

# The Collaborative Project: the First Two Years

Presentation to Joint Legislative  
Education Oversight Committee

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# Background on Project

- **3-Year pilot initiated summer '07 by legislators to improve**
  - teacher recruitment & retention and
  - student performance & attainment in rural districts
- **Collaborating Organizations & Pilot Districts**
  - Public School Forum and the NC Science, Mathematics, & Technology Education Center
  - Caswell, Greene, Mitchell, Warren, Washington
- **Funding: \$4.4 M in '07-'08, \$7.2 M in '08-'09, \$ 6.45M in '09-10**
- **3 Main Components**
  - Professional Development
  - Performance Incentives
  - After School Program
- **Focus on Elementary & Middle Schools**

# Background on Components

## Professional Development

- Brokered from organizations with developed capacity to deliver professional development of known quality
- Quarterly Leadership Institutes for Superintendents, Central Office Contacts, & Principals
- Professional development for 4 Main Groups of Teachers
  - New Teachers, Math & Science Teachers, NBCT Candidates, Other Teachers
- Much on-site, on weekends; also summer weeklong residential
- Stipends for participation
- Huge volume: > 4100 person days in 1<sup>st</sup> year alone, spent almost twice the 5 districts' combined PD spending in previous year

# Background on Components

## Performance Incentives

- Superintendents: deferred compensation up to \$10,000 annually for student performance, learning community, leadership to principals, leadership in Project, teacher & principal retention
- Principals: deferred compensation up to \$7,500 annually for similar criteria
- Teachers: annual bonuses up to \$2,000 for participation in PD, communication with parents, student performance, principal's evaluation
- Also bonuses for Project Central Office Contacts and Assistant Principals
- All incentive criteria developed collaboratively

# Background on Components After School Programs

- \$150K per district per year for after school programs at 2 or more elementary or middle schools
- Modeled on Forum's Young Scholars program that was initiated with Z. Smith Reynolds funds
- Emphasis on enrichment, engagement but attention to skill building, as well
- Premise: underachieving students would profit from types of activity often reserved for Gifted & Talented students
- Districts have considerable flexibility to design for own situation & needs

# Focus of Reports

- **Preliminary Report (February 2009):** implementation of professional development, performance incentives, & after school programs to improve outcomes in participating districts
- **Report on First Two Years (June 2009):** the systems of professional development, incentives, & after school programs – status, quality, problems, & ways to strengthen
- **Future Reports (May & November 2010):** impacts on student achievement, schools as places to work and learn, teacher and administrator turnover, and related goals

# Report on First Two Years: Overview

By the end of the first two years ('07-'08, '08-'09)

- Systems of professional development, incentives, and after school programs well-developed, functional, beyond what local districts could readily do for themselves
- Systems are valuable products of the pilot in themselves
- But some challenges & refinement remained for third year
- Project & district leaders have shown will & capacity to address these through “adaptive management,” ongoing adjustment
- Adaptive management = a characteristic of successful projects & learning organizations

# Professional Development System for Teachers: Overview

- System for brokering and managing large quantity of professional development from sources of known quality
- Enabled huge increases in quantity of professional development
- “From minor leagues to major leagues” in quality, positive responses to survey, interviews
- Excellent online system for enrollment, management, & reporting
- Principals report significant & widespread positive impact on classroom instruction



# PD System for Teachers: Desirable Features, Needed Refinement

- Desirable features
  - active learning
  - combine research-based ideas & practical techniques
  - opportunity to try out techniques & materials
  - 1 or 2-day chunks easier to absorb
  - critical mass of teachers from a school
  - teaching & learning of specific subject matter
  - in-district location for more participation
- Quickly addressed scattered reports that some presenters failed to model teaching for active learning
- Some teachers objected to tax withholding, summer workshop attendance as prerequisite for followup

# Professional Development for Administrators: Overview

- Most helpful Leadership Institute sessions : Lenses on Learning math, Zhang data use, discussion of teacher evaluation cases
- Another strength: team building within districts & cross-district communication
- Covey sessions helpful for perspective on leadership but need more application focus to spark widespread implementation
- Book readings bring fresh perspective, more interactive discussion in teams needed
- Coaches especially helpful in two districts

# PD for Administrators: Possible Future Directions

- Sharper focus: e.g., on data use, instructional management in math & science, promoting professional community supported by NBCTs
- Push toward widespread implementation
  - Beyond awareness, general perspectives, informational heads-up
  - More guided practice, feedback, reflection, problem-solving during LI sessions
  - But also try-outs, follow-up, on-site consultation and problem-solving when feasible

# Performance Incentive System

- Workable system of criteria, data collection, online tracking, payments, ongoing refinement
- Interviews indicate full involvement in developing, even to point of frustration with ongoing adjustment
- Teachers' survey & interview responses strongly positive overall: "makes me feel like a professional"
- Some anomalies caused by combination of whole school & individual focus
- Parents positive about increased contact, standardization of parent contact reporting would help
- Administrators' more diffident than teachers: "rewards are great for my morale, but I should be doing this anyway, for the sake of the kids"

# System of After School Programs

- Students, teachers, principals generally enthusiastic, engaged
- Working to balance
  - central guidance vs. local freedom of design
  - focus on enrichment vs. skills
- Freedom to create own designs is motivating, generally works well but a few schools needed more help
- Most do put primary focus on enrichment, format and schedule similar across districts
- Variation in numbers of % of students served, focus on students near but below proficiency, hours of service
- More assistance & support for local coordinators (rather than tighter guidance) may strengthen
- Supplementary instruction vendors competing for Project teachers