

## **Description and Justification**

The primary purpose of the partnership is to have a University of Virginia (UVA) team collaborate with the school system and school leadership teams to assess progress, discuss opportunities to reinvigorate or adapt efforts and determine how the team can best support the improvement efforts.

The UVA/ADE/TUSD partnership is established through the school improvement division of the Arizona Department of Education to further support qualifying districts in the state. TUSD met the criteria to receive additional federal funding and support for transformation of struggling schools using the UVA Model for partnership and turnaround. Based on identified needs, the UVA team will connect district leaders to members of nation-wide network of successful turnaround practitioners.

Turning our most struggling schools using the Transformation Model is strengthened with the support of an entity that brings an unbiased perspective; and, concurrently an entity who understands rigor from a national perspective. Additionally, UVA partnership districts have had a great track record for success. They work with over 250 schools in 75 districts across the nation, and over 100 schools averaged 35% gains in both reading and math.

This federal grant funded process will set the bar for our other schools as the *transformation* schools will become models for school improvement work. The children at these *transformation* schools and their families will benefit greatly from the expertise and ability to get the resources and support in a timely fashion. Through three years of work, we will ultimately transform these sites for the betterment of the community that they serve.

The Arizona Department of Education approached us for this partnership due to our demonstration of a capacity to use the funds from USDOE Grants wisely. The ADE believes we have the capacity to make a significant change that will further impact students' learning experiences in TUSD.

## **District Needs Assessment**

The University of Virginia School Turnaround Program conducted a needs assessment in January that focused on two components critical to successful and sustainable turnarounds:

1. High-impact school leaders
2. The district capacity/conditions necessary to initiate, support and enhance transformational change

Based on their assessment of the district, they determined that TUSD had strong capacity to implement the expectations and delivery model of the partnership.

## **Delivery Model**

The program pairs experts from UVA's **Darden School of Business** and **Curry School of Education** with school systems to institute new practices and increase student success. The approach requires work with educators at every level – from state and district administrators to school principals and teachers.

The program focuses on practices and processes that will help build the internal capacity necessary to not only initiate change, but to sustain success. Accordingly, the University of Virginia School Turnaround Program curriculum focuses on:

- Understanding the school turnaround context and the fundamentals of successful turnarounds
- Developing and communicating a vision that includes the need for urgent change
- Establishing a culture of high expectations
- Building effective coalitions and implementing shared decision-making
- Using data to drive decisions and to monitor/measure the need for mid-course corrections
- Identifying innovation opportunities and developing strategic plans
- Teaching state/district/school administrators to think like leaders, not simply managers
- Case Studies
- Data Monitoring
- Intense goal setting

## **Implementation Timeline**

### **SY 2013-14**

- Initial Audit to determine capacity
- Boot Camp for District Leaders: This executive education experience brings together leaders from across the country seeking to launch bold turnaround initiatives. Boot Camp inspires district leadership to embolden their turnaround plan and rethink the support and accountability schools currently receive.
- Hiring of District Shepherd to oversee selected sites
- Grant application-award

### **SY 2014-15 and SY 2015-16**

- Summer Retreats (9 days): leadership teams work together to understand root cause needs, launch organization change efforts, learn how to better drive decisions with data, establish focused execution plans and create a learning organization that continuously adapts. It also serves to create honest conversations and build trusting relationships between the district turnaround leadership team and principals in order to create and sustain change in the targeted schools. In Year 2, the program is held over three days. The focus during this time is further leveraging strengths to build on success, addressing

gaps in implementation, utilizing innovation to promote change and reinvigorating change efforts to overcome resistance.

- Winter Retreats (4 to 6 days): Two-to-three day executive education retreats will be held in January or February of each year. These sessions will include not only the district turnaround leadership team and the turnaround specialist principals, but also a 3-member school leadership team (per participating school). The focus for these retreats is strengthening teamwork, empowering change agents and making strategic mid-course corrections.
- Spring Retreat (1 day): A local one-day strategic retreat will be held with the school system leaders and the turnaround principals each spring of the turnaround effort. These meetings will be facilitated by UVA-STP staff or faculty and in year one typically focuses on resource reallocation and coordination – covering topics that help energize summer planning. Our final retreat focuses on sustainability to help leaders determine lessons and practices that will drive continuous transformation.
- SY 2014-15 and SY 2015-16: All four semesters, each partner system and school develops context-based 90-Day Plans that enable teachers and students to succeed. To help leaders stay urgently on course, our team makes embedded visits, provides customized support and remains engaged throughout both years.

### **Schools Participating**

Johnson Primary

Lawrence Intermediate

Cavett Elementary

Mission View Elementary

Utterback Middle School

Catalina High School

### **Funding**

This is a Federally Funded Project sponsored through the Arizona Department of Education that specifically targets Focus and Priority Schools agreed upon by ADE and UVA.