



Contract for Excellence

Needs and Strategies Report For School Year 2009-10

SYRACUSE CITY SD

SUPERINTENDENT DANIEL LOWENGARD

Contract Plan: Describe the overall strategy your district will implement under the Contract for Excellence to address the above needs. Detail the new and innovative programs selected and how they will integrate with existing improvement plans.

The District will continue to implement the District's Literacy Initiative this school year in all classrooms Pre-k-12. In addition the District will implement a new 4-Tiered Student Support System District wide that will address gaps in academics and behavior. Clear expectations for instruction will continue to be communicated and supported by the new 4-Tiered System and with embedded professional development in literacy across all content areas. The mathematics and ELA Instructional Support Teachers (ISTs) will provide the ongoing, consistent professional development and coaching in research based practices across all classrooms, grade levels, and schools. These ISTs will provide ongoing support that will ensure a clear direction for each school as part of a system of schools. For example, specific to special education, the District's Mathematics Coordinator and Math ISTs are working with approximately 65 teachers utilizing the First Steps program which is a research based intervention. Feedback from teachers indicates that they believe the program has a significant positive impact on students' performance and the ongoing support ensures implementation at continued efficient and effective levels. Students' progress is monitored on a regularly scheduled basis. The ELA Coordinator, Math Coordinator, and the ISTs work closely with the Special Education Training Resource Center (SETRC) trainers to ensure common vocabulary and research based practices are presented and supported District wide, ensuring teachers across the district will experience the same training with modifications to ensure maximum benefits for students. Student performance data will continue to be collected and analyzed to provide specific feedback to schools/teachers and to inform future professional development sessions.

The Wilson Reading Program, a research based proven intervention program, has been purchased for use in all resource and self-contained classrooms kindergarten through 8th grade. It will be expanded in the 2009-10 school year to include all inclusion teachers. Teachers continue to receive concentrated, embedded professional development by a Wilson coach who will collect and analyze the data on a scheduled basis. The data will be shared with ISTs, special education administration, and SETRC trainers to ensure areas of weakness are addressed at every professional development session.

Maintenance of Effort: Describe how you will continue your previous years' C4E expenditures. Districts are required to maintain total expenditures for C4E allowable programs at the level of their 2007-08 and 2008-09 amounts, as approved by the Commissioner. The total amount to be maintained in 2009-10 therefore is equal to the approved 2008-09 Contract amount, including the 2007-08 MOE amount.

Educators hired through C4E funding will continue in their roles in the schools including AIS teachers, professional developers, AVID teachers, etc. Full day pre-k classes initiated in 2007-08 and in 2008-09 will be sustained. All of the high schools have maintained their established Smaller Learning Academies. H.W. Smith Elementary School will continue as a K-8 building. The establishment of our new technological high school, the Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central, began in 2007-08 and will continue to grow in 2009-10 by adding staff for the 11th grade students. C4E funds will continue to support our new middle level Expeditionary Learning Program established in 2008-09. Acuity and IEP Direct will also be continued into the 2009-10 school year.

Reallocation: Specifically describe how you will reallocate any funds which will not continue to support prior year C4E programs. The reallocation of funds must be for new C4E allowable programs and be approved by the Commissioner. Reallocated funds will reduce the prior year's MOE by an equal amount. Describe specific programs and items to be purchased and how the new programs will improve student achievement. Revised Narratives, Programs, Options, Input Metrics, Performance

None at this time. The District will follow SED amendment procedures if necessary to adjust their allocations to specific schools.



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Achievement Issues: Describe the overall student achievement need presenting the greatest challenge in your school district which the Contract for Excellence addresses. In particular, describe the needs for those schools in improvement status that qualified your district for the Contract for Excellence.

The Syracuse City School District was identified in 2004 as a District in Need of Improvement for English Language Arts achievement for the student with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs) subgroups. Currently, we have no middle level schools or high schools identified as Schools in Good Standing and the majority of our elementary schools are identified at various stages of improvement status. Clary Middle, Dr. King Elementary and Elmwood Elementary were removed from SURR status this year. Delaware Academy, Blodgett Pre-k-8, and Seymour Dual Language Academy continue to be identified as SURR schools. Although our graduation rate continues to increase at incremental rates, we have large numbers of students not graduating in four or five years and/or dropping out. Our ESL student population continues to rise. We are piloting a New Comer Program in the 2009-10 school year to address the needs of ESL students coming to the District with little or no formal education in their native language. Hopefully this new program will assist in decreasing our ESL dropout rate. We are still not graduating a high percentage of our students with disabilities. The percentage of students living in poverty continues to increase each year with 79% of our students qualifying for free or reduced meals during the 2008-09 school year. More than 20% of our students are identified as students with disabilities and 9% of our students are English language learners. These high risk factors are challenges faced by all of our schools and our community as a whole. Therefore, any interventions or initiatives that are implemented are done so District-wide to improve student achievement in all schools with additional supports and interventions placed in our lowest performing schools and to support students with disabilities and ELLs.

Although our ELA and math results increased significantly this year, these content areas continue to need a laser like focus in order to improve student achievement. Our schools in highest academic need also have a high level of poverty and in many cases a high level of ESL students, primarily Hispanic students. Our struggling students need more time to close the achievement gap through after school programs, summer school, and individual and small group tutoring. Academic Intervention Services and AVID teachers use differentiated instruction to meet the needs of these at risk students including those with disabilities and English language learners. C4E funding allowed us to hire and maintain math and ELA Instructional Support Teachers for our C4E identified schools to embed professional development through coaching and modeling to improve teaching and learning.

