

A. Project Abstract

It is imperative that school systems invest in the leadership capacity of teachers. Schools that have high leadership capacity are those that believe in leadership for all. Schools in which teachers are becoming leaders of significance have structures in place that provide opportunities for broad participation in teams, study groups, vertical communities, and action research teams. The guiding paradigm is that the principal is only one leader in the school community (Lambert, 2005).

This collaborative effort between Niagara University's Colleges of Education and Arts and Sciences, Buffalo Public School District, Niagara Falls School District, and Cleveland Hill Union Free School district addresses: building teacher leaders, training and retaining teachers in high needs schools, getting teachers certified who are teaching out of certification, recruiting administrative candidates for school leadership programs, and strong induction programs for novice teachers. All of these components support the research stated above and include all of the structures mentioned.

The purpose of this proposal is to utilize and maximize the valuable resources that reside in neighboring P-12 school districts and local universities. Building on the strengths of research practitioners, we can close the student achievement gap, share what we know works, and explore new methodologies to reach our most at-risk students.

The goals of our project will be accomplished through a firm commitment of each of the partners. The project partners bring valuable expertise to the necessary commitment to involve all levels of participants to change the school culture in a way that will have a positive impact on student achievement for all learners. Professional learning communities create a shared vision, one shared by a community of learners that elevates the role the learner may want to embrace in the school environment. Through the work of the school district professional development plan, this will allow each area of expertise to show how connecting the pieces matter to effective teaching and learning. For example, other successful grant projects (i.e. Math and Science Partnerships Grant and Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant) Master Teachers can model and serve as catalysts for improved teaching and learning and share their climb to the "mastery" level.

Expected outcomes:

- In all school districts, 5% increase in student achievement for affected students.
- Develop a shared professional development community with current research-based practices for high needs schools in alignment with the New York State Learning Standards.
- Shared expertise of Master Teachers in content driven professional development for literacy, math, science, and technology (STEM).
- Work with administrators and teachers to build a cost effective, sustainable and comprehensive professional development model.
- Alignment of curriculum mapping to professional development plan.

Buffalo School District:

- Raise student achievement and attendance at the Academy School.
- Increase number of certified teachers who are teaching out of certification.
- Recruit potential applicants for school administration programs.

Niagara Falls School District:

- Student achievement improvements in literacy and writing for 390 Students with Disabilities at Niagara Falls High School.
- Increased use of differential learning in literacy and written language by 23 Special Education teachers receiving training.

Cleveland Hill Union Free School District:

- Decrease 15% rate of teacher turnover (novice teachers) with less than 5 years of experience.
- Increase overall effectiveness of novice teachers through strong induction program with data analysis, literacy, differentiated instruction, Response to Intervention (RtI) and formative assessments.
- Improve instructional practices aligned to Response to Intervention (RtI) Tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions.

B. Institutional Effectiveness in Meeting the Teachers' Professional Development Needs in High- Need Schools and School Districts

Founded by the Vincentian Community in 1856, Niagara University (NU) is a private liberal arts university with more than 4,000 students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs in the colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education, and Hospitality and Tourism Management. All of Niagara's colleges hold major national accreditations, including those of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB), the Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (CHRIE), and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). In addition, significant resources are dedicated to outreach, community, and continuing education programming.

An indication of the commitment of the Colleges of Education and Arts and Sciences is the recent notification from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education that two grant funded projects through the United States Department of Education and New York State Education Department will represent New York State in a publication on the AACTE's Day on the Hill, June 17-18, 2009 in Washington, D.C. Both projects have produced a model of sustainable professional development and gains in student achievement across P-12 grade levels. The publication is entitled "Partnerships That Work" Turning Around Low-Performing Schools and is presented to members of Congress.

Institutional progress toward meeting the needs of:

1) Students, teachers, and other educators from high-need schools and/or districts.

