



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

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

February 27, 2013

Bernard Pierorazio  
Superintendent  
Yonkers City School District  
One Larkin Center  
Yonkers, NY 10701

RE: Notice of Award: Systemic Supports for District and School Turnaround Grant  
Round 2  
Award Amount: \$1,204,410  
Time Period: February 1, 2013 to August 31, 2014

Dear Superintendent Pierorazio:

The New York State Education Department, School Turnaround Office (NYSED STO) is pleased to inform you that the Yonkers City 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

## Proposal Narrative

### I Executive Summary

Yonkers is the fourth largest city in New York State and the largest city in Westchester. In establishing district readiness to build upon its strengths and opportunities, we initially look at our leadership. Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Bernard P. Pierorazio, has demonstrated exceptional leadership, as indicated in his recognition as Superintendent of the Year by the New York State Association of Superintendents in 2011 and the College Board William U. Harris Award of Excellence. In the capacity of Deputy Superintendent, he was instrumental in developing the District's Five Year Plan which compelled unitary status for the Yonkers Public Schools.

As Superintendent, Mr. Pierorazio is adamant about student achievement and expresses his expectations annually through the Superintendent's non-negotiable goals. All schools in the Yonkers Public School District are expected to meet the Superintendent's annual non-negotiable goals through the supervision of the school administration. The non-negotiable goals address the following: Student Achievement for All Students, Supervision and Community Outreach.

The Superintendent of Schools is presently involved in several District improvement initiatives: the restructuring of the school system through the introduction of a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade model that is improving student achievement and parent involvement at the secondary level, an increase in the number of district high schools to ensure smaller learning communities and a one billion dollar Yonkers Public Schools infrastructure modernization effort. Yonkers Public Schools' Public-Private Partnership is among the world's 100 most innovative urban infrastructure projects, announced by KPMG, in conjunction with *Infrastructure Journal*. It is the first social infrastructure PPP for a public school district in the United States.

The Superintendent is supported by the Chief Academic Officer, Executive Director of Elementary and Secondary Administration, and the Executive Director of Instructional Support. As part of the District's efforts to support school turnaround efforts, ongoing support and monitoring of student progress is conducted by these administrators through monthly meetings with principals and ongoing meetings with the Superintendent and his cabinet. This monitoring also includes the mid-year principal review where student progress especially the progress of targeted subgroups is addressed and highlighted for final performance evaluation. Principals share any additional needs for the schools in relation to achieving the non-negotiable goals. The Director of School Improvement attends these reviews to monitor the implementation of recommendations made by NYSED through the School Quality Reviews and JIT reports. Any recommendations by the External School Curriculum Audits are also revisited at this time.

There are forty schools in the Yonkers City School District. Specialized themes and instructional philosophies enable students to discover and develop their interests, intelligences, and imaginations while meeting the learning standards. A rigorous curriculum throughout the District encourages children to embrace the philosophy that "College Is In My Future." Through a systemic approach to ELA and math programs among all schools the District is able to coordinate instructional practices, professional development, and assess to data thus supporting the current capacity to insure district readiness.

District readiness to build upon current strengths and opportunities for improvement can be seen in the design of District schools and the ongoing development of improvement initiatives. The Yonkers Public Schools provides a remarkable range of secondary educational choices to meet student needs and expectations and beyond. The District boasts a College Board Preparatory School for grades seven through twelve, a middle high school that houses International Baccalaureate Programmes for grades seven through twelve and a Montessori Academy for Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve. Two high schools are participating in the Smart Scholars Grants, preparing students to participate in Early College experiences. In addition, comprehensive high schools for grades nine through twelve incorporate challenging college preparatory coursework, distinction career training, or both. The YPS District has established its readiness to build upon its strengths and opportunities among all secondary schools.

Related to the district readiness in improving implementation of the Common Core Standards, throughout the 2011-2012 school year, a facilitator from one of the District partnerships provided a series of workshops on the ELA Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for reading, ESL and ELA department representatives from grades K-12. She also worked with social studies teachers and administrators. In the 2012-2013 school year, this partner will be providing additional training to Yonkers teachers in conjunction with the Assistant Director of Literacy. The conversation will continue to delve into the six instructional shifts and strategies teachers can use to focus on these changes.