Our new Say Yes to Education Project will assist in supporting afterschool programs, summer programs, tutorials, and higher education incentives to encourage students to stay in school, graduate and go one to college. Say Yes will also provide socio-emotional supports for students in the primary grades as well as legal services for families, mentoring for our middle level students, mental health services, increased social workers in our buildings and a new student assessment system.



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Special Populations: The needs of special populations (LEP, students with disabilities, poverty and students with low achievement) should be assessed, with specific programmatic efforts identified.

The District has implemented the Acuity formative assessment system for the past 2 years District wide by using the system's predictive and diagnostic assessments in math and ELA in grades 2-8. This computer-based assessment gives teachers and school leadership immediate feedback on students' strengths and areas of need to inform/adjust instruction and professional development. This data will be used to guide instruction with the assistance of the maintained ELA and Math Support Teachers who work with classroom and AIS teachers to target instruction to remediate gaps in learning especially for struggling students such as ELLs and SWDs.

The District is working collaboratively with experts from the NYS Comprehensive Center, the Comprehensive Center for Evaluation and Assessment in California and NYSED on a formative assessment project. The initial results of this project have been great and our hope is that the final project results will be used to guide the use of formative assessment not only in our District and NYS, but nationally. The majority of our low performing elementary schools are receiving training in the effective use of formative assessment data through this project. All Math and ELA Instructional Support Teachers have been trained by experts in this area to ensure they are able to turn-key train teachers in their assigned schools. Our Information and Technology Division, under the leadership of Deputy Superintendent Anita Murphy, provides all schools with disaggregated data and NYS assessment results so that every building administrator and teacher are able to identify trends and patterns in student achievement to inform professional development and teaching in each school.

The Wilson Reading Program was initially implemented by all resource and self contained special education classroom teachers in grades K-8 in 2008-09 and will be expanded due to its success to all inclusion teachers in the 2009-10 school year. Wilson Reading Program students are assessed every 2-3 weeks to monitor their progress. The Wilson Reading Coach collects data from all schools to monitor implementation. This data will be analyzed and used to modify instruction to meet the identified needs of students. The outstanding program data was used to determine the expansion to all inclusion classrooms in the 2009-10 school year.

In most cases, the same assessments are used for both special education and general education District wide in grades Pre-k-8. For each District initiative implemented, data is collected to monitor progress and determine its effectiveness for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities. There has been ongoing training for both teachers and administrators throughout the District in the use of data and differentiated instruction which will continue in the 2009-10 school year.

Finally, with the implementation of the Say Yes Program this coming school year, there will be a new Say Yes student monitoring tool for all students in the 12 Say Yes elementary schools in grades K-3/4. The results of this assessment will identify students as "On Track to Thrive", "On Track" or "Off Track". This program will expand by quadrant each year so that by the 2011-12 school year, all elementary schools will be a part of the program and will be using the Say Yes monitoring tool that not only captures academic information, but also health and mental health information. All staff and students will be surveyed district wide in 2009-10 using a Say Yes tool and each school will be reviewed by an outside evaluator to identify gaps and strengths. Although all students, including ELLs and SWDs, in this program will be offered afterschool and summer school programming, those that are identified as "Off Track" or "On Track" will also have targeted tutorials to ensure gaps in learning are addressed.

Targeting to Need: Provide evidence that funds are targeted to students with the greatest educational needs. Refer to the Educational Need Matrix e-mailed to each superintendent.

All C4E funds have been targeted to C4E identified schools following the Educational Need Matrix. Most of the C4E funds have been targeted to improving math and ELA achievement by hiring and sustaining math and ELA Instructional Support Teachers (ISTs) as recommended by our NYSED liaison following Title I program monitoring. In addition, we will maintain full day pre-k class added since 2007 and supports to expand our AVID program. SED has monitored our implementation of C4E for the past 2 years and we have met their expectations for implementation of targeted programs and supports.



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Performance Targets: You will need to complete a detailed Performance Matrix in the application that will capture the specific gap reduction you expect in each school with C4E funds for specific accountability areas and subgroups of students. In this narrative, describe the overall achievement outcomes that you anticipate will result from the C4E programs.

Our ELA and math scores increased this year as well as our graduation rates. Our expected targets are at least a 10% increase in ELA, Math and graduation rates for the coming year for all subgroups.

New vs. Continuation of Existing Programs: Describe how funds will supplement and not supplant current programs, except where allowed.

The District will maintain the staff positions and the initiatives that were funding using C4E funds for the past 2 years. The Math and ELA ISTs will continue to provide the necessary embedded professional development on research-based practices and strategies to improve teaching leading to increased student achievement through our District wide literacy initiative Pre-k - 12. Our new 4-Tiered Student Support System will clearly outline our expectations for supports, both academic and socio-emotional, for all students. AVID and AIS teachers will continue to enhance our ability to provide targeted tutoring in small groups and to individual students as well as supports provided to us through the implementation of our new Say Yes to Education Project. All full day pre-k classes will be maintained. Finally, the ability to provide every new administrator with an experienced mentor (retired SCSD administrators) will continue to assist our nontenured leaders receive the necessary support as they are learning their craft.
