

Syracuse City School District

Region: Syracuse/North Country

Motto: Striving to become the most improved urban school district in America

Awards: Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness 1 and 2

Superintendent: Ms. Sharon L. Contreras



Note: Profiles of this nature have been developed by the Office of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness at the New York State Education Department to highlight how recipients of the Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) Grant have established career ladder pathway models to address their diverse student achievement and talent management needs.

SYRACUSE CITY SD AT-A-GLANCE

The following data was retrieved from the 2013-14 New York State Report Cards via the [Public Access Data Site](#) unless otherwise indicated.

Schools in the District



35

Teachers in the District



1,580

Principals in the District



33

Turnover Rate of Teachers with Fewer than Five Years of Experience



34%

*2012-13 data

Turnover Rate of all Teachers

25%

*2012-13 data

State-Provided Growth Ratings

Ineffective

30

(10%)

Developing

56

(18%)

Effective

211

(69%)

Highly Effective

9

(3%)

Student Enrollment



20,328

Per Pupil Expenditure



\$10,007.00

*2012-13 data

Students by Ethnicity

American Indian or Alaska Native

260

(1%)

Black or African American

10,078

(50%)

Hispanic or Latino

2,689

(13%)

Asian or Native Hawaiian/
Other Pacific Islander

1,515

(7%)

White

4,973

(24%)

Multiracial

813

(4%)

Other Student Groups

English Language Learners

2,890

(14%)

Students with Disabilities

4,067

(20%)

Economically Disadvantaged Students

15,601

(77%)

Eligible for Free Lunch

14,575

(72%)

Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch

788

(4%)

OVERARCHING VISION

Syracuse City School District (SCSD), located in Syracuse New York, is a Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) 1 and 2 recipient of \$4,963,138. Educators in Syracuse have created a cohesive vision of leadership that spans across 35 schools, 20,328 students, and 1,580 teachers.

Original Vision Outlined at the Start of the STLE Grant Period

SCSD first applied for a Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant in 2011, partly in order to help set the foundation for new career ladder pathways for their teachers and principals. The district believed that new roles on these career ladder pathways could serve dual purposes. First, these roles could offer its great teachers and principals opportunities for recognition, reward, and career advancement. At the same time, the district could leverage these teacher and principal leaders to develop their colleagues. In 2012, SCSD published and began implementation of a five-year strategic plan, *Great Expectations 2012-2017*. Goal 2 of this strategic plan is to recruit, develop, support, and retain effective teachers and school leaders. One initiative under Goal 2 is to recognize teacher and school leader success and provide opportunities for advancement. Specifically, the plan stated that the district would develop and implement career ladder pathways for teachers and leaders that would allow them to gain leadership experience and expertise while assisting other teachers and leaders. With support from TIF and the first STLE grant, SCSD planned career ladder pathways for both teachers and principals that would be implemented beginning in the 2013-14 school year. Each of these two career ladder pathways included several steps with a higher bar for selection at each subsequent step. At the top level, master teachers and master principals would spend time working to mentor newer and less effective peers.

Current Status of Career Ladder Pathways

As SCSD began implementation of its career ladder pathways, as outlined for the TIF grant, the district decided that a new STLE grant focused specifically on career ladder pathways would allow thoughtful expansion of the opportunities available to teachers and principals. SCSD was interested in improving their career ladder pathways in three ways. First, as outlined for TIF, career ladder pathway roles included some “roles” that did not change a teacher’s or principal’s responsibilities, other than opening one’s classroom or school for others to observe. While a career ladder pathway role without specific, additional responsibilities could be used to recognize and reward strong teachers and leaders, it would not allow the district to leverage those individuals to support others. Second, the roles outlined in the original career ladder pathways had no built-in sustainability; both financially and in terms of effort, almost all of the roles would always require something on top of standard levels of funding and effort. Third, SCSD wanted to expand the pathways to include even more specific types of teacher and principal leadership opportunities. Therefore, the district worked with some external partners, including Education First, Public Impact, and the American Federation of Teachers for its teacher career ladder pathways and Cross & Joftus for its principal career ladder pathways. District representatives worked with teacher-led school design teams for more than six months during the 2013-14 school year to develop additional roles, including “Multi-Classroom Leader” roles in a pilot group of schools. These Multi-Classroom Leader roles align with Public Impact’s “Opportunity Culture” models for rethinking how SCSD staffs schools so that the district can extend the reach of the most effective teachers in financially sustainable ways. Additionally, a principal design committee wholly redesigned how SCSD supports new principals through a more comprehensive, largely peer-led principal induction program.

