

Amphitheater Unified School District Project EXCELL!

Project EXCELL! serves students in nine high-needs inner-city schools (K-12) and two high-needs rural schools among the Amphitheater Public Schools in the greater Tucson area. The differentiated compensation system supports academic achievement and will enable the district to recruit, develop, and retain high-quality educators.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

The Amphitheater Unified School District (AUSD) makes up the second largest school district in the greater Tucson area and serves some 17,000 students. The median county income is 16 percent below the national average. AUSD encompasses a high stress area of Tucson in terms of crime, drugs, and poverty. In the pilot schools, between 31 percent and 93 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Large academic disparities exist between these schools and the non-target ones. Pass rates on standardized exams range between 3 percentage points and 25 percentage points difference.

Background

Building on its historic efforts to improve achievement, design a differentiated compensation program, and develop a nationally recognized career ladder system, AUSD is instituting its TIF grant to build on its successes. The EXCELL! Grant will be used to improve and expand the existing system following an analysis of where improvements were needed. The analysis indicated specific targets, such as increased incentives to engage more participation in the career ladder program,

inclusion of principals, and compensation for school improvement and school-wide achievement gains. In addition, the grant will be used to develop a plan of frequent classroom observations and analysis of classroom assessments. Monies will also be used to replace the existing, out-dated, data management system. Professional development will be expanded for all educators, and principal incentives will be introduced.

Incentives

The Project EXCELL! differentiated compensation program gives educators the opportunity to earn up to \$10,000. The system is based on three performance objectives: (1) student achievement, (2) leadership, and (3) participation in professional development. Each component will be assessed via comprehensive portfolio system that is combined with direct observations. Successful completion in all three areas is required to obtain the maximum incentive.

Evaluation

Teacher effectiveness will be measured by multiple assessments. These assessments will be coupled with the development of an educator evaluation instrument designed to determine the extent to which 21st century skills are incorporated to strengthen school and student

LOCATION(S)	Tucson, Arizona
GRANT AMOUNT	Year 1: \$4,700,840 5-year total: \$29,211,930
DURATION	5 years
PARTNERS	None

performance. In addition, on-going mentoring for principals will support and prepare them for rigorous objective evaluations. Instructional Support Leaders at each school will evaluate teacher portfolios and will conduct classroom observations.

Resources

AUSD has supported performance-based compensation and has the existing infrastructure for supporting new efforts. Instructional coaching and on-going staff

development will aim to build further capacity to sustain the program beyond the grant period. Existing entitlement grants and pay for performance mechanisms will play a major role in post-grant funding.

Data Systems

The current data management system is outdated and has serious deficiencies. Project EXCELL! will institute a new system capable of meeting the needs of the project and the district beyond the grant period.