

Great Ideas for Great Public Schools

TENNESSEE

Professional development pays dividends in student achievement

In 2005, the NEA Foundation provided a \$2.5 million grant to help raise student achievement in five struggling schools in Chattanooga in Hamilton County. The resulting program, **Middle Schools for a New Society**, is the product of collaboration among the Hamilton County Department of Education, the Hamilton County Education Association, the Public Education Foundation, the NEA Foundation, and the Chattanooga-based Lyndhurst Foundation, which has provided more than \$6 million in support. The program has spread to all 21 middle schools in the district and produced measurable gains in student achievement.

Rising student achievement

- 90 percent of middle school students passed the state reading exam and 40 percent scored “advanced” in 2009, compared to 84 percent passing and 30 percent scoring “advanced” in 2005.
- 89 percent of middle school students passed the state’s math exam and 45 percent scored “advanced” in 2009, compared to 86 percent passing and 30 percent scoring “advanced” in 2005.

Meaningful professional development for teachers

- At semi-annual planning retreats, leadership teams of students, parents, teachers, and administrators study effective methods of school improvement and develop plans to address the unique needs of their schools.
- Expert teachers serve as coaches and offer support to other teachers.
- Coaches receive training in best practices and working with adults, participate in network meetings, bring information and effective teaching strategies back to their schools, encourage collaboration and sharing of great ideas and model lessons, and support teachers who are working to improve their craft.

Educators learn from one another, study best practices

- Principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and lead math and literacy teachers work and learn together through networks. At network meetings, schools share best practices, strategies, interventions, and data that document progress. Schools have begun to open their doors and classrooms to teachers who want to see stellar lessons firsthand.
- Staff use proven approaches—for example, Michael Schmoker’s *Results Now* to boost instructional leadership, and the “Reading & Writing Project” at Columbia University’s Teachers College to boost literacy.
- Leadership teams visit high-performing schools in Hamilton County and elsewhere.

Using data to set goals, measure progress, improve instruction

- Participants examine data down to the level of individual questions on exams, so teachers know what students are learning (and what they aren’t).
- Teachers revisit and reteach missing elements.

For more information:

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Great Public Schools for Every Student