

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

UTICA CSD – AUGUST 2015 *(Grant ended August 2014.)*

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.
Utica City School District	<p>The Utica City School District (UCSD) is located in Utica, New York. Utica is the fourth neediest city in New York with 42.7% of its children below the poverty level. In 2012, the Student Census Poverty Rate in New York was 23%. The Student Census Poverty Rate in Utica was 43.9%. The New York State Education Department ranks UCSD as New York's fifth neediest school district as measured by the Combined Wealth Ratio and categorizes it as a Group 3 district meaning it is a district with high student needs in relationship to low district resource capacity. The UCSD enrolled 9,621 students for the 2013-2014 school year including 20.5% of Special Education and 15% ESL. The District also has 76% of its students eligible for free and reduced lunches per the NYS BEDS data.</p> <p>UCSD is a Focus District with one Priority School and nine Focus Schools due to the performance of Students with Disabilities (SWDs), Asian, Black, Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged, and Limited English Proficient subgroups on the combined New York State ELA and math assessments. It is also identified for the graduation rate of the 2008 Cohort subgroups of Hispanic, Asian/Other Pacific Islander, Limited English Proficient, and Economically Disadvantaged.</p> <p>We participated in the grant in an effort to build leadership capacity and systems in our district.</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.
Instructional Rounds	<p>The building leader identifies a problem of practice such as "To what extent and what ways are students engaged in higher order thinking?" A team including the building leader, a principal from another building, and a Central Office Administrator visit various classrooms for 10-12 minutes apiece and focus on scripting teacher student exchanges centered on the problem of practice. The Instructional Round team then meets to reflect and discuss patterns and trends. The patterns and trends, not specific information, are shared with the school staff. The Instructional Rounds allow the building leader to focus on a particular instructional practice, assess how the entire building is progressing towards the particular goal, and identify areas of need.</p> <p>Those areas of need drive Professional Development. As a result of Instructional Rounds we identified the need to focus on Giving Effective Feedback to Students, Higher Order Thinking Skills, Data Driven Instruction, and Differentiated Instruction. These areas of concern were reinforced through the Diagnostic Tool for School & District Effectiveness (DTSDE) reviews and drive the School Improvement Plans.</p>
Evidence	How do you know the practice you have described is promising and/or successful? How have you measured its effectiveness and/or success?
Instructional Rounds	<p>At a follow-up workshop on Instructional Rounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals shared their excitement over the process; • They discussed lessons learned;

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They mapped the process and dates to continue the practice for the 2014-15 school year; • Principals stated that Instructional Rounds allowed them to really zero in on specific areas of concern; and • They stated that when they do regular observations they are trying to focus on too many elements. <p>Principals used the patterns and trends observed to build their measurable objectives for their School Comprehensive Education Plans (SCEPs).</p>
Looking Ahead	What are your sustainability plans and hopes for the future (both short and long-term) of your promising practice?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Round dates are on the District calendar for 2014-2015 for all Elementary Buildings. • Middle School and High School principals and assistant principals will receive Instructional Round training in the fall of 2014 so they can also implement the practice. • By including Assistant Principals in the training the district ensures sustainability because the majority of Assistant Principals go on to become Building Principals.
Additional documentation	Please provide any additional documentation/attachments/website links created/demonstrate/communicated as a result of the implementation of the SSDST grant initiatives.
	NA