



ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER
OFFICE OF SCHOOL INNOVATION
ROOM 475 EBA
Tel. 518/474-4817
Fax 518/474-7558

February 15, 2013

Susan Johnson
Superintendent
Hempstead Union Free School District
185 Peninsula Blvd.
Hempstead, NY 11550

RE: Notice of Award: Systemic Supports for District and School Turnaround Grant
Round 2
Award Amount: \$302,170
Time Period: February 1, 2013 to August 31, 2014

Dear Superintendent Johnson:

The New York State Education Department, School Turnaround Office (NYSED STO) is pleased to inform you that the Hempstead Union Free School District has been approved for the above referenced grant. As a reminder, if your district's current approved APPR is set to expire prior to the end of the grant, subsequent APPR plans must obtain and maintain Commissioner approval with no break in force or effect in order for the grant to remain in good standing.

The NYSED STO will serve as your lead program office for project oversight, assistance, monitoring, and reporting. Within the next several weeks you will be contacted by a representative from NYSED STO to set up an initial welcome and introduction telephone call.

We look forward to working with you and your leadership team on this innovative opportunity to improve student achievement in underperforming schools.

Sincerely,

Sally Bachofer

c: Sandra Herndon
Owen Donovan

Systemic Supports for District and School Turnaround (SSDST)

Executive Summary

The Hempstead School District, located in Hempstead, Long Island, is in the process of developing and assessing a highly effective leader and teacher leader continuum that will support recruitment, development and retention of effective educators and administrators. A major goal is to design a coherent system of development for our educators throughout their careers in order to increase their ability to improve student learning outcomes. To achieve this we will support our leaders and teacher leaders in systematically addressing the implementation of common core in both ELA and Math, in addition to developing cohesive district systems and structures. To increase the effects of the Annual Professional Performance Review, the district will integrate the Common Core Standards implementation into a comprehensive process of professional development that ensures our district can continuously meet the particular needs of our schools and our students. In implementing this goal of Common Core Standards in both ELA and Math, the Hempstead School District will be working with Scholastic Achievement Partners, known throughout the country for its successful work with school districts. In implementing the goal of establishing a cohesive strategic plan for improving/enhancing district capacity, the district will be working with the **International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE)**, who like Scholastic has a long history of collaborating with school districts across the country.

Focusing on common core standard implementation in both ELA and Math and redesigning district capacity and systems are critical for the academic success of the students in the Hempstead School District. The district has 5,909 students and 441 teachers housed in a prekindergarten, two kindergartens centers, five elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Approximately 75% of our students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The district ratio/ethnic student profile includes 41% African American, 58% Hispanic, and 1% other. Limited English Proficient students account for 28% of students in the district. The graduation rate is 52% overall, with 58% of African American students graduating in four years and 48% for Hispanic students graduating in four years. All district schools are Title 1 school-wide programs, and all have a high percentage of students from low-income families and a high percentage of English Language Learners. The district currently has five elementary schools

designated by NYS as Focus Schools and one middle school that is designated as a Priority school. There are two kindergarten centers and one high school that houses four small learning academies.

To produce a coherent, common core implementation we need to integrate all the elements into a cohesive district strategic plan. The district now has discreet initiatives in various stages of development that are designed to support the common core standards in both ELA and Math and has been working on efforts to begin the strategic planning process. We would like to design a district level structure that will allow for a more streamlined approach to the common core standards implementation and understanding by our leaders and teacher leaders, in addition to a more open process of strategic planning in where all stakeholders' voices will be heard.

The Hempstead School District will focus on providing release time for teacher leaders to meet with staff developers and building leaders regarding common core implementation. This will allow us to identify each teacher's specific needs and design targeted support for them. Ongoing carefully designed professional development will address the key knowledge and skills needed by teachers and administrators to enhance the education of all student populations. The district currently has a professional development plan created by a committee comprised of HCTA representatives and district level administrators, which can serve as an outline for expanding our effort to district-wide needs assessment.

Investment has to be made in data-driven inquiry systems that help teachers to learn more about their students, figure out how to systematically address their specific learning needs, plan a coherent progression of classroom lessons, and adapt their instruction based on more defined and sophisticated assessment. The district plans to use Race to The Top funds to support the data driven inquiry initiative district-wide.

Though the district has planned and implemented several important initiatives in recruitment, professional development and APPR (described above) at this point few if any target the improvement and enhancement of district capacity.

The Hempstead district recognizes the need to reverse the downward spiral of our at-risk student performance through a rigorous review of our current structures and processes. Our expectation is that a critical mass of our lead teachers and administrators will have intensive

training in proactively planning for the identification of, interventions for and consistent support of our low performing students and schools.

Over the past seven years the district has had three different superintendents, no math director until a year and a half ago, and two different ELA directors in three years, and one ELL Director with a massive load of staff to support. This administrative mobility has been unfavorable to the development of a school culture that supports student achievement at our lowest performing schools. We also know that we lack core content teachers prepared to teach these students. To address this gap, we will develop professional development and training for lead teachers and administrators that will delineate cultural dispositions and pedagogical understanding in direct support of the learning of all students that is aligned with the new CCSS. Appropriate criteria will be identified in the Board of Education policies and procedures manual and will be reflected in the district's Human Resource department's mission and operations descriptions. To close the gaps, we will develop a robust partnership with organizations with a proven track record of assisting school districts in improving student achievement for all students. We aim at building a professional learning community that emphasizes a culture of accountability and responsiveness to student learning with a sustained professional development plan based upon needs assessments for ELA and Math teachers.

A review of teacher classroom observations suggests that current administrators have limited skills in providing feedback to teachers on the alignment of their lesson plans with the new CCSS in both ELA and Math. Also, a quality evaluative system that demonstrates alignment to ELA/Math student performance goals is needed, so that data on teacher performance can directly inform administrators and teachers about the effectiveness of CCSS strategies for student learning. In addition our evaluation processes will support the alignment of professional development initiatives with lead teacher and administrator professional growth.

Though our current goal is to improve the delivery of professional development in specific areas, few of the initiated programs have been fully implemented and none have been evaluated for their effectiveness. Currently we have several initiatives based on quality programs that will service students, and a District Data Team that has been created to analyze data to inform instruction. However, the existing district structures are highly fractionalized resulting in a lack of focus and the adoption of programs without criteria for selection or evaluation. The

district requires an alternative structure for aligning the written, taught and tested curriculums for ELA and Math.