Future Aspirations for Syracuse through Educator Leadership in Career Ladder Pathways

As Syracuse’s career ladder pathways for teachers and principals have evolved, the district has stayed true to its original vision and the goals set in the strategic plan. SCSD has sought ways to integrate the Opportunity Culture principles into other work in the district, such as developing a new turnaround school leader preparation and support program that will create new opportunities for teacher leaders to take a seat at the school leadership table in support of a highly effective principal. In the 2014-15 school year, SCSD will be working with at least 3-4 additional school design teams to expand the pilot that began in 2013-14. The district is particularly interested in school teams who are interested in incorporating blended learning models

(or “time-technology swaps”) into their school design in alignment with one of Public Impact’s other suggested models for extending the reach of the most effective educators. Meanwhile, SCSD is hopeful that its evaluation of the first-year implementation of the Multi-Classroom Leader pilot will provide lessons for the expansion of that particular model, providing more schools with teacher leaders in hybrid teacher/coach roles. Surely, the future will include some ideas that Syracuse has yet to consider. SCSD believes that to dramatically increase student achievement, the district needs to reimagine teaching and leadership, and SCSD’s career ladder pathways are a critically important part of reimagining how the district’s schools work.

MODEL SUMMARY

Syracuse City School District developed career ladder pathways for teachers and building principals designed to utilize their expertise in career advancement positions to support faculty development and improve student outcomes using research-proven teaching and learning methods. The district's career ladder pathways address and integrate the following components of the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE) Continuum: recruitment and placement, induction and mentoring, evaluation, and ongoing professional development/professional growth.

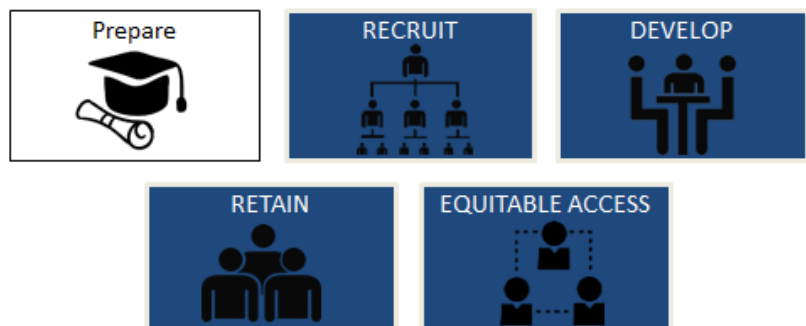
The district established the following teacher and principal leader positions on its career ladder pathways:

- Teacher Leader: Mentor Teacher and Multi-Classroom Teacher
- Novice Principal: Principal Consultant and Content Developer
- Principal Leader: PLC Lead Principal, Principal Induction Lead, and Principal Assistant Lead

The district's 48 teacher leaders assist their peers with professional development activities as Mentor Teachers and Multi-Classroom Leaders, whose roles and responsibilities were designed by teacher-led teams in a group of pilot schools beginning in the 2013-14 school year. Syracuse's career ladder pathways provide clear and intentional opportunities for teachers to progress to positions with greater responsibilities and new kinds of leadership. On the novice rung of the principal career ladder pathway, the Principal Consultant shares content expertise during induction sessions and 2 Content Developers create best practice content for distribution. On the professional rung, 4 Mentor Principals provide mentoring opportunities for principals through the new principal induction program. Similarly, the district's 4 principal leaders help support and coach other principals. Teacher and principal leaders are able to extend their reach to more students and staff, either directly or indirectly to promote and sustain a positive school culture and a rigorous instructional program, including high performance and growth of instructional staff.

The Syracuse City School District is committed to implementing a comprehensive TLE Continuum to strengthen teacher and leader effectiveness and provide incentivized opportunities for professional growth. The district's partnerships with the American Federation of Teachers/New York State United Teachers has supported their expansion of career ladder pathways opportunities including preparation for advanced roles for highly effective teachers and provision of district wide and building-level support and training. The principals' association has been a key partner in implementing the principal pathways and associated professional development.

