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Sent: Monday, February 25, 2019 3:55 PM
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Subject: Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources Pilot Project Report
Attachments: 2019 Innovation Zone Pilot Project Report.pdf

Chairs and Minority Leads,

On behalf of the Commissioner, I am providing you with the Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources Pilot Project Report.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,

Kate Lynne Snyder

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Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources Pilot Project

Final Report to the Legislature

As required by Minnesota Laws 2012, Chapter 263, section 1 as modified by 2014
Session Law, Chapter 312, article 15, section 24

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As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197: This report cost approximately \$1096 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

Upon request, this material will be made available in an alternative format such as large print, braille or audio recording. Printed on recycled paper.

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Legislative Charge

Minnesota Laws 2012, chapter 263, section 1, as modified by 2014 Session Law, Chapter 312, Article 15, section 24, was established to improve student and school outcomes by allowing groups of school districts to work together to provide innovative education programs and activities and share district resources. Statute requires the commissioner of education to submit a final report to legislative committees with jurisdiction of kindergarten through grade 12 education finance and policy on the efficacy of the Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources Pilot Project. The report is to analyze best practices and recommend whether to continue or expand the pilot project.

Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) approved eight innovative pilot projects under the Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources legislation. Seven projects from across the state were ultimately implemented, beginning with one in the 2014-15 school year. The project continued during implementation of the 2017 Innovation Research Zone Pilot project [2017 Minn. Laws 1st Sp. Sess. Chap. 5 Art. 2 Sec. 52](#). Having two innovation programs running concurrently caused some confusion for participants in the 2012, (as modified in 2014), Innovative Delivery projects.

To participate in the Innovative Delivery pilot project to improve student and school outcomes, a group of two or more school districts were required to collaborate with school staff and receive formal school board approval to form a partnership. The partnership then developed a plan to provide challenging programmatic options for students, create professional development opportunities for educators, increase student engagement and connection and challenging learning opportunities for educators or students, or demonstrate efficiencies in delivering financial and other services.

Participating districts collaborated to design innovative learning opportunities for students and challenging professional development for educators while working cooperatively to share resources and expertise. As described below, the projects experienced mixed success in achieving outcomes. Yet the majority were able to report on strides made during the project period. Collaboration across district lines was a boon to participants, despite the lack of additional funding or waivers to statutory requirements.

Analysis

The Minnesota Department of Education approved eight Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources Pilot Projects; seven were carried out. While each was unique, there were commonalities among the projects. Five of the Innovative Delivery Projects included staff development. Three dealt with career development. Four had career pathway components. Three had business partnerships. Four projects partnered with higher education. Four had academic engagement of at-risk students. Four contained digital learning. Despite challenges noted below, all of the projects worked diligently on behalf of students, families, faculty and staff and communities.

The Innovative Delivery projects are summarized below together with some of the remarks heard as district leaders reflected on participation in the Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources Pilot Project.

The Innovation Campaign (renamed Innovate K12 for 2018-19 and beyond)

Participating Districts (Operating Years):

Minnetonka and Becker (2016-2019)

Eden Prairie, Mahtomedi, Stillwater, Orono, Austin, Cambridge-Isanti (2017-2019)

Project Summary:

The project focuses on the introduction of a crowd-based innovation program into a school district in an effort to engage frontline staff in identifying pain-points and in identifying solutions. The program has run successfully in Minnetonka since 2011; in 2016-2017 Becker expressed a desire to replicate the program. With the successful replication in one district, others followed. The number of districts involved will expand to 20 districts in 2019-2010. Every district that has used the crowd-based innovation approach has surfaced new ideas that have made a difference in the lives of Minnesota students, staff and communities.

Of Note:

“Staff report that administrators are listening to their ideas. They report that their ideas matter. They report that they are finally able to have a meaningful impact on their work environment”

– Crowd-Based Innovation Program

Best Practices:

The use of a crowd-based innovation program methodology with software. Frontline engagement and problem-solving strategies with staff and teachers. Lean prototype development. Human centered design; scaling solutions.

Tri-District Career and College Readiness Initiative

Participating Districts (Operating Years):

West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan (2017-18)

Inver Grove Heights (2018-19)

Project Summary:

The Tri-District Career and College Readiness Initiative focuses on improving and increasing career and college readiness for all students. As part of the larger goal, the project intends to increase diversity of students involved in rigorous courses, Post-Secondary Enrollment Options and career and technical courses. Establish career pathways with registration available across district lines that lead sequentially to a value-added asset such as certification and incorporate collaboration with a business or community partner to enhance and

deepen the authenticity of the learning experience. Programming that has developed out of the project has seen a 100 percent increase in participation in specific career pathway participation in courses at specific high schools, as well as in our Tri-District courses. The project has since expanded by refining the work to focus efforts on changing the secondary experience by making purposeful changes to how career and college readiness is approached; and providing deepened levels of engagement as students use their own voice and choice to pursue their skills, interests and passions. The level of engagement between schools and local business communities has increased. The bond of collaboration between schools and districts is strengthened.

Of Note:

“We have improved and strengthened the level of engagement between our schools and our local business communities . . . We have sparked the interest of students which in turn has led them to deepening levels of engagement.”

– Tri-District Career and College Readiness Initiative

Best Practices:

Added external resources to assignments aligned to local objectives. More use of outside experts. External partners for speakers, mentors, projects. This added diversity and authenticity to the classes and activities in which students participated.

Career Technical Academy

Participating Districts (Operating Years):

Southwest Metro Educational Cooperative (2015-2018)

Jordan (2015-2018)

Project Summary:

The Career Technical Academy was created for struggling high school students to engage in authentic and active learning. Over