

Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Program

Grantee Information:

Grantee: **Utica City School District**

Partner: **Utica College**

Abstract:

Initiative #1: All teachers will use data to drive instruction.

Professional development will make all teachers proficient in using data to inform instruction. Based on the collection and examination of assessment data, teachers will adjust teaching and building teams will examine trends. Re-teaching can then target students' weaknesses. Principals will monitor the use of data.

Initiative #2: Master teacher/school leader positions will be created.

Using APPR data, highly effective and effective teachers and school leaders will be identified, trained, and paid as mentors for new, struggling, and ineffective teachers/leaders. Master teachers/leaders might also be utilized as district staff developers. These career ladder opportunities will make highly effective and effective teachers/leaders more likely to remain in the district. In addition, overall teacher quality will improve and student needs will be will more consistently met throughout all district schools.

Initiative #3: The existing Instructional Strategies Guide will be expanded for all subjects.

Research texts will be ordered to be used by a newly formed, district-wide committee that will select and write up instructional strategies to add to the district's existing guide. The new teaching strategies will serve as a long-term district resource for all subject area teachers with a special focus on strategies for economically disadvantaged students, English Language Learners, and Students with Disabilities. As a result, student performance, especially for those with high needs, will improve.

Initiative #4: Refocus Professional Learning Communities to concentrate on common district-wide topics.

The district will choose a common focus based on aspects of the Common Core. This focus area will help teachers and school leaders reach a similar understanding of topics such as the impact of poverty, close readings, academic vocabulary, and writing expectations. Students will benefit from teachers' common understanding as they move within the district. Trained master teachers/leaders will provide professional development in focus areas.

Initiative #5: Establish a partnership with Utica College.

Highly qualified future teachers attending Utica College will be identified, trained, and recruited by the Utica City School District. As part of this partnership, they will attend district professional development sessions. Training will include skills and knowledge specific to the needs of Utica City School District's students. Newly hired teachers from this partnership will start careers with skills tailored to the district's students' needs. The relationship with Utica College will create an ongoing pool for well-trained professionals.

Initiative #6: Create a bank of exemplary close reading and other lesson videos.

A committee will identify close reading and other exemplary lessons. These lessons will be videotaped and posted on the district site so that all district teachers and leaders will have access for training and modeling. Students will benefit from teachers' improved understanding of best practices.

Initiative #7: Establish part-time Instructional Coaches for district-wide instructional support.

Experienced applicants who are up-to-date in regards to recent NYS education changes and research-based instructional practices will be interviewed and hired as Instructional Coaches. These district-wide coaches will establish greater consistency in presenting and monitoring the district's initiatives and academic focus.

Initiative #8: Improve rigor and relevance of classroom content and expectations through professional development.

Professional development will focus on Common Core and other areas such as: higher-order thinking, writing across the curriculum, economically disadvantaged students, Response to Intervention (RtI), and student engagement. All district teachers/leaders will attend the same training workshops to establish uniformity across the district.

Initiative #9: Ensure equitable distribution of highly effective and effective teachers.

The district will chart the distribution of teachers/school leaders using APPR ratings. Data from Human Resources will show equitable distribution of effective and highly effective staff.

Initiative #10 Use common evaluation instruments/observation techniques to monitor instructional gaps.

A committee will create a common, union-approved, teacher monitoring instrument for all schools. All building leaders will be trained in observation techniques. School leaders will be better able to monitor instructional gaps.

Initiative #11 Retain highly effective and effective teachers and school leaders.

A survey to measure job satisfaction will be used at the beginning and the end of the grant period. Common district focuses, multiple supports, and recognition of exemplary staff will increase the level of job satisfaction and increase teacher and school leader retention.

Project Contact

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