Syracuse CSD's Career Ladder Pathways model addresses the talent management challenges of recruiting, developing, retaining, and providing equitable access to effective and highly effective educators.



RATIONALE

Professional learning is essential to Syracuse’s school reform efforts. Activities planned for this project have been selected through a careful and thorough review of district needs, resources, and best practices.

Gap Analysis:

In an initial assessment, Syracuse identified the following needs:

Student Achievement:

- Accelerate student growth and close achievement gaps.
- Adequately support the increasing population of English language learners, economically disadvantaged students and students with specialized learning needs.
- Achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the following areas: NYS Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Math Assessments, English and Algebra 1 Regents, and Graduation Rates.

Talent Management Needs:

- Strengthen the skills and effectiveness of the district’s experienced teachers and leaders to meet the needs of a growing, diverse student population.
- Provide training to help teachers and leaders better utilize data systems to track student progress and growth over time.
- Expand the supports provided to new principals and teachers.
- Improve capacity of teachers so that all students meet the college and career ready standards.

Design Principles:

In response to those needs, Syracuse designed career ladder pathways that:

- Extend the influence of the most effective educators throughout the district to students with the highest needs.
- Ensure equity.
- Allow for evidence-based decision making.
- Are solution focused.
- Expand the scope and impact of the district’s teachers and principals to provide targeted, job-embedded professional development.
- Provide opportunities to develop and share expertise.
- Focus on performance.
- Provide significant and meaningful advancement positions.
- Provide monetary recognition.

TEACHER ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Novice Teacher

- Standard teacher responsibilities.
- Attend professional development above and beyond basic district requirements.

Professional Teacher

- Standard teacher responsibilities.
- Attend professional development above and beyond basic district requirements.
- Open classroom to model effective classroom instruction and classroom management.

Teacher Leader

Mentor Teachers:

- Provide intensive support for 2 early career teachers in all areas of teacher practice.

Multi-Classroom Leaders:

- Work to develop a group of teachers in the areas of curriculum development, instruction, and assessment.

PRINCIPAL ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Novice Principal

Principal Consultant:

- Share content expertise during principal induction and Leadership Academy sessions.
- Provides one-to-one coaching to new principals on an as-needed basis.

Content Developer:

- Create best practice content for distribution (i.e., new principal handbook).

Professional Principal

Mentor Principal:

- Provide mentoring opportunities for up to 4 principals through the new principal induction program.

Principal Leader

PLC Lead Principal:

- Design and lead regular principal professional learning communities.

Principal Induction Lead:

- Designs and implements new principal orientation.
- Oversees new principal induction activities in coordination with the Office of Talent Management and the Office of Teaching and Learning.

Assistant Induction Leads:

- Support the design and implementation of new principal orientation and all induction activities in coordination with the Principal Induction Lead.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

1. IDENTIFY

- Identify high quality, “Effective” and “Highly Effective” teachers and principals, according to Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR).
- Identify high quality teachers and principals who have a history of successful practice.
- Identify teachers and principals who are skillful in the use of data analysis to drive instruction, student learning, and integrated decision making.
- Identify teachers and principals who are respected by their peers and administration.

2. SELECT

- Develop clearly defined job descriptions for each of the teacher and principal leader roles.
- Develop technical, behavioral, and role specific competencies for all teacher and principal leader roles.
- Develop a selection screening tool.
- Communicate teacher and principal leader opportunities to identified teachers.

3. RETAIN

- Create a structure involving intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, as well as formal and informal recognition.
- Develop foundational and role specific professional learning activities to build capacity.
- Create ways for teacher and principal leaders to broaden impact on school improvement.
- Ensure adequate resources are in place to support teacher and principal leaders.
- Provide opportunities for teacher and principal leaders to share best practices.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR EDUCATORS TO LEAD

Implementation of this teacher and principal leader model requires preparation for teacher leaders, principal leaders, building staff, and district leaders. Syracuse established a strong shared vision for expanding teacher career ladder pathways and designing innovative school models to provide more students with access to excellent teaching in financially sustainable ways among the district's leadership team, principals of schools participating in the pilot project, teachers and other staff in these schools, and their union partners. The following are suggested practices for effective implementation that have been successful in Syracuse:

- Maintain transparency and articulate clearly defined roles and responsibilities for teacher and principal leaders.
- Ensure adequate time for collaboration between administration, teachers, and teacher leaders.
- In partnership with Cross & Joftus, Education First, Public Impact, and the American Federation of Teachers, the Syracuse City School District set the frameworks and groundwork for the development of new models for implementation in the 2014-15 school year and beyond.



