves as partners with CNLN management and other sites in pursuing a common vision and mission. There is no CNLN identity beyond the limited few stakeholders involved with the grant. However, all staff at the sites we visited are ready to move forward and participate more actively in a central CNLN direction. Although things have not always gone smoothly, people want to see this project succeed in terms of the big ideas presented in the proposal.

Recommendation: ***There is a great need to review, articulate, and implement the vision collectively.*** The intent of the grant is for a community or communities of schools, neighborhood organizations, businesses, parents, students, adult learners, and other stakeholders to work together to achieve a common, integrated vision. This

comprehensive vision extends beyond the goals of the individual agencies in the consortia. In outcomes and achievement, the “total” should be greater than the “sum of the parts.”

CNLN is at a stage of development where they need to consider the question of what kind of real changes in education they want to achieve and how to achieve them as a collaborative. The CNLN should organize and conduct strategic planning meetings with all sites. The meetings should ask what are some of the collaborative activities sites can design and implement together. Sites would need to feel ownership with these activities and play complementary roles in the activities. Sites would also need to feel that these roles are not "extra" tasks for them and fit within their own organizational mission. Goals, scope of work, accompanying budgets need to be done. Strong leadership will be needed to operationalize the strategic plan and guide others as they work to achieve it.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Chicago Neighborhood Learning Network (CNLN) project is a five-year undertaking of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). It is funded by the U.S. Department of Education (DoED) as part of a Technology Innovations Challenge Grant (TICG) program. The start date for the project was September 30, 1997. The CNLN project seeks to develop a replicable model for expanding learning opportunities beyond traditional classrooms by creating a networked computing environment that is accessible on an "anytime, anywhere" basis and a professional development program for teachers that engages them in using this technology to promote active learning. Supported by a school-neighborhood-business-government partnership, this learning network model invites the participation of parents and other members of the community as well as K-12 students and teachers, thereby providing "technological equity" to disadvantaged families and enhancing the economic development potential of neighborhoods.

Project evaluator Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), an international nonprofit research and development agency in education, has developed an evaluation design and conducted five studies of the CNLN project to date. These reports can be found at EDC's CNLN website <www.edc.org/EWIT/cnln> or by contacting the project evaluator at EDC. They include:

- Chicago Neighborhood Learning Network, Evaluation Design
- Chicago Neighborhood Learning Network, Year One Evaluation Report
- Chicago Neighborhood Learning Network, Year Two Report
- Chicago Neighborhood Learning Network at the Half Way Point

- Chicago Neighborhood Learning Network, Year Three Report
- Chicago Neighborhood Learning Network, Report on Professional Development.

This report not only evaluates Year Four of the project but also reviews the progress of CNLN through the first four years. The purpose of this report is to:

- Present the perspectives of the people involved with the CNLN and provide a picture of the concerns, challenges, and issues facing the CNLN.
- Inform funders, partners, and other CNLN participants about the progress that has been made, as well as the circumstances that have aided or impeded this progress.
- Offer recommendations designed to increase the probability that the desired outcomes of the project, as expressed in the proposal, will be achieved.

The CNLN evaluation team has maintained regular contact with community-based and school sites and with project management. In addition, May 2001 site visits were made to: Erie House, Holy Angels Academy, Holy Trinity High School, Humboldt Park Vocational Center, Association House, Martin Luther King, Jr. High School, Northwest Towers Computer Learning Center, Emerson House, Street Level Youth Media, Bronzeville Neighborhood Learning Network, the Chicago Urban League, and Wells High School. In addition, the evaluator met with CNLN Project Director Ila Weinberg. A scheduled interview with James Deannes, Officer, CPS Office of School and Community Relations, was cancelled because Mr. Deannes had an emergency to which he had to attend.

It should be noted that specific data or analyses regarding CNLN grant management, budget, expenditures, or allocations is beyond the scope of this evaluation.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents findings as of the end of May 2001, organized under four major headings: (1) project goals, including technology infrastructure, professional development, community networking, website development, project scale-up, and evaluation; (2) project management; (3) project vision; and (4) recommendation. For each of these topics except the last, we first discuss what was proposed, then report what we found, and conclude with a summary of the main findings.

It should be pointed out that although CNLN is now at the end of fourth year, the grant has only had the opportunity to carry out the intent of the grant for the past 15 months. Due to well-documented start-up issues (see EDC's CNLN Evaluation Reports), the project did not get on course until considerable time was spent in putting in a new management structure and completing a corrective action plan.

The critical milestone for the project getting on track was a February 24, 2000 meeting held at CPS to define CNLN Year Three goals. Attending the meeting were Jennell Leonard, Project Officer, US DoED; Ila Weinberg, CNLN Project Manager, and her staff; and Dr. John Wong, Senior Project Director at EDC, Evaluation Team Leader.

The group examined the Year One, Year Two, and Year Three goals from the original CNLN proposal. They deleted goals that were no longer applicable and updated the ones that were operative. The group also decided to hold a strategic planning meeting with all CNLN sites to share the amended project goals and to work together to determine each site's Scope of Work (SOW) to reach those goals. That meeting, set for March 20, 2000, would also establish benchmarks and outcomes for the CNLN. The group agreed

that Dr. Wong, in his role as formative evaluator, would plan and facilitate that meeting and additional strategic planning meetings as needed.