YPS has partnered with a former AMTNYS president to develop instructional practices aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards in Math systemically in order to maintain consistency in sequence and pacing across schools while addressing unique strengths and needs within these sites. During the 2011-2012 school year, an introduction to the CCLS in Math was delivered to Grades K-8 and Algebra teachers. In the 2012-2013 school year, the partner will construct units of study with emphasis on the content transitions and the mathematical practices that remain constant in Grades K-12. Geometry and Algebra 2/Trig teachers are scheduled to participate in CCLS training.

The district approach to supporting school turnaround efforts, has been documented and monitored by the NYSED since our initial identification with the two PLA schools. Following the leadership of the Superintendent of Schools, a team was brought together to review reports and data. From this preliminary step a plan was identified and has been successfully implemented. The YPS approach to initiate and fulfill school turnaround efforts supports, verified the readiness of the Yonkers City School District to continue with similar efforts within the district and among our schools.

To spearhead these efforts the leadership in Central Office has been expanded to include the Turnaround Office with the Director of School Improvement in the Department of Instructional Support. The District Turnaround Officer and the School Improvement Manager (SIM) ensure that student progress is monitored on an ongoing basis and the attainment of goals is reached in the PLA (Priority) schools funded by the School Improvement Grant. Specific annual goals are identified by the grant and outlined by the administrative team and faculty as they continue to create a new school culture.

As an additional layer of support to the schools in accountability status, the Assistant Directors from the Department of Instructional Support coordinate ongoing visits to schools in the district to offer guidance and conduct specific workshops for staff. NYSED assessment data is accessible to all administrators, and available for analysis and review by school data committees. School needs are brought back from these visits and addressed in Cabinet Meetings and weekly Department of Instructional Support meetings.

In the district goals, as led by previously agreed and implemented upon MOAs for the PLA schools, is a determination to bring the elements of Education Law 3012-c to all administrators and teachers. The initial steps included training among all central office and school administrators by partner consultants, CSSR and Pace University. Training has evolved into the formation of Principal and Assistant Principal focus groups. In the 2012-2013 school year, focus groups will receive professional development and identify best practices for changing underperforming schools. School plans to address the targeted subgroups will be shared and evaluated by District and School administrators.

It was determined that the plan for school improvement and data inquiry should be revisited after the analysis of the reports from the NYSED interventions for the schools

in accountability status and the results of the NYSED 2012 ELA and Math assessments. Through this plan several District departments will develop a deeper coordination and collaboration of efforts to build administrative capacity and strengthen the district approach to school improvement.

Included in these efforts is our partner The Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR) which represents a team of administrators and school coaches with experience as classroom teachers, department heads, principals, superintendents, district instructional coordinators, and college professors. With a national network of school change coaches, CSSR provides technical assistance to schools and districts across the country. For the past ten years, the Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR) has worked with Yonkers Public Schools as coaches for our Persistently Low Achieving schools and the Smaller Learning Committee teams of teachers, school and district administrators.

This team has intimate knowledge of the District structure. During the 2011-2012 school year, a CSSR change coach joined the YPS Network Team at the institutes in Albany. After an evaluation of the CSSR initiatives by the YPS District administrators, it was decided that CSSR would be chosen to partner with the District to contribute to the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP). The CSSR team will work in collaboration with the Office of School Improvement to streamline objectives and goals of the DCIP with the other District department plans and the SCEP plans of the underperforming schools.

Each of the YPS schools has developed its own method of data inquiry and is at a different stage of development of a data driven culture. The District will partner with The Assessment Training Institute. The Assessment Training Institute (ATI), based in Portland, Oregon, was founded in 1992 by Dr. Rick Stiggins. ATI will work with the District to implement balanced assessment systems and develop the assessment literacy needed by teachers and school leaders to improve student learning. A structured plan will be developed to empower administrators and teacher leaders to create formative and summative assessments and to analyze, monitor and evaluate data.

The partnership will work at the district level with the Executive Director of Student Information, Assessment and Reporting, the Director of Assessment and Evaluation and the Department of Instructional Support to ensure effective program implementation and monitoring efforts. These three departments will work collaboratively to support school improvement efforts and to embed a cycle of data-driven inquiry in the chronically underperforming schools. The partnership will create sustainable systems of support so that the District can maintain progress after the grant has ended.