Principal leaders kick off the new principals' institute on August 11, 2014.

"The Syracuse City School District believes that, while we work in collaboration with all teachers and principals to continuously improve all team members' performance, we must simultaneously leverage the talents of - and reward - our most effective teachers and principals by extending their reach to more students and providing new leadership opportunities. With the New York State Education Department's support through the STLE 2 program, our teachers and principals are at the table, deciding how to best support our students, teachers, and principals so that we can collectively achieve dramatic gains in student learning. We're creating new roles where teachers and principals will support implementation of college and career ready standards, evidence-based instruction, and meaningful professional development."

-Jeremy Grant-Skinner, Syracuse City School District
Executive Director of Talent Management

"Syracuse is proposing to add additional pathways that include Multi-Classroom Leaders, or teachers who lead a team of teachers and other professionals to take responsibility for multiple classrooms of students, and Extended Reach Teacher, or teachers who use specialization, blending learning, collaboration with a paraprofessional, or other means to teach a larger than typical number of students."

-From Syracuse's Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) 2 Application

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The development and implementation of the district’s career ladder pathways began when Syracuse officially accepted the Strengthen Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) Grant. However, it is being further enhanced through a STLE 2 Grant.

Syracuse City School District (SCSD) Career Ladder Pathways Implementation Timeline	
November 2012	Awarded Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) grant. Provide initial Professional Development in the SCSD Leadership Framework, including the content of the framework, its uses, and rationale.
January 2013	Provide extensive training to Master Educators (MEs) on the Teaching and Learning Framework and delivering effective oral and written feedback.
February 2013	Finalize selection procedures and tools to align with Teaching and Learning Framework and Leadership Framework. Start date for Executive Director of Talent Management.
April 2013	Peer Assistance and Review program recruitment takes place. Teacher selection based on new Teaching and Learning Framework-aligned procedures and tools.
June 2013	Analyze Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluations, School Comprehensive Education Plans (SCEPs) and student achievement data to identify and plan targeted, differentiated professional development in priority areas, including but not limited to: college and career ready standards, evidence-based instruction, frameworks, differentiated instruction, and observations.
August 2013	Develop policies for the use of evaluation data to inform Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE) Continuum decisions. Design differentiated professional development.
October– November 2013	Awarded STLE 2 grant. Commit to building teacher and principal leader roles and career ladder pathways.
December 2013 – May 2014	Determine acceptable teacher and principal career ladder pathways design parameters to ensure that every building is being led by high performing teachers and principals.
February 2014	Introduce teachers and principals to career ladder pathways concept. Conduct school needs assessment across the district.
May 2014	Prepare for classroom implementation by completing district and school-level planning and starting implementation in talent, resources and infrastructure.
July – August 2014	Begin implementation teacher roles and pathways plan for Year 1, and conduct professional development. Begin implementation of principal roles and activities to support development along the career ladder pathways.
September 2014 – June 2015	Complete implementation of both teacher and principal leader roles and career ladder pathways development plans. Engage school design teams in ongoing school-level adjustments. Continue to communicate with and receive input from educators, parents, and key community members about efforts to reach more students with excellent teachers.
July 2015	Submission of final evaluation report. Teacher and principal leaders will be identified based on APPR results of New York State student assessment results.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Syracuse prioritized clear and authentic communication with all district stakeholders throughout the development and implementation of their career ladder pathways. A commitment toward developing communication plans and improving communication and engagement across all stakeholders is a central focus as the district works to improve achievement outcomes for students. Syracuse CSD's strategic plan, "Great Expectations 2012-2017," has as one of its major goals to "communicate effectively with all district stakeholders."