At that time, the project was already two years and five months into the grant. Since the strategic planning meetings held in March 2000, CNLN has had only 15 months to implement the project goals. Readers should keep this fact in mind as they examine the progress of the project.

3.1 Project Goals

The CNLN proposed five broad goals for Year Four:

- Build technology infrastructure, create steering committees to guide development of the infrastructure, prepare operations policies, inventory technology assets in neighborhood sites, design network architecture, select vendors and suppliers, and install equipment.
- Conduct professional development by selecting teachers to train on the CNLN and begin developing instructional materials, organize cross-sector teams to select content, design a graphical user interface, define competencies and skill standards, share successful strategies, assign site coordinators and resource staff, and establish a recognition program.
- Train community in effective use of CNLN, do outreach to inform neighborhood residents, identify critical education needs, conduct technology conferences and demos, and develop programmatic initiatives such as software lending, collaborative projects, peer tutoring, and mentoring.

- Create neighborhood web sites, provide key information to support teacher-community interaction, and begin developing a national database on community learning center experiences.
- Set up a repository of evaluation and best practices materials, define goals, benchmarks, and measures of performance, conduct pre-project data acquisition and surveys, design data collection instruments, collect data and provide feedback to CNLN participants.

In this section, we will examine whether each overall goal and the individual tasks under each goal were accomplished in Year Four. Table 1 summarizes the status of proposed goals and tasks. The paragraphs that follow closely examine the effort made to address each goal and the outcomes.

Table 1. Amended Year Four Goals

Goals	Poor/No Progress	Moderate Progress	Good Progress	Done
Goal 1. Build CNLN technology infrastructure				
• Continue site committees in two neighborhoods			x	
• Continue to inventory technology assets in neighborhood (satellite) sites	x			
• Design, maintain, and update CNLN website	x			
• Select vendors and suppliers as needed				x
• Install equipment as needed				x
Goal 2. Professional development				
• Select teachers to train on the CNLN		x		
• Teachers develop instructional materials focused on science, math, and technological literacy		x		
• Organize cross-sector teams to select and develop content		x		
• Develop database of learning objectives and instructional modules to post on the webserver	x			
• Design graphical user interface to access content				x
• Assign site coordinators and resource staff				x
• Provide professional development support, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding professional development support to feeder schools in the two CNLN neighborhoods • Conducting 2-day training workshops on technology integration into academic learning to teachers and community site instructors from sites and feeder schools in the two CNLN neighborhoods • Providing continuing support to workshop attendees who wish to integrate technology into their instruction during the academic year 		x		
• Share successful strategies	x			
Goal 3. Train community in effective use of CNLN				
• Develop materials and outreach program to inform neighborhood residents	x			
• Identify critical education needs and offer CNLN resources in student learning, career development and community service	x			
• Develop programmatic initiatives such as collaborative projects, cross-age peer tutoring and mentoring		x		
• Begin training neighborhood students and residents to maintain network		x		
• Expand community training program, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and implementing training for parents of students on various topics of interest to be made available at the Einstein Center and at CNLN sites • Enable learners at sites to participate in on-line learning programs, including Gotham Writers and Space Explorers 		x		x

Goals	Poor/No Progress	Moderate Progress	Good Progress	Done
Goal 4. Creation of neighborhood website				
• Create neighborhood websites	x			
• Expand web resources with links to community organizations, events, and resources	x			
• Provide key information to support teacher-community interaction	x			
Goal 5. Conduct evaluation and provide best practices repository				
• Define goals, benchmarks, and measures of performance			x	
• Conduct pre-project data acquisition and surveys		x		
• Design data collection instruments			x	
• Begin collect data and provide feedback to CNLN participants			x	
• Conduct summative evaluation			x	
• Validate best practices to be placed on the website	x			

3.1.1 Goal 1: The Technology Infrastructure and Goal 4: Creation of Neighborhood Websites

3.1.1.1 The Proposed Infrastructure

Originally, the CNLN was to be built as a prototype "network-centric" environment. File servers at the hub school sites would host an Extranet that would deliver software "objects" to school and community sites. These "objects" would be capable of running on different operating systems, networks, languages, and hardware. These Extranets would rely heavily upon the development of low-cost "dumb" terminals, a smart card interface to identify authorized users, and a special network architecture. The proposed goals centered around the technological development of hub sites in two pilot communities—Wells High School in West Town and Martin Luther King High

School in Grand Boulevard Oakwood-Kenwood. With these hubs as base, CNLN would conduct outreach and “train the community in the effective use of CNLN.”

3.1.1.2 Technology Infrastructure Findings

The proposed technology was not available when the grant was awarded because its manufacturers, Dell and Oracle, had abandoned its development. Another major difficulty was that CPS security protocols prevent those outside of CPS from accessing computer networks inside CPS. For our Year One evaluation report, CPS staff told us that this policy eliminated the possibility of servers at King and Wells acting as hosts of Extranets that share learning materials and projects with neighborhood organizations and other users outside of CPS.

It was unfortunate that original proposed technology was not available at the outset of the grant. However, it should not have deterred the progress of the grant. An Extranet for the CNLN project has no practical value in the web environment. The only real difference between an Extranet, Intranet, and a public website is the control placed over who has access to the site, and an Extranet is no more than a password-protected website.¹ Restriction placed over access would be contradictory to the goal of CNLN to widely share information and resources. Moreover, there is little to be gained for CNLN to become part of CPS's Intranet. There are more than ample instructional resources on CPS's external website <www.cps.k12.il.us> and on the world wide web for sharing of learning materials and resources. If King or Wells could not host the CNLN website, another host could easily have been found.

