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For Immediate Release

Schott Fellowship leads Educational Study Tour for Early Childhood Educators in Massachusetts

October 2007 – Cambridge, MA and Puerto Rico –Thirteen educators from across the state traveled to Puerto Rico as part of the Schott Fellowship Immigration Initiative from October 13 to October 18, 2007. This Initiative strives to create a better understanding amongst educators and policy makers about the academic, social, emotional policy and practice issues encountered by immigrant and s migrant children in Massachusetts.

The participants focused their attention on the unique issues, strengths and challenges of young children who are immigrants/migrants or are the offspring of immigrants/migrants in Massachusetts. The purpose of the immigration project and study tour was to define critical issues impacting the development and learning of these young children; articulate policy recommendations which would improve their quality of life and share the lessons learned in order to advance these policies.

The Immigration Initiative has been a year-long effort to explore the issues of immigration and migration in Massachusetts. The initiative included extensive review of the literature as well as two major roundtables involving over 100 Massachusetts leaders. Participants explored how immigrant children are fairing in Massachusetts; how dual language acquisition impacts academic learning; how services are currently organized by the state and community organizations to support newcomers; why most Latino students are fairing poorly among their peers on assessment tests; and what practices make sense for such a diverse population of young children as is found in classrooms across the state. The study tour also included a hands-on experience via educational visits and structured dialogues with families, immigrant/migrant serving organizations and schools in both the Greater Boston area as well as in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The study tour participants were: Barbara Black, Northampton; Marcia Farris, Nashua, NH; Hanna Gebretensae, Somerville; Winifred Hagan, Boston; Emily Koester, Northfield; Barbara Kozma, Osterville; Carol Nolan, Somerville; Jeri Robinson, Dorchester; Lourdes Sariol, Jamaica Plain; and Nida Wright, Brockton. Add Marta, Yvette and Valora

“These educators are ‘architects for change’ for children and families in the Commonwealth, and are interested in learning about educational practices in other areas,” said Dr. Valora Washington, Executive Director of the program.

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“This study tour is an experience that will ensure that all children in Massachusetts thrive academically, socially, and emotionally,” Dr. Washington continued.

Upon arrival in San Juan on Saturday, October 13 (?), (date) study tour participants immediately joined the Puerto Rico Association for the Education of Young Children conference. While there, they were greeted by the AEYC President and Executive Director, and shared informal dialog with prominent educator, Luis Hernandez, who was in Puerto Rico for the conference. Over the next few days the travelers had an educational forum at The Cambridge College Puerto Rico Regional Center. Presentations and dialog with the local faculty included the history of Puerto Rico and its relationship to the USA mainland; the origins of migration and its impact on the island; and the status of preschool and public school education.

The group was hosted by Dr. Pedro Schuck, Director of the Cambridge College Puerto Rico Regional Center and the Puerto Rico Teachers Association, Executive Director, Reyes Rodriguez.

Organizers for the Project and Study Tour, Marta T. Rosa, Project Consultant and Fellowship Advisory Member, and Yvette Rodriguez, Deputy Director, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA) and Schott Fellow, lead the group through this journey. “This is a dream come true! It is an exciting opportunity to work on helping educators further understand and connect with the experiences of Immigrant and Puerto Rican children. I am hopeful that through the exploration of the critical issues facing these young children and their families we can begin to impact relevant needed change.” said Marta T. Rosa.

The Schott Fellowship is a group of senior early childhood leaders who come together for one year to develop policy skills and undertake a project that is timely, directly relevant and actionable to what is happening in Massachusetts. It is administered through Cambridge College.

Established in 1971, Cambridge College is a national leader in creating higher education opportunities for diverse adult learners. The College has the lowest private tuition rate in Massachusetts.
