



School Improvement Newsletter

FOCUS LEARNING ACADEMY

May 2011

Focus Learning Academy is pleased to announce our participation in two movements in Ohio education including the Ohio Improvement Process and Race to the Top. Participation in each program is important for improvement efforts in our schools involving all areas of your student's education. We are committed to the academic and social development of our students and strive to create lifelong learners who will become productive members of our community. All of our staff members are dedicated to ensuring every student receives a high standard of education. It is with great care that we set out to nurture our students and assist them in putting forth their very best effort on a consistent basis. We want your student to receive a high quality education, and participating in these programs will assist our school in reaching our goals for successful achievement.

Race to the Top

In fall of 2010, Ohio was awarded \$400 million from the federal government as part of President Obama's initiative to raise student achievement across the U.S. over a four year period. The main goals behind Race to the Top includes:

- Increase graduation rates
- Ensure every student is taught by an effective teacher
- Enhance educator preparation and support
- Provide reliable data to personalize instruction
- Turnaround underperforming schools

Focus Learning Academies of Columbus was awarded the following funds (distributed over a 4 year period):

Focus Learning Academy Southwest: \$34,662 per year for four years = \$138,648.00 Total monies

Focus Learning Academy Southeast: \$24,944.75 per year for four years = \$99,779.00 Total monies

Focus Learning Academy North: \$34,974.75 per year for four years = \$139,899.00 Total monies

In order to participate in Race to the Top, Focus Learning Academy was required to complete a detailed Scope of Work laying the groundwork for the next 4 years centered on the grant assurance areas. Race to the Top covers five main assurances with which each school district must comply. Below is a description of the assurance areas and the commitments required by the Ohio Department of Education. The assurances include:

Assurance A: Transformation Team and Transparent Communication

- LEAs commit to creating a local Race to the Top Transformation Team
- LEAs commit to developing a strategy of transparent communication to include, at a minimum, a monthly update in public to the local Board of Education

Assurance B: Standards and Assessments

- LEAs commit to participating in professional development on the new academic content standards and will contribute teacher and principal time to participate
- LEAs commit to revising existing local curricula in order to align with new state standards

Assurance C: Using Data to Improve Instruction

- LEAs with a functioning instructional improvement system (as defined by Race to the Top) commit to its active use at the classroom level
- LEAs without an instructional improvement system (as defined by Race to the Top) commit to adopt a qualifying system
- LEAs commit to implementing a formative assessment program; LEAs without a current formative assessment program commit to collaboratively developing and implementing such a program with the state and other participating districts
- LEAs commit to making instructional improvement system data available to researchers, consistent with the state's broader research agenda

- LEAs commit to partnering with institutions of higher education to evaluate and implement innovative education models

Assurance D: Great teachers and Leaders

1. Measure Student Growth

- LEAs commit to implementing the student-level value-added program consistent with the program conducted by Battelle for Kids. This includes supporting professional development and the distribution of value-added reports on an annual basis to all eligible teachers and administrators.
- LEAs commit to identify measures of student growth for grades and subjects that do not receive value-added reports

2. Evaluation Systems

- LEAs commit to adopting comprehensive evaluation systems and definitions of effective and highly effective teachers and principals which encompass multiple measures including student growth as one of multiple significant factors, and which are aligned with criteria established by the state. Recognizing the complexities of implementing new evaluation systems in a collective bargaining state, LEAs commit to designing revised evaluation systems, implementing pilots, and providing training, with full implementation within four years
- LEAs commit to annual evaluations of all teachers and principals within a comprehensive performance assessment system that includes standards-based observation, measures of student growth, and other varied evaluations formats aligned with state criteria
- LEAs commit to using data and results from the evaluation system in the planning of district professional development programs and in the decision-making process for budget development (building and district)
- LEAs commit to using evaluation results in promotion and retention decisions. LEAs commit to implement the Teacher Residency program with Lead Teacher(s) as specified in House Bill 1
- LEAs commit to including evaluation results as a significant input into tenure decisions
- LEAs commit to employing evaluation results as a significant input to removal decisions and will commit to not allowing persistently low-performing teachers and principals to remain once they've been provided with ample

opportunities and support to improve

3. Effective Distribution of Effective Teachers and Principals

- LEAs commit to collaboratively creating and implementing a plan that provides innovative strategies for placing highly effective teachers in high-poverty and high-minority schools, including strategies such as additional compensation, creating professional learning communities, placing teams of effective teachers in such schools, and distributive leadership models. (Placement of teachers in such schools will not be based solely on seniority.)
- LEAs will implement recruitment and professional development strategies to increase the pool of effective teachers available in the LEA for hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas including mathematics, science, special education, English language learner programs; and teaching in other areas as identified by the LEA.