The following list includes proposed communication strategies to multiple district stakeholder groups. The district currently utilizes the services of a public relations company that will support career ladder pathways engagement strategies.



Establish a regular and timely communication process between central administration and each school.



Use media, on-line and print, to promote the career ladder pathways program.



Utilize in-person meetings, monthly newsletters and email to communicate the career ladder pathways program to educators and non-educators.



Publish notices and updates on the district website as well as use social media to share program success as one means to garner more funding.



On December 15th, 2014, students at Dr. Edwin E. Weeks Elementary school wear their t-shirts that read, "I am the Future" to show their Wildcat Pride. Syracuse is definitely focused on the future for all their students. Superintendent Contreras says about the district's strategic plan, "Although ambitious and challenging, "Great Expectations 2012-2017" is our commitment to making a long-term, collective investment in our students and their future."

PROMISING PRACTICES

Using a set of guiding questions, Syracuse City School District thoughtfully considered promising practices that would support implementation of their teacher and principal career ladder pathways.



Develop a comprehensive plan that identifies the needs of the district and provide support for educators to be trained to meet those needs.



Communicate extensively and in multiple formats to make certain that all stakeholders are aware and in support of district initiatives. The SCSD Superintendent's Teacher Advisory Council provides an opportunity to communicate about the broader talent management strategy in SCSD, as well as allowing direct dialogue about the successes and the struggles taking place across their district.



Partner with educational organizations dedicated to building the capacity of teacher and principal leaders.



Provide for the creation of career ladder pathways that clearly articulate transitions from one rung to the next.



Collaboration between central office staff and teachers take place at the regularly scheduled Superintendent's Teacher Advisory Council meetings.

COST & SUSTAINABILITY

Syracuse CSD has used Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) grants to fund the development and implementation of its career ladder pathways. The district is committed to sustaining all grant funded activities, including career ladder pathways, beyond the grant term.

The teacher career ladder pathways pilot is specifically designed to build sustainable career ladder pathways through the development of new, innovative models of school staffing based on Public Impact’s Opportunity Culture. Multi-Classroom Leader roles will be expanded to four additional buildings and will be sustained through the standard budgetary process. The district is working with a strategic partner to examine district and school-level resource allocation and explore cost-saving mechanisms across their system.

The remaining career ladder pathway roles will continue to be funded in part using other grant funds in 2015-16. At that point, the district will look to use local funds to sustain the work beyond the grant period. The district has built upon the work accomplished through the STLE and TIF grants using a Turnaround School Leaders Program grant from the federal government.



Multi-Classroom Teacher Leaders, a role based on Public Impact’s Opportunity Culture, collaborate at a summer institute on August 9, 2014.

Novice Teachers	Professional Teachers	36 Teacher Leaders	12 Multi-Classroom Leaders	3 Novice Principals	4 Professional Principals	4 Principal Leaders
Stipend eligibility determined in the spring based on multiple factors, including earning at least 6 “Leadership Points,” determined by participation in professional development and other activities.	Stipend eligibility determined in the spring based on multiple factors, including earning at least 9 “Leadership Points,” determined by participation in professional development and other activities.					
X \$2,000 stipend	X \$3,000 stipend	X \$6,000 stipend	\$187,500 total cost	X \$4,000 stipend	X \$6,000 stipend	\$54,500 total cost
		= \$216,000	= \$187,500	= \$12,000	= \$24,000	= \$54,500

Select teacher and principal stipends are funded in part from Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) and STLE grant funds. Final numbers for Novice and Professional Teachers will be confirmed in spring 2015.

IMPACT

Through Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) funds, Syracuse has been able to extend the reach of the district's top talent to positively impact teaching and learning.

12



Multi Classroom Leaders
directly impact

60

Teachers
which impact

1,560

Students

300

Students

36



Mentor Teachers
directly impact

72

Teachers
which impact

5,587

Students

3



Principal Induction
Leaders (1 Lead and 2
Assistants)
directly impact

11

Principals
which impact

6,339

Students

COST SAVINGS



- The cost of Principal Leader roles are 40 percent less than the cost of a "Principal on Special Assignment" that has in the past been used to develop newer principals.
- Multi-Classroom Leader positions are in four pilot schools in which teacher-led teams designed budget tradeoffs to fund these positions sustainably without any new funds.