The College of Education and Arts and Sciences has F/T and P/T faculty heavily involved in high needs schools throughout the school year and during summer programs on campus and in the schools. College of Education faculty work with high needs

districts on multicultural issues, gender equity, socioeconomic and literacy for students and parents. A university-school partnership that reflects this commitment is through our existing TLQP project with The Academy School in the Buffalo School District. The focus of the College of Education TLQP project has been to increase literacy skills and provide research-based strategies to teachers through embedded professional development at the school. Every pre-service candidate receives a minimum of one to two semesters experience in a high needs district.

2) Teachers who either lack New York certification or are teaching out of the field or grade level for which they are certified.

The College of Education has been involved in many grant initiatives working with teachers and highly qualified paraprofessionals to receive certification in critical shortage areas within the school district. From 2003-2007, the TLQP grant provided Niagara University the opportunity to certify 13 paraprofessionals from the Buffalo School District in critical areas of need. Twelve paraprofessionals received Master of Science Degrees in the areas of literacy, Special Education and 7-12 content areas, and one received a Bachelor of Arts Degree with TESOL certification. All 13 students employed in the Buffalo School District remain involved in TLQP activities by serving on the advisory council for the grant and provide valuable input on professional development needs.

3) Teachers and administrators who will be working in high-need schools and/or districts.

All undergraduate and graduate programs in the College of Education are aligned to meeting National and State standards. Beyond that point, content knowledge, skills and dispositions are measured through field placements and reflective practices in the high needs school districts. A model, which has been piloted and implemented, is a two-semester placement within a high needs district, where the teaching assistantship and student teaching placement is with the same cooperating teacher. This model affords the pre-service candidate to receive professional development opportunities with the cooperating teacher offered by Niagara University faculty throughout the school year. In advanced programs, such as Educational Leadership, Literacy, Special Education, School Counseling, and School Psychology, 40-45% of students are in high needs placements for practicums and internships annually.

Description of Current TLQP Project

During the 2003-2009 grant cycles, the Colleges of Education and Arts and Sciences partnered with high-needs LEA Buffalo Public School district. During 2003-2007, the project enrolled 13 paraprofessionals in degree programs in education leading to NYS certification, one graduating with a Bachelors of Arts degree and 12 with Master of Science degrees in critical shortage areas. All 13 participants are currently employed with the district: seven as full time teachers, two as substitute teachers, and three as full-time teaching assistants. During 2007 – 2008, nineteen additional paraprofessionals enrolled in literacy, TESOL, and mathematics credit-bearing coursework as non-matriculated students. Seventeen are currently employed in the district: 15 as teaching assistants, one as a special education health aide, and one as a special education individual teacher aide.

During 2008 – 2009, a comprehensive school–university partnership within the LEA Buffalo School District was established

with The Academy School, an alternative school for overage underachieving students in grades 7-12. The TLQP project provides ongoing professional development aligned with the district Professional Development Plan and the School Improvement Plan to The Academy School administrators and teachers. The TLQP Project Director has worked diligently with 19 teachers in an embedded professional development model consisting of two graduate literacy courses this past year. Much emphasis was placed on literacy and content integration in the core subject areas. Teachers have acknowledged new strategies, embraced a visual difference of literacy concepts in the classrooms, and implemented action research to problem solve. Faculty in the Colleges of Education and Arts and Sciences have provided activities/services in the following areas: a) a Wii video game project to highlight math skills, team building, anger and stress management, and improve attendance, b) Literacy faculty bringing classes of pre-service candidates for literacy tutoring in the fall 2008 semester, c) mentoring in the core academic areas, and d) Generating Expectations for Student Achievement (GESA) training.

C. Partnerships

The College of Education has developed the *Institute of Applied Learning*, the professional development arm of the college. The institute has been in existence for five years and has collaborated with school districts in building continuous and sustainable forms of professional development in high needs, inner city, and urban settings.

The commitment of the college is substantiated with the creation of the position of Assistant Dean for External Relations who oversees the Institute of Applied Learning and works directly with the P-16 education community.