4. Effective Support to Teachers and Principals

- LEAs commit to implementing the residency program as specified in House Bill 1 with additional, intensive supports for new teachers in the lowest-performing schools.
- LEAs commit to using the state's professional development standards when designing and implementing professional development.
- LEAs commit to using the state's professional development standards when evaluating the effectiveness of professional development.

Assurance E: Turing Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools - N/A

The Transformation Team has worked diligently to create a comprehensive Scope of Work designed around the assurance areas and commitments. By 2014, Focus Learning Academy will be a model institution for its work in enabling students to succeed in their goal of graduating high school. In order to provide the best opportunities for a quality education, Focus Learning Academy will be providing the following for students, teachers, and administrators:

For Students

- Focus Learning Academy will improve upon the current system by developing and implementing online curriculum, models, and scaffolds that can be molded to each student.

- Students will be given base-line standards assessments which will determine their current knowledge and abilities, as well as pinpoint their learning style.
- A system of formative and summative assessments will guide the instruction
- Incorporate videotape lessons from the instructors and upload them into the curriculum.
- Students will also have the opportunity to showcase their work through an online portfolio including assessment data, pieces of student work, and progress reports.

For Teachers

- Focus Learning Academy will create a database where all student data could be easily accessible
- Teachers would also have the opportunity create and add to their own professional portfolios
- Teachers will be given opportunities to see their colleagues teach and engage in professional conversations about teaching practices.
- Performance based incentives will be given.

For Administrators

- By having electronic portfolios for staff and students and a database with formative and summative assessment results, administrators will be able to gain additional insight into the performance of the school.
- Focus Learning Academy will partner with an institution of higher education to help our teachers and staff stays up-to-date with the latest Best Practices and high-quality teaching pedagogies.
- By providing professional development opportunities for teachers, compiling and analyzing data to drive important decisions, and partnering with an institution of higher learning, Focus Learning Academy hopes to deliver the highest quality education possible.

Year 1 (2010-2011) Accomplishments

Assurance A:

- Team consists of 50% teachers and 50% administrators
- Communication Plan drafted

Assurance B:

- Curriculum Crosswalks and Model Curriculum provided by ODE has been sent to administrative and teaching staff
- 25% courses aligned to Common Core
- Common Core Needs Assessment completed
- Common Core Standards professional development

- and review completed by teaching staff
- Job-embedded professional development opportunities

Assurance C:

- Working with management company programmers on Instructional Improvement System (IIS) requirements

Assurance D:

- Examined practiced towards measuring student growth
- Drafted new teacher and principal evaluation system

Assurance E: N/A

Transformation Team Members:

Focus Learning Academy Southeast: Facilitator

Erin Scott, Project Consultant

Team Members

RaShaun Holliman, Director

Roderick Watson, Dean of Students

Kevin McCain, Social Studies Instructor

Scott Roberts, Language Arts Instructor

Lori Cochran, Literacy Specialist

Focus Learning Academy Southwest: Facilitator

Kathy Williams, Executive Director

Team Members

Kerry Hill, Director

Julie Nelson Slagle, Dean of Students

Stephanie Thomas, Science Instructor

Eric Pressler, Language Arts Instructor

Kelley Straight, Math Instructor

Focus Learning Academy North: Facilitator

Trina Williams, Admin. Asst. to Executive Director

Team Members

Tiffany Delong, High School Director

Ismail Ahmed, K-8 Director

Jamica Harper, Dean of Students

Shana Kramer, Science Instructor

Andrea Wallace, Literacy Specialist

Michael Wilt, Math Instructor

Amy Bailey, ESL Instructor

Ohio Improvement Process (OIP)

In 2009, Focus Learning Academy continued their efforts in School Improvement which transformed into the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP). The OIP contains four components for schools to implement:

- Stage 1: Identify Critical Needs of Districts and Schools**
- Stage 2: Develop a Focused Plan**
- Stage 3: Implement and Monitor Focused Plan**
- Stage 4: Evaluate the Improvement Process**

The District Leadership team then attacked the first component of identifying the critical needs within our schools by completing the Decision Framework Tool. Within this tool, the Building Leadership Team was able to view past OGT data and then rank each core subject and indicator by level of need (high, medium, low).