¹ Jason Bloomberg, "Controlling Access to an Extranet," *Intranet Journal*, www.intranetjournal.com/, visited May 30, 2001.

To date, project management has not identified and developed a solution to meet the intended purpose of the grant to build a CNLN technological infrastructure. Our findings are that:

- The project has not created a functional CNLN website. There is no website that disseminates information about CNLN or serves as the central nexus for communication and sharing of resources.
- There is a listserv that was created to discuss issues related to CNLN; however, it has only three subscribers and there has been no discussion on this listserv.
- Many schools and community sites have their own websites; however, most of these do not identify their role in the CNLN or have links to other sites in the CNLN. One exception is the Chicago Urban League website, which posts a page on the Neighborhood Computer Learning Center and lists its CNLN partnership with King HS, the Charles Hayes FIC, and Holy Angels School.
- There is no information about CNLN on CPS's website.
- Not as a substitute for the CNLN website, EDC developed a website to support its roles in professional development and evaluation. EDC needed a web-based platform for its professional development training and a place to disseminate its evaluation reports. Because there is no CNLN website, EDC developed one that is hosted on its web server in Newton, MA.

<www.edc.org/EWIT/cnln>

- Martin Luther King High School, the proposed hub for the Grand Blvd area, has no information about CNLN on its website <www.kinghs.k12.il.us>. It only has a link on its homepage to the EDC professional development and evaluation website. Wells High School, the proposed hub for West Town, does not have a website. There is no Wells High School website listed on the CPS page of school websites.

<www.cps.k12.il.us/Schools/School_Web_Sites/school_web_sites,html>

Since the inception of the grant, CNLN has employed the following entities for technical management and consultation and for designing the CNLN website:

- CPS Division of Learning Technologies
- System Concepts, Inc.
- Creative Solutions, Inc.
- Staff associated with Martin Luther King HS and community sites
- I-Works, Inc.

Each of these technical providers and consultants has not developed a functional website. At the First Strategic Planning meeting of CNLN facilitated by EDC on March 20, 2000, Creative Solutions was charged with the task of developing a CNLN website. Creative Solutions obtained the domain name <www.cnln.org> and hosted a preliminary design. Various representatives of CNLN sites and the evaluator found the design not to meet quality standards. Creative Solutions and CNLN management eventually ended their contractual relationship.

The task of developing the website was then given to a committee of community and school sites. However, confusion over roles impeded progress. This committee thought that they were responsible only for the design issues, including determining the look and feel of the site, the type of information to be on the website, and the navigational map through the site. They thought that they would work with a webmaster who would build and host the site. However, the project did not develop a formal agreement with a webmaster responsible for executing a website.

In the fall of year 2000, I-Works, Inc. <www.i-works.com> was engaged as the webmaster and site host. According to the project director, she has had to work with a succession of three I-Works consultants and not all school and community sites have provided information to I-Works to be placed on the website. At the writing of this report, the <www.cnlh.org> displays a "temporarily down" message. A teacher at King HS is working with I-Works to provide it with text and images to be used on the site; HTML coding for the links; fields for the registration form; and preference for the look and feel of the site.

3.1.1.3 Infrastructure Status at Schools and Community Sites

In Year One, two hundred and fifty multimedia computers, Local Area Network equipment, twelve printers, and software were purchased by the grant. They were divided among the five CNLN sites: Holy Trinity High School, Martin Luther King High School, Wells High School, the Urban League, and the Charles A. Hayes Family Investment Center (FIC). In partial fulfillment of the matching grant condition, these sites contributed the necessary electrical rewiring and refurbishing of classroom space to

accommodate this hardware. Preparing the physical facilities, including dealing with asbestos, lead paint, and antiquated wiring, was a major undertaking for several sites. Since then, these sites have also invested their own funds to upgrade and maintain the laboratories.

Since the infusion of technology in Year One, school and community sites have used CNLN funds to purchase additional computers and technology. Table 2 presents the technology obtained.

Table 2. Technology Obtained with Year 2 and 3 Funds

Site	Technology
Emerson House	Printer, software, toner, paper, digital camera
Humboldt Park	20 computers
Association House	One Mac G-4 for video editing
Holy Trinity High School	25 wireless computers (five computers placed in each of five classrooms)
Erie House	17 computers, network, and software
Holy Angels School	32 computers

Those sites that did not choose to use CNLN funds for technology have acquired technology with funds from other sources. Examples of these community and school sites are described below.

Northwest Towers, a resident-owned apartment building acquired under a HUD Section 8 program, has a lab with 11 networked computers, laser printer, scanner, headphones, color jet printer, video cams, a data projector, and Internet access through a DSL line. This lab was built through a variety of support since 1999.

Emerson House, which joined the CNLN in February 2000, also has acquired a networked computer laboratory through other sources of funding and did not use CNLN funds to build its technology infrastructure. It is currently installing a T-1 line.

