



US PiL: State Partnership Overview

Virginia: Turn Around Specialist Program

The University of Virginia Partnership for Leaders in Education (PLE), a partnership of the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration and the Curry School of Education (Darden/Curry Partnership) has been contracted to deliver an executive education program specially designed for the needs of a cadre of experts who are charged with “turning around” consistently low-performing schools. The program focuses on leadership challenges, strategic change, decision-making, communications, and partnering. It offers the opportunity for successful school administrators who have already earned at least a Master’s Degree to also earn a professional credential in educational turnaround management. With the expansion of this program on a national basis, such a credential could become a valued commodity in the world of school improvement.

In 2004, Microsoft Corporation entered the partnership to increase district support for the Turnaround Specialists, provide a digital forum to share and access multi-media case studies, create a sustainable funding mechanism to ensure the long-term success of the program, and develop a model for the Turnaround Specialist concept that can be scaled across the nation.

Educational Turnaround Specialist Credential

The performance-based Turnaround Leadership Credential will be awarded at the end of the two-year program after the turnaround has occurred and there is satisfactory evidence of sustained improvements. The Turnaround

Leadership Credential will be awarded to the Turnaround Specialist provided that all of the following criteria have been met:

- The Turnaround Specialist has successfully completed all modules of the Training.
- At the end of Year One of the Training, the Turnaround Specialist has met at least one of the following criteria – Adequate Yearly Progress (“AYP” - as defined by NCLB), State Accreditation or a 10% reduction in the failure rate in reading or math.
- The Turnaround Specialist’s school makes AYP in Year Two.
- The PLE has received the necessary documentation from each participating district regarding the Turnaround Specialist’s progress over the course of the Training.

Results

Seventy percent of the Turnaround Specialists from the first cohort led their school to achieve AYP in their first year as principal following participation in the program. Another two received greater than 10% reductions in student failure rates on math and English assessments. These remarkable results serve as the best indication of program success. Results from the second cohort will be available soon.

Program Expansion

The first two cohorts in the program consisted of 10 principals from districts across Virginia. In 2006, the third

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cohort included participants from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Chicago, Illinois and Broward County, Florida for a total of 25 principals. In 2007, it is anticipated that the Turnaround Specialist program will grow in both participants and districts represented.

In response to growing interest, an open enrollment session will be launched in October, 2006. This four day intensive will mirror the full program in its focus on leadership challenges, strategic change, decision-making and communications and serves as a strong introduction to the Turnaround Specialist program.

For more information regarding recruitment of additional Turnaround Specialists and the application process, please see <http://www.dardencurry.org/Programs.htm>

State Innovation Partnerships

Microsoft has established five-year public/private partnerships with seven states — Florida, Michigan, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington — to provide investment funding for innovative solutions that have yet to be developed or deployed by states. Our goal is to support a broad and diverse set of long-term strategic models that can serve as blueprints for other schools or educators across the U.S.

Partners in Learning

For more information about Partners in Learning, please visit www.microsoft.com/uspil

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