TIME SAVINGS



- Every school with Multi-Classroom Leaders committed to building at least 90 minutes of uninterrupted common planning time into their weekly schedule.
- Principal Leaders working to expand new principal induction opportunities created a "principal's roadmap" to guide new principals, month by month, in their new role for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

STUDENT NEEDS ADDRESSED



21 out of 25 schools showed improvement in the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded proficiency from 2012-13 to 2013-14 on New York State (NYS) Math assessments.



Increased the four year graduation rate for all students by 4% from 51.9% in August 2013 to 56% in August 2014.



The district offered recruitment/ transfer awards of \$6,000 to teachers and select ancillary staff who accepted a new position at one of the district's seven Innovation Zone schools.



Provided all students at all grade levels in all subjects with instruction based on coherent and aligned curricula, instructional materials, and assessments with the support of teacher leaders.

TEACHER AND LEADER NEEDS ADDRESSED



Through the Talent Management Coach, supported through STLE, the district afforded 1,440 hours of additional support for administrators during the 2013-14 school year as compared to the previous year.



Elementary and K-8 school administrators as well as peer observers were required to be certified through Teachscape with more rigorous standards in the 2014-15 school year as compared to previous years.



All teachers with Teacher Improvement Plans (TIPs) completed professional development aligned with specific areas identified for growth. The number of optional professional development hours completed by teachers during 2013-14 set a district record of 41,268 hours as compared to 35,825 hours in 2012-13 and 26,918 hours in 2011-12.



Contracted with Insight Education Group to develop, refine, and evaluate the implementation of the new college and career ready standards aligned teacher and principal evaluation instruments.

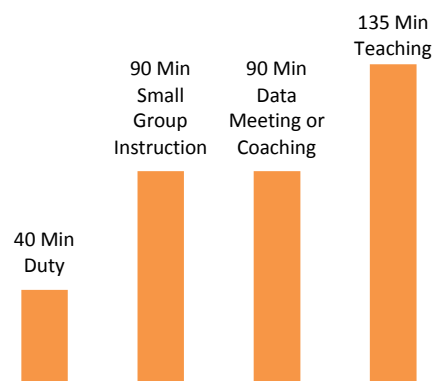
One Day in the Life of Paul Russ Stanton: Syracuse CSD Multi-Classroom Leader



**Paul Russ Stanton,
Multi-Classroom Leader
Seymour Dual Language Academy
Syracuse City School District**

One Day in the Life: by the minute

- 8:00 AM Arrival: Greet students in the hallway as they arrive.
- 8:30 AM Homeroom: Restorative Circle
- 8:40 AM Data Meeting: Facilitate data meeting with grade level team.
- 9:30 AM Meet with English Language Arts (ELA) or Math teacher to analyze formative assessments or review curriculum with teachers.
- 10:10 AM Block 1: Teach Social Studies lesson
- 11:00 AM Intervention: Math small group or observe lesson collection feedback.
- 11:45 AM Block 2: Intervention: ELA small group or observe lesson collection feedback.
- 12:30 PM Teach Social Studies (block 2)
- 1:20 PM Lunch: Eat lunch with team to discuss lessons and student behavior.
- 2:00 PM Planning: Create agenda for daily meetings, review data collected, or meet with administration.
- 2:45 PM Teach Social Studies (Block 3)
- 3:30 PM Supervise dismissal
- 4:00 PM Debrief with team to discuss the academic day.



Note: The schedule to the left shows how responsibilities fit into a particular day. The bar graph above is an estimation of time spent on typical duties and may not reflect the exact schedule provided.

Opportunities for professional growth

Here are a few of the ways that Russ Stanton is developing his teaching and leadership skills:

Implementation Planning



Mr. Stanton was trained in Explicit Direct Instruction, Co-Teaching, and Cognitive Coaching in order to prepare for his role as a Multi-Classroom Leader (MCL).

One-on-One Support



Mr. Stanton has created a 90-day professional development plan and participates in regular MCL workshops, conferences and Saturday Academies to support the work of those he is responsible for supporting.

Communities



Mr. Stanton participates in professional development opportunities within and outside the district, including virtual meetings with MCLs and administrators outside the district, throughout the year to develop his leadership skills.