Street Level Youth Media is the winner of a National Endowment for the Arts “Coming Up Taller” award in 1998, and a model for bridging the digital divide cited by President Clinton in his speech at the Comdex Conference in April 18, 2000. Street Level Media provides young people with access and training on media technology so that they can carry out their own projects. Street Level has maintained a variety of computers, camcorders, and video editing devices for use by its membership.

Since the Year One installation of computer labs at King and Wells High Schools, much has changed in terms of the overall direction of the schools. Wells has been designated as one of seven Information Technology Academies in CPS. It has 12 computer labs with 32 drops in each room. In addition, each classroom is equipped with eight computers. The CNLN computers gave Wells a head start in bringing technology into the school and Learning Technologies moved Wells up in line for wiring work because of the CNLN project.

King High School has changed from a local high school to a college preparatory magnet school. The computer lab installed in Year One will continue to serve King well in this transition.

3.1.1.4 Summary of Technology Infrastructure Findings

The first strategic planning meeting in March 2000 identified construction of a www.cnl.n.org website as a priority. It also set an easily achievable target date of May 2000 for the project to complete the CNLN website as well as to provide technical assistance to all school and community sites so that links to CNLN are established and

information about CNLN are posted on their individual websites. A year has passed beyond this deadline without this goal being reached.

The fact that CNLN has not developed a website has severely hampered the ability of CNLN to disseminate information about itself and leaves a vacuum in terms of a central digital place where exchanges between sites could be made and products developed by school and community sites could be shared.

The installation of the technology infrastructure at the local sites proceeded. Computers and networks funded by CNLN have been put to productive use at these sites. However, these networks are independent entities generally without identification or active connection with CNLN.

3.1.2 Goal 2: Professional Development

While the proposed technology infrastructure has great potential to extend learning beyond the classroom and build a learning community, the quality and extent of the learning that will take place will depend heavily on the preparation of classroom teachers and community site instructors. This section begins with a discussion of the proposed plans for training and the implementation of professional development.

3.1.2.1 Proposed Professional Development

Professional development, as conceptualized in the CNLN proposal, refers to two kinds of experiences for teachers and community instructors. One is basic training in the use of computers, e-mail, and the Internet for instructional purposes. The other is the involvement of teachers and community instructors in designing instructional strategies that engage community organizations, parents, and students outside the classroom.

The training is to be provided by a field support team from the CPS Department of Learning Technologies as an in-kind contribution. According to the proposal, CPS field specialists are to visit each school and neighborhood site on a monthly basis to help with the development of instructional strategies and collaborative projects involving the community and parents. Furthermore, a cross-sector team of teachers, students, parents, and neighborhood organizations will select educational resources as well as co-develop them and place them on the neighborhood server. In this way, a learning community will evolve.

In the first year and a half of the project, the CNLN project deferred the professional development training pending the installation of the infrastructure at the three high schools. The rationale was that, without computers and software with which to learn and practice, teachers would not derive maximum benefits from the training.

Due to this start-up obstacle, CNLN did not address planning for professional development until March 2000. The strategic planning meetings in March and April of 2000 involved all project sites in planning the professional development.

The sites called for cross-site instructional development teams to be formed. These teams were to combine the perspectives of school-based teachers and community education instructors. They were to develop innovative instructional plans that use technology to enhance learning. The sites chose a hands-on approach in which teachers and community instructors with advanced technology skills could coach teachers and community instructors who are not familiar with technology. The instructional teams were supposed to work over the summer, and have draft modules ready for piloting in September. A professional development provider was to be hired to provide training and

support to these teams. EDC was identified as the professional development provider.² Because of delays in approving the Year Three budget, the teams were not able to work over the summer.

With review and agreement by the sites, EDC developed a professional development plan. This program provides training and support for school administrators and for teachers at three levels.

- The Principals Meeting (to be approved by Chicago Public Schools) demonstrates how the Internet can be used to enhance learning in several different ways, and shows how community resources can be used by students and teachers to extend learning beyond the school. It provides detailed information on how school leaders can inspire and support their faculties and students to take advantage of Internet-based learning. This meeting obtains buy-in for principals to support CNLN professional development for teachers in their schools.
- The Adventurers Level helps teachers and community instructors get started using the Internet in the classrooms. Workshops provide background information on how the Internet can enhance students' learning, and hands-on training needed to find, create and implement technology-integrated assignments in the classroom. Teachers will learn how they can make use of community resources to expand learning opportunities for their students.
- The Explorers Level helps teachers and community instructors with some prior experience integrate Internet activities into an extended curriculum unit on an

² Chicago Public Schools contracted with EDC to serve as both evaluator and professional development

ongoing basis. Students may use the Internet to conduct research, develop skills and collaborate on learning projects with students in other communities, in this country or around the world. Community resources can be used to expand students' learning opportunities.

- The Trailblazers Level supports teams of experienced teachers in schools and community organizations to develop and pilot new teaching units that integrate technology in the curriculum and link schools with other organizations in their neighborhoods. Units that are piloted successfully will be posted for use by other teachers.

The Principals Meeting remains to be scheduled because CNLN needs to obtain permission from CPS administration to hold this meeting.

