

Teachers as Leaders



PINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Urban | Northeast U.S. | 8,500+ Students | Four Trainers

Background

One administrator, two elementary special education teachers, and one high school special education teacher from the Pine School District became SETTT for Success trainers. The trainers were excited to establish themselves as leaders and bring teachers together to share resources. They wanted to plan meaningful and impactful teacher professional development (PD) across all grades. After analyzing district data, they decided to focus on how extended standards (Dynamic Learning Maps® Essential Elements), connect to general education standards. The data also led them to conclude that planning instruction across related standards and understandings, rather than isolated skills, supports quality comprehensive instruction.

Opportunities and Challenges

Trainers faced challenges in designing and delivering teacher PD, including a shift in PD goals to address new staff and scheduling around other district priorities. Trainers learned at the start of the school year that there would be more new teachers than anticipated. Before they could deeply explore connections between English language arts standards, they wanted to establish a foundational understanding of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Support for Trainers

- provided a structured yet flexible approach for special education teachers to pair with a district staff member to design and deliver teacher PD
- supported trainers in using SETTT for Success resources to plan relevant PD for teachers through coaching
- supported trainers in reviewing DLM assessment data results to set potential teacher PD goals
- used the knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, behaviors framework to help trainers organize their thoughts about teacher learning needs and PD learning goals
- provided feedback on PD design and ways for trainers to evaluate the effectiveness of PD

The trainers shifted their teacher PD goals to focus on what it means to presume competence of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, asking what instruction looks like when teachers presume all students are capable of learning. The trainers learned they could not use established district PD time for their session and held PD after school, when many teachers could attend.

Due to classroom demands and other district staff responsibilities, trainers could not deliver the follow-up PD as planned. The trainers met throughout the summer to plan for the school year and discuss how they could use SETTT for Success flexibly and meaningfully. They wanted to target instructional planning using the required district curriculum, as teacher use of the curriculum was a priority for the district, and consider extended standards in designing lessons.

Trainer Accomplishments

- conducted PD to examine what it means to presume all students are capable of learning
- cultivated opportunities to provide teacher PD on the required district curriculum from a teacher-focused perspective
- created plans to build on teachers' new knowledge of the curriculum to evaluate curricular materials, choose supplemental resources, and make instructional decisions
- established themselves as teacher leaders to be available to teachers in their buildings and across the district, both through informal conversations and structured PD opportunities
- established themselves as teacher leaders, available to teachers in their building and district to support them in designing instruction through informal conversations and structured PD opportunities