

School Turnaround Office
Systemic Supports for District and School Turnaround Grant (SSDST)

SCHENECTADY CSD – AUGUST 2015

School/District Background	Provide a brief overview of your district including location, size, demographics served, and needs of the district. Please provide an overview of why you decided to participate in this grant.
	<p>Schenectady is a small city in upstate NY with a free and reduced lunch rate over 80%. The District serves nearly 10,000 students in Grades PreK-12. The student body is 34% black, 16% Hispanic, 32% white, 1% multi-racial, & 17% Asian (primarily of Guyanese origin). 18% of SHS students qualify for special education services, significantly higher than the NYS average of 12%. Schenectady CSD (SCSD) is a Focus District with three priority schools and four additional schools at-risk of priority status.</p> <p>This grant offered an opportunity to make lasting district-wide improvements and to use data to drive instruction on the student level, classroom level, building level and District level to improve achievement and opportunities for all students.</p> <p>Goals for Strand #1 1a. Create systemic shift in thinking to increase equity achievement for all students; 1b. Improve special education identification and instructional practices; and 1c. Create integrated data system to inform District decision making capacity.</p> <p>Goals for Strand #4: 4a. Develop process for creating rigorous, valid and reliable student assessment item bank aligned to the CCSS; 4b. Implement assessments to measure student growth and meet requirement of APPR; and 4c. Customize report generation based on student assessment data to refine decision making process.</p>
Promising Practice to be Highlighted	Thoroughly describe a promising practice currently taking place at your district as a direct result of the strategies through the SSDST Grant with each strand implemented. Also provide an explanation as to why this particular practice was chosen to be implemented at your district.
	<p>The District need was to increase achievement for all students and to close the achievement gaps between student subgroups. The goal aligned to this need was to create systemic shift in thinking to increase equity achievement for all students.</p> <p>Practice: NYU (Center on School Change, Practice and Policy) worked with the SCSD to develop leadership capacity in using an action research cycle to problem-solve and make informed decisions that lead to intentional equitable academic outcomes for students; and to develop leadership competency in specific knowledge areas relevant to equity improvement areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals developed and submitted Comprehensive School Improvement Plans resulting from the NYU-led monthly meetings with three Principal and Leader cohorts to study best instructional practices, best reading practices, and implementing effective PLCs.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district-level Theory of Action and Theory of Change process have been developed and embraced district-wide. <p>Developing equitable academic outcomes for all students is essential in a highly diverse, low income community such as Schenectady. The District need was to increase achievement for students with disabilities. The goal aligned to this need was to improve special education identification and instructional practices.</p> <p>Practice: Work with the SCSD District Management Council allowed for an examination of special education practices. This led to changes in how our District works with students struggling with academic or behavior concerns. Building level teams put interventions and supplemental supports for struggling students well before special education services are considered.</p>
Evidence	<p>How do you know the practice you have described is promising and/or successful? How have you measured its effectiveness and/or success?</p>
	<p>At Schenectady High School, the Regents passing rates increased over the past three years as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English from 61.08% to 78%; United States History from 70.7% to 76%; Geometry from 76% to 92.8%; Trigonometry from 32.6% to 70.3%; Chemistry from 32.6% to 73.4%. <p>Using the lens of equity, the District and high school leadership looked at how teaching resources were allocated reducing the number of under enrolled electives and dedicating funding for required core courses by reducing class size. Struggling students also receive support and intervention rather than focusing efforts on classifying students for special education services.</p> <p>Early wins included adopting the District’s new mission statement: Everybody Counts; Everybody Learns - this has become the mantra embraced by leaders and faculty across the District.</p> <p>The District adopted an RTI Approach to put the emphasis on support for struggling students rather than to wait for classification for special education services to receive additional supports.</p> <p>Roti interventions for struggling students, is an observable practice that is having a positive impact on students and on overall District achievement. Supports and interventions take place during regular class time, during free periods and after school. Schools across the District are beginning to adopt a “whatever it takes” approach to help students to master CCLS to be successful.</p>
Looking Ahead	<p>What are your sustainability plans and hopes for the future (both short and long-term) of your promising practice?</p>
	<p>Teachers and building leaders will continue to use data to examine achievement to drive decisions on the student level to provide interventions as needed rather than looking to special education to close student gaps.</p> <p>Additionally, building and District leaders will continue to use data to make decisions through a lens of equity for resource allocation and improvements to practice.</p>

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	It is our vision that, not only will overall achievement increase, but the gap among student subgroups will close.
Additional documentation	Please provide any additional documentation/attachments/website links created/demonstrate/communicated as a result of the implementation of the SSDST grant initiatives.
	N/A