EDC's 15 professional development meetings are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Professional Development Conducted by EDC

Level	Date	Site	Training Participants	Description
Trailblazers (Advanced)	7/25-26/00	Wells	15 teachers and community instructors	4 cross-site groups met to plan and develop instructional projects
Adventurers (Beginners)	10/26/00	Holy Trinity	20 teachers	Session 1 - Teachers developed an Internet based activity for the classroom
Adventurers (Beginners)	11/13/00	Holy Trinity	20 teachers	Session 2 - Teachers reviewed their activities and planned additional activities
Trailblazers (Advanced)	10/24/00	Parent Training Academy	Cross-site teams	Design projects
Trailblazers (Advanced)	11/13/00	Street Level	Cross-site teams	Design projects
Adventurers (Beginners)	11/14/00	King	6 teachers	Session 1 - Teachers developed an Internet

provider, both recognizing and accepting the potential conflict of interest.

				based activity for the classroom
Trailblazers (Advanced)	12/11/00	Urban League	Cross-site teams	Design projects
Adventurers (Beginners)	1/16/01	King	12 teachers	Session 2 - Teachers developed an Internet based activity for the classroom, and reviewed their activities
Adventurers (Beginners)	1/17/01	Erie House	6 teachers	Session 1 - Teachers developed Internet based activity for the classroom
Adventurers (Beginners)	1/30/01	King	8 teachers	Session 2 - Teachers reviewed their activities and planned additional activities
Adventurers (Beginners)	1/31/01	Erie House	5 teachers	Session 2 - Teachers developed Internet based activity for the classroom
Trailblazers (Advanced)	2/1/01	Emerson House	Cross-site teams	Design projects
Adventurers (Beginners)	2/2/01	Holy Angels	35 teachers	Session 1 - Teachers developed an Internet based activity for the classroom
Trailblazers (Advanced)	3/1/01	Urban League	Cross-site teams	Design projects
Adventurers (Beginners)	3/2/01	Holy Angels	35 teachers	Session 2 - Teachers reviewed their activities and planned additional activities

3.1.2.2 Professional Development Findings

Products

EDC developed a workshop guidebook, *Integrating Technology in the Classroom*, for distribution at the professional development workshops. It includes three components:

- Guidelines for Evaluating and Planning Technology-Enhanced Curricula and Lesson Plans;
- Examples of Appropriate Innovative Activities for Technology-Enhanced Learning (with links);
- Instructional Development Planning Guide.

Teachers and community instructors also developed products to be shared with others. Based on their extensive search and use of Internet resources, teachers and community instructors at the Adventurers and Trailblazers levels developed a hot list of recommended sites. These lists are posted on EDC's website <www.edc.org/EWIT/cnln>. Follow the link to Teachers Lesson Plans.

Cross-Site Instructional Development

The cross-site instructional development teams have met monthly since October 2000 to share information and plans. Each meeting is held at a different Center, alternating between the two neighborhoods. EDC established an email list to share announcements and information among the group. The goal is to have each team plan and pilot an activity before the end of this school year. During the summer of 2001, these will be revised based on feedback from the pilot testing, written up for posting on the project web site.

At present there are two active cross-site development teams, and one that is just getting started:

- Grand Boulevard regentrification project, involves Pamela Greyer from M. L. King High School, Brandon Rosier from Holy Angels School, Steve McCorry from the Chicago Urban League's Quantum Lab, and Karen Bozeman Grant, community organizer. Current work involves students from Holy Angels and M. L. King schools interviewing senior citizens who participate in adult programs at the Quantum Lab. The senior citizens have brought in photographs, and students will videotape interviews focussed on the photographs. The photographs, student

write-ups of the interviews, and some video segments will be incorporated into the Grand Boulevard Project's web site.

- A project on web evaluation for teen-agers involves Malin Lindelow and Rivka Sadarangani from Street Level Media, Mercedes Soto from Emerson House, and Nancy Battaglia and Theresa Guevara from Holy Trinity High School. The project focuses on students learning to evaluate web sites that contain information of particular relevance to teen-agers.
- A collaborative tutoring project between Erie House and Northwest Towers and local schools has been on hold due to changes of staff at each site. Both sites now have staff assigned to the project.
- A collaborative project planned last summer between Wells H. S. and Emerson House has not developed due to lack of participation by Wells teachers.

Feedback from the July 2000 workshops:

Teachers' comments about parts of the workshop they found most useful:

- All the presentations I was present for were very useful. Showing people links to replicable collaborations will get ideas flowing and forcing people to brain storm around their own work will make sure we plan properly.
- The actual practicum when we wrote out our plan of joint activities.
- The curriculum development guidelines and the list of resources on the web.
- Sitting down with other sites and working together to create our projects
- All parts were useful to everyone because it establishes more unity with the program. The more we all meet together and collaborate the better for our

programs. We continue absorb new ideas and when we are together we brainstorm how to incorporate them into the CNLN program.

- I believe that the outline of guidelines for integrating technology into curriculum development and examples of projects were very useful. [also] The information on evaluation.

