CS3 and Action Research

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The Center for Student Support Systems (CS3) at the University of San Diego is the leading resource in the country for action research in school counseling. Since 2000, graduate students in the School Counseling Program have been trained in the methods of action research and have put their skills to use in the local community through collaborative action research with practicing school counselors. To date, more than 40 collaborative action research projects have been completed involving counselors in more than 12 local school districts. Results of the projects have been shared annually at what has become the premier North American action research conference—the San Diego Action Research Conference.

Established in 2004 by Prof. Lonnie Rowell, CS3’s founding director, the San Diego conference has grown from a school counseling focused event attended by USD graduate students and local counselors to a North American and international event focused on the multiple uses of action research in education, business, and community settings and attended by approximately 200 researchers, university faculty, public and private school counselors.
teachers, counselors, school administrators, undergraduate and graduate students, and leaders and service providers from community-based organizations. Information on the conference can be found at http://www.sandiego.edu/soles/programs/action_research/events/. The conference features workshops, panels, dialogue sessions, poster sessions, breakout sessions, and keynote addresses. Past keynote speakers have included Bill Torbert, Susan Noffke, and Jack Whitehead. A preconference was added at the 2010 conference, which included visits to local schools and community organizations engaged in action research. The preconference was sponsored by the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), based in the United Kingdom.

In 2009-2010, the Center’s action research resources were combined with the resources of our school’s departments of Leadership Studies and Learning and Teaching, and a new virtual action research ‘home base’ was created. This site can be found at http://www.sandiego.edu/soles/programs/action_research/. The purpose of the School of Leadership and Education Sciences’ Action Research website is to provide resources for practitioners, students, researchers, and theorists interested in exploring the role that action research plays in improving educational practice and community life in general. The site includes information, ideas, examples, and working documents on action research related to education and community life. Resources are included that support the practice of action research. The site also provides a forum for advancing the development of theory and social innovations linked to the use of action research.

(Note: At present [Fall semester, 2010], we are undergoing a major website upgrade. Expanded functionality and additional resources will be available beginning in November.)

Lonnie Rowell, Ph.D., is the director of the Counseling Program at the University of San Diego. He teaches and writes in the areas of school counseling, action research, counselor leadership, and policy and program development in school counseling. Rowell is the founding director of the Center for Student Support Systems (CS3), which he established as a research, policy development, and professional development center in 2003.