1. The scope and extent of involvement in the project by high need school and /or district partners.

The scope and extent of involvement in the project by high need school and /or district partners is the strength of this proposal. School/school district partnerships in this proposal are indicative of the value of a continuous dialogue based on school district data, administrator and teacher needs, and an awareness of culture, curriculum, and socioeconomic conditions in building sustainability in school/teacher leadership. Through the partnerships established with the school districts included in this proposal, professional development has been offered through customizing coursework and workshops to meet district needs and offering general sessions to all districts with topics of common interest. This model has produced a cadre of Master Teachers, presenters and coaches/mentors that can share scientifically based research practices that have produced gains in student achievement across the core content areas. The other partners in the project, Cleveland Hill Union Free and Niagara Falls can strengthen and benefit from sharing in-house resources. This proposal's planning has included: school district superintendents, assistant superintendents, curriculum directors, teacher center directors, human resource departments, and professional development planning committees. A time frame has been established identifying project personnel and school/district representatives who will be responsible for planning, implementation, and assessment of the grant's activities.

2. The College of Education and Arts and Sciences faculty and administration

The College of Education and Arts and Sciences faculty and administration share a plethora of knowledge by sitting on school district quality councils, teacher center policy boards, school district professional development planning committees and

working in school districts an average 100 hours per week. Through the *Institute of Applied Learning*, a model of content and pedagogy co-teaching has been very effective through other grant projects: Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant (5 years), Math and Science Partnership Grant (5 years), and Teacher Leader Quality Partnership Grant (6 years). College of Education and Arts and Sciences faculty have worked with Master Teachers hired in the grant projects to provide new coursework and re-align core content area curriculum for pre-service candidates to meet the rigor of national and New York State Learning Standards. The scope of these projects have included: creation of a sustainable professional development model with student achievement gains by participating teachers, the development of a Math, Science, Technology (MST) Masters Degree, the development of an advanced certificate of study for Teacher Leaders, the recruitment and retention of 41 teachers (Niagara Falls School District) who will receive the MST Masters Degree (embedded teacher trainers in P-12), graduate course offerings created through district data and needs (15 courses designed), embedded classroom professional development, integration of math, science and technology, and literacy integration. An extension of core content areas has been to include faculty from Educational leadership, Literacy, Special Education, School Counseling, School Psychology, and Mental Health Counseling to provide professional development in topics such as: Response to Intervention (RtI), parental issues, behavioral and anger management, gender equity training, cooperative and interactive learning, and educational leadership. All pre-service candidates in the College of Education begin field experiences in their freshmen year, this enables students to start working in high needs districts and gives them over 150 hours of classroom application prior to student teaching. The College of Education places between 700-800 students each semester in local school districts. In 2008-2009, 100% of pre-service candidates did one of their placements in high needs/inner city schools. In all high needs/inner city, grant projects, participating teachers are required to take a pre-service candidate for two semesters, a 35-hour teaching assistantship and a seven-week student teaching placement. The pre-service candidates receive 8 hours of literacy training in the adopted school district literacy program. This fall/spring semester arrangement allows pre-service candidates the opportunity to become familiar and identify with students individual learning styles and needs.

3. Other partners

Other partners included in the project are the New York State Math, Science, and Technology Associations, organizations that can provide field trips (both virtual and hands-on) for teachers such as Castellani Art Museum, New York State Power Authority, Buffalo Zoo, and University of Buffalo Center for Bioinformatics. Often, an exhibit or display will be scheduled after a grant deadline that can provide an experience aligned to the coursework. As in past projects, with the continuum model of professional development, teachers establish new boundaries through inquiry-based learning, and find and create new resources that match (i.e. forensic societies, hospitals): content area interest, NY State Learning Standards alignment and real life applications for students. This project includes developing a professional learning community, which focuses on shared resources, curriculum mapping and opportunities to bring exposure that is more international to the classroom with technology-expanding teachers' knowledge of available resources.