Feedback from the workshops at Holy Trinity:

Teachers' comments about their students' learning experiences through Internet-based assignments:

- they learned to like the Internet
- it was great to see the satisfaction on their faces
- kids were trustworthy and stayed on focus
- some were satisfied with any data; others searched for best data
- they searched harder and harder
- help from Nancy (technology coordinator) and Kristin (media specialist) was GREAT
- “cyber Police” (access protection system) interfered with appropriate searches in some cases
- some students did not have (or remember) their passwords; this caused difficulties
- all of my students would not do this at home or after school; it was essential to make it an in-class assignment
- students were surprised at some difficult vocabulary (on Web sites dealing with religious history)

Teachers' comments about their own learning:

- I overcame my fear of the internet – found it more useful than I expected
- I need to prepare in advance for the vocabulary students will encounter
- we need to get permission slips in ahead of time for all students – only about half my students were able to get on the computers, so I paired them up
- the media specialist was very helpful working with students and finding useful web sites
- I'm still not sure how best to use five computers in a classroom with 20 students
- It was great to have two workshops with an assignment in between – and time to do it.
- It was great having a workshop in our own school, and help from Nancy, Eva and Kristen
- We (teachers) need more hands on time!

Comment from Holy Trinity:

Management and coordination staff at Holy Trinity were disappointed at the training provided by the EDC professional development team. The report was that EDC training focused too much on showing teachers the various resources on the Internet, and did not train teachers on how to integrate web resources into instruction. Hands-on training is needed to guide teachers through the process of integrating technology into instruction. However, EDC failed to provide this type of training after being asked to do

so. When asked about the training at Holy Trinity, EDC trainers agreed to incorporate this type of training into the next set of training there.

Holy Angels Evaluation

Holy Angels administration was very satisfied with EDC's professional development training. Holy Angels stated that the training has energized teachers to use technology in the classroom and to learn more about technology. In-house instruction has been instituted monthly to meet the demand from teachers for technology training.

CNLN Project Director's Comments

The CNLN Project Director expressed a high degree of dissatisfaction with EDC's professional development performance. In particular, she stated that:

- EDC has not provided the level of service for the cost of training.
- There is no follow-up with Adventurers teachers to further engage them in professional development.
- The Trailblazers have not developed any products to this date.
- She has to provide direction on the professional development effort, when EDC as professionals should provide the direction.
- EDC failed to work with Learning Technologies according to the intent of the grant.

- EDC used certain personnel for training without first obtaining permission from CNLN.

When asked about its performance in professional development, the EDC team stated that its effort has been significantly hampered by a lack of contract. It reported that it has been impossible to plan a training schedule, provide follow-up training, or conduct long range work without a long-term contract from CNLN. CNLN and the Department of Education have not provided a long-term contract to EDC for professional development. EDC has performed its work based on series of letters of intent issued for scope of work and budgets for four weeks.

Professional Development Provided by Sites

Some school and community sites have used CNLN funds to conduct their own professional development. For example,

- Holy Trinity hired a consultant to assess the technology competency of its teachers. Teachers then took courses to improve their technology skills
- Association House hired 16 teachers from local elementary schools to develop web based curriculum. Teachers have developed standards and the frameworks for the curriculum thus far.

3.1.2.3 Summary of Professional Development

The goal of professional development is to train and support teachers to integrate productivity tools and Internet resources into their regular instruction. Because of start-up issues, teacher and community instructor training was postponed for more than two

and a half years. This was obviously very unfortunate. In the short time that professional development has taken place, the preliminary indication is that it requires much time and nurturing to get interested teachers and community instructors to share ideas and plan the kinds of collaborative learning activities described in the proposal. It is equally clear that careful planning of professional development and support must be given to cross-sector teams in order for them to succeed. Moreover, professional development in integrating technology is not a one-time event, but a continuous process of supportive activities. Management, EDC, and sites have yet to develop and implement a long-term plan.

It is too early to assess the impact of professional development on learner outcomes. However, given the start-up issues that CNLN has faced, the progress in professional development and general satisfaction among the teachers and community instructors who received the training is a welcome change.

3.1.3 Goals 3: Train Community in the Use of CNLN

3.1.3.1 Community Networking as Proposed

Goal 3 centers around community networking and involves “fostering a higher level of interaction and participation between parents, residents, and neighborhood organizations to support learning.” In concrete terms, this kind of community networking refers to helping parents and other members of the community learn basic technological skills, gain access to Internet information and learning resources, communicate with classroom teachers, disseminate knowledge and information via e-mail or the Web, and create relationships through participation in listservs or other groups dedicated to such

activities as mentoring, cross-age tutoring, and homework assistance. In addition, neighborhood websites are created to display student projects, instructional materials, and other key products of teacher and community interaction.

3.1.3.2 Community Networking Findings

All CNLN sites already have a good record of partnering with schools, businesses, and community organizations and institutions. They also already had successes partnering with each other. In some ways, this was why these sites were included in the original proposal. For example, Humboldt Park has close working relationships with the Citibank, Family Start, Association House, Northwest Towers, and local elementary schools. It is also working with six teachers and their students from nearby schools on the web-based Amazon Project. King High School works with IBM, University of Illinois, Operation Push, and other organizations. Wells has a highly successful mentoring program with IBM. In developing their programs, Erie House staff work closely with local schools, including Wells, Holy Trinity, Carpenter, and Otis.

Individual organizations and schools have developed and sustained successful partnerships prior to and outside of the CNLN initiative. Even so, they have found CNLN's priority on collaboration one of the most valuable aspects of the project. All CNLN strategic planning meetings have emphasized cross-site collaboration. All sites felt that the collaborative efforts formed as the result of CNLN will endure beyond the grant.

CNLN also extended learning by offering Space Explorers and Gotham Writers. Four schools and five community sites chose to use part of their CNLN allocations for

Gotham Writers, a creative writing program in which students are mentored by writers on-line. Sixty students participated. See Table 4.

