

New York State Education Department
Contract For Excellence
2008-09 Needs and Strategies Report

SCHENECTADY CITY SD

SUPERINTENDENT ERIC ELY

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.

We are a District in Need of Improvement in ELA with three middle schools (Central Park, Oneida and Mont Pleasant) identified as either in restructuring or planning for restructuring. The high school is identified as a SRAP under state guidelines for ELA as well. We have a significant need to improve our ELA results as a district at all levels and have particular deficiencies with regards to both LEP and SWD. In addition to these subgroups, there is also a discrepancy with the Black/African American, Hispanic, and Economically Disadvantaged students when compared to the all student group for ELA. We also have achievement gaps in mathematics results, but are still in good standing at this point.

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 has approached the last two years with a three pronged approach to addressing the needs of all students under the Contract for Excellence. While the identified subgroups of students are achieving below the district average, all students groups are achieving lower than acceptable with an overall proficiency level on ELA assessments of 46% and a graduation rate after four years of 58%. The three areas in which we have chosen to primarily target C4E funds are: reducing class sizes with a particular focus on the middle schools and the high school; developing and implementing a comprehensive professional development program focused on differentiating instruction and teaching literacy across all content areas; and extending the time on task for all students through creating extended day programs targeting needy students and lengthening the school day by thirty minutes across all school levels for all children. Specifically, we will add staff to reduce class sizes at the middle school and high school levels attempting to achieve a student teacher ration of 18:1; use additional staff to reduce the case load for academic intervention service teachers enabling students most in need to receive at least one hour of intervention each day in ELA and Math; design and implement a three day professional development institute in the fall and follow this up with regularly scheduled professional development opportunities in the areas of differentiated instruction and teaching literacy across the content areas; add thirty minutes to each school day at all schools for all children, essentially adding ninety hours of direct instruction for students throughout this year and into the future; and supplement our current instructional coaching program in both classroom instruction and literacy initiatives.

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 special populations addressed have been identified through a review of the achievement data provided by the NYSED. The data indicates a low percentage of students are scoring at proficiency on state mandated ELA assessments (Levels 3 and 4). The following details the percentages: Students with Disabilities (11%), Limited English Proficient (11%), Black/African American (40%), Economically Disadvantaged (43%), and Hispanic students. The following programatic efforts have been identified to address the overall students population and more specifically the identified subgroups: reducing class size, increasing time on task, professional development and coaching initiatives, and literacy across the content areas as well as differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

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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.

The district recognizes that as a result of being designated a "District in Need of Improvement" the educational needs of all students must be addressed using Contract for Excellence resources and initiatives.

Additionally, the district recognizes certain targeted subgroups of students demonstrate achievement gaps when compared to white and Asian student results must be closed. Our initiatives under the C4E are global in nature to ensure that we are addressing the needs of all students in ELA and math achievement. Our time on task initiative will address the needs of all students including the targeted subgroups and will be supplemented by our existing extended day program that serves specifically these subgroups of students. We believe our use of professional development for all teachers in the areas of differentiating instruction and teaching literacy across all content areas along with an active instructional and literacy coaching program and an administrative focus on monitoring the use of these techniques and strategies on a daily basis will ensure a high quality instruction throughout the district. This will benefit every child and will particularly improved the achievement levels of the identified subgroups within each building who have not had the benefit of this quality instruction in the past.

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 approach to the C4E programs has been two-fold. First, we expect to see steady growth in the area of ELA achievement as measured by mandated assessments of at least 10% more students in all groups at proficiency levels (3 and 4). Second, we expect to narrow the achievement gap between the white and Asian student populations and the other struggling subgroups (Black/African American, Hispanic, Students with Disabilities, and Limited English Proficient) by at least an additional 3% achieving proficiency levels.

Maintenance of Effort : Describe how you will continue your previous year's C4E program expenditures. Explain any reductions in expenditures that will be reallocated as part of this year's contract.

We intend to maintain the C4E programs and initiatives we started last year and use additional fund in 2008-2009 to maintain them at current levels under maintenance of effort guidelines. We have no plans to reduce our expenditures in any of these areas and further will use 2008-2009 funds to supplement many of the same 2007-2008 initiatives.

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

We intend to extend the school day by thirty minutes across all buildings and grade levels. This will supplement our current school day and our 2007-2008 extended day initiative that was and will continue to be targeted to the most needy children in identified subgroups where achievement gaps exist. It is our intent to supplement our class size reduction initiative by adding additional teachers where needed to achieve our desired student to teacher ratio described above. We also intend to add additional instructional coaches and literacy coaches to supplement those already in place.