After reviewing the data collected within the Decision Framework, the Building Leadership Team created SMART Goals in the areas of Reading, Mathematics, and Graduation/Attendance. After generating these goals, action steps and focused plans were created to begin implementing in the 2010-2011 school year. The goals and strategies include:

Goal 1: FLA students will increase passage rate on the OGT Reading Assessment by 7% over the previous year.

- Strategy 1a: Use quality benchmark assessments focused on reading comprehension to inform instruction and monitor student progress toward reading proficiency
- Strategy 1b: Expand Literacy Department to support the needs of individual students in Reading

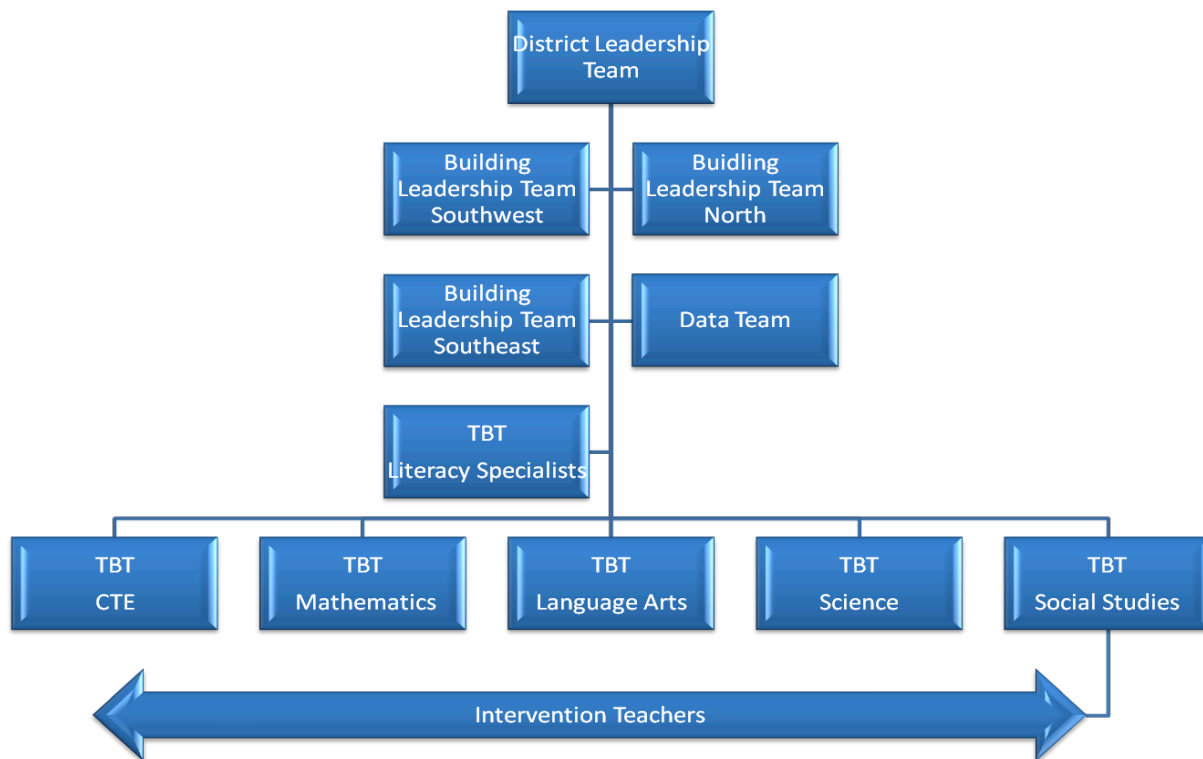
Goal 2: For 3 consecutive years, FLA students will increase passage rate on the OGT Math Assessment by 7% over the previous year.

- Strategy 2a: Use quality benchmark assessments focused on mathematics to inform instruction and monitor student progress toward math proficiency
- Strategy 2b: Expand the Math Department to support needs of individual students in Mathematics

Goal 3: Increase graduation rate by 10% over the previous year.

- Strategy 3a: Increase Attendance rate by 10% over previous year
- Strategy 3B: Continue to Develop Career Planning Program

Within each goal and strategy, the Building Leadership Team has created several action steps to use as a measurement for showing progress. The team meets throughout the school year to discuss the action steps and is now working on implementation (Stage 3).



For a complete viewing of our Race to the Top Scope of Work and Ohio Improvement Process Plans, please visit our school website at <http://focuslearn.org/>.