Table 4. Gotham Writer Participants

Students	Community Sites	Students	Schools
16	Northwest Towers	8	Holy Angels School
7	Association House	5	Holy Trinity High School
6	Quantum Neighborhood Center	6	Wells High School
5	Charles Hayes Center FIC	5	King High School
2	Erie Neighborhood House		
36	total after-school	24	total in-school

3.1.3.3 Summary of Community Networking Findings

While individual sites have extensive connections and collaborative relationship with business and community partners as well other CNLN sites in its area, the CNLN project has had only limited success in defining, establishing, or fostering relationships between and among all its sites. Each school and community site has its own successful network. However, the leveraging of the resources of all the CNLN sites into a learning community that is the potential of this grant remains unfulfilled. While individual sites have created strong local partnerships, they are not sharing their resources across the board with the larger CNLN network. In the proposal, the outcomes anticipated for CNLN depended on developing a functioning “learning community” through the collaboration and networking of school and neighborhood organizations. In reality, the absence of a CNLN website and a technology infrastructure undermined this goal.

3.1.4 Goal 5: Evaluation

3.1.4.1 Proposed Evaluation Process

As specified in the CNLN proposal, EDC's evaluation methodology includes:

- participation by stakeholders in the evaluation design, data gathering, and interpretation of information;
- formative (implementation) and summative (outcome) approaches;
- qualitative and quantitative information;
- use of evaluation by stakeholders in a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process.

EDC believes that the CNLN initiative can best be served by a collaborative, participatory, empowerment evaluation. Grounded in the theory of organizational learning and in extensive practical experience in applied research, these approaches see collaboration between the evaluator and the client, and shared control of the evaluation as central to the process. It uses participant feedback and other data as a way to improve programs, evaluate progress toward goals, accomplish scale-up, and share information with others interested in adapting the program's ideas and strategies.

3.1.4.2 Evaluation as Implemented

EDC has followed its collaborative evaluation strategy and CNLN is an exemplary case study of how formative evaluation can help the project. In addition to conducting the evaluation reports, EDC has:

- Participated in the February 24, 2000 meeting to define CNLN Year Three goals with US DoED and CNLN management

- Planned and conducted two Year Three Strategic Planning meetings with all sites
- Planned and conducted the Year Four Strategic Planning meeting with all sites
- Participated in professional development planning meetings
- Planned and prepared materials for the CNLN's Interim Presentation to US DoEd; also participated in the presentation
- Helped CNLN management to design a management task and timeline framework for its site coordinators
- Maintained regular contact with the CNLN Project Director to provide consultation as needed.

3.1.5 Project Scale-Up

3.1.5.1 Project Scale-Up as Proposed

One of the original proposed goals is project scale-up. The CNLN proposed 5-year plan involves supporting and scaling up the CNLN from two neighborhoods to 12 neighborhoods, by forming business, government, and non-profit partnerships to design, install, and technically maintain the distributed environment of neighborhood access centers.

3.1.5.2 Project Scale-Up Findings

The project has focused on accomplishing the primary goals of technology infrastructure, professional development, and community networking in the two pilot

communities of West Town and Grand Boulevard Oakwood-Kenwood. It would have been premature for the CNLN to divert attention to expanding to other neighborhoods. Before expanding to other Chicago neighborhoods, the CNLN needs to develop the initial pilots to show some results and to examine the lessons learned in developing the two pilot communities.

3.2 Project Management

3.2.1 CNLN Management as Proposed

The CNLN proposal specified the following key elements of project management:

- A project management structure that would combine the talents and resources of the Chicago Public Schools, local schools, neighborhood organizations, and project's citywide partners.
- A CNLN design team consisting of representatives of stakeholder organizations to support the project management office.
- Site coordinators and an administrator to coordinate the work with schools and local sites and to administer grants and contracts.

3.2.2 CNLN Management Findings

Findings related to the management of the CNLN project relate to its leadership, its organizational structure, basic management principles, and several start-up issues around community involvement and partners' organizational needs.

3.2.2.1 Background

In Year One, we found no evidence that a central vision guided the design, planning, and implementation of the project. The big ideas of the project were not translated into plans that held real meaning for all the participants. The four partners (Office of Catholic Education, CPS, Chicago Housing Authority, and Chicago Urban League) appeared to be acting independently, guided by their own organizational mission, philosophy, and programming needs, rather than working together toward an overarching project vision. To understand the full scope of management problems that plagued the grant, please see EDC's Year One Status Report.

In Year Two, from November 1998 to March 1999, CNLN was without a Project Manager. The partners divided the responsibility of the Project Manager among themselves. However, little progress was made in the CNLN during this period. For example, the partners convened a strategic planning meeting on January 7, 1999. This planning meeting was attended by representatives of the four partners, various agencies named in the grant proposal as hubs and satellites, interested members of the community, and technology vendors. The participants made suggestions about direction and priorities for Year Two of the project and beyond. The stated purpose of these meetings was to build the basis for a Year Two Operational Plan, to be completed by the partners at the end of February, 1999. The Partners did not complete such a plan.

In March 1999, Ila Weinberg was hired as Project Manager. She addressed and began to overcome the bureaucratic and management problems that had plagued the grant. In particular,

- In Year One, OCE served as the fiscal agent for the grant. It withdrew as the Fiscal agent and as partner in June, 1999. CUL agreed to be the new fiscal agent. CPS, as the main contractor for the grant, appointed CUL as the fiscal agent. CPS anticipated that this change would make contracting for vendors and services more streamlined.
- In Year Two, CPS moved the management of the CNLN from the Office of Learning Technologies to the Office of School and Community Relations. This transfer facilitated community involvement in the CNLN.
- Accountability was a problem in Year One and Two. The Management team included representatives from the four partners. This led to confusion and non-responsiveness. CPS has established a clear line of responsibility for the project within CPS.

3.2.3 Project Management Findings

Project management changes continue to improve communication and interaction. The creation of an Executive Committee in year 2000 allowed top level managers from sites to interact and participate in CNLN. Compared to the first two years, sites have much more confidence in the project infrastructure. There is a sustained process for exchanges of information, ideas, and programming strategies through the monthly site meetings, strategic planning meetings to determine annual goals and project activities, and the Executive Committee to discuss the major project issues.

Sites agree that an important achievement of the project is putting a structure in place for communication, coordination, and collaboration. However, many also state that

there is an absence of leadership, direction, and energy from CNLN in moving the grant goals forward. Some also expressed frustration with CNLN management on the operational level: requests are made at the last minute, meetings are cancelled without notice, set schedules are changed, and there are long delays in processing invoices. They said that project management needs to focus on specific tasks and get them accomplished with a singleness of purpose.

The sites generally perceived the CNLN grant in the context of the community that they serve and as a resource to support their organization's mission and programs. Through the CNLN grant, they were able to extend, improve, or add to their programming. Implementing the project vision appears to be secondary or coincidental to the organizational mission. Without a central grant vision, CNLN is viewed as a grant source to implement important activities. Sites do not see themselves as partners with CNLN management and other sites in pursuing a common vision and mission. There is no CNLN identity beyond the limited few stakeholders involved with the grant.

However, all staff at the sites we visited showed enthusiastic interest in CNLN and expressed the willingness to work together and contribute to CNLN. They were ready to move forward and participate more actively in a central CNLN direction. Many innovative ideas and programs were going on or planned at the sites. The straightforward and thoughtful comments we heard from all corners indicate that although things have not always gone smoothly, people want to see this project succeed in terms of the big ideas presented in the proposal.

3.3 The Vision

The CNLN proposal describes a vision of innovative, technology-based teaching and learning that promotes active learning not only for students and teachers across the range of grades from kindergarten to grade 12, but also for parents and other neighborhood residents. Through collaborative partnerships of schools and local organizations, it seeks to foster learning communities and communities of learners. Three major elements comprise the CNLN project as envisioned in its proposal to the U.S. Department of Education. These are: a technology infrastructure, a professional development program, and a school- community network. Each of these elements, by itself, is important in promoting a learning community. When they are integrated into a comprehensive system such as described in the proposal, their power to produce beneficial outcomes is likely to be greatly enhanced. Some of this potential can be seen in partnerships that school and community sites have formed, even in the limited time that funds have been distributed to sites. However, without a central digital nexus, without a CNLN identity being established, without a powerful drive from CNLN management, this potential remains to be tapped.

The vision expressed in the proposal is not a simple one. It requires foresight, careful orchestration, clear communication, and commitment if it is to be achieved. These elements must be thoughtfully coordinated to produce powerful systemic outcomes.

Moreover, reaching this vision is a very difficult challenge given the size of the constituency and the size of the CNLN grant. When there are so many school and community sites, the impact of CNLN funding on any particular site is reduced.

Moreover, these sites were chosen for the CNLN grant because of their diversity. That very diversity in terms of organizational missions and constituency served makes it difficult to coalesce into one project vision. Again, the reader is reminded that the project has only gotten off the ground for a little more than a year. There is ample time and opportunity for the CNLN to develop a powerful unifying vision for the CNLN. CNLN has the creativity, energy, knowledge, skills, and physical resources that could be used to articulate a shared vision.

4. RECOMMENDATION

Our recommendation is based on the intent of the TICG granting program, the CNLN proposal, and our meetings with stakeholders.

There is a great need to review, articulate, and implement the vision collectively.

The TICG provides funds to consortia, not an individual entity. The intent of the grant is for a community or communities of schools, neighborhood organizations, businesses, parents, students, adult learners, and other stakeholders to work together to achieve a common, integrated vision. This comprehensive vision extends beyond the goals of the individual agencies in the consortia. In outcomes and achievement, the “total” should be greater than the “sum of the parts.”

The TICG is a catalyst for change and experimentation. Grants under this program support communities of educators, parents, industry partners, and others who are working to transform their schools, neighborhood centers, libraries, and other learning environments to improve learning productivity and outcomes. CNLN is at a stage of development where they need to consider the question of what kind of real changes in education they want to achieve and how to achieve them as a collaborative.

The CNLN should organize and conduct strategic planning meetings with all sites. The meetings should ask what are some of the collaborative activities that most, if not all, of the sites can design and implement together. Sites would need to feel ownership with these activities and play complementary roles in the activities. Sites would also need to feel that these roles are not "extra" tasks for them and fit within their own organizational mission. Goals, scope of work, accompanying budgets need to be done. Strong

leadership will be needed to operationalize the strategic plan and guide others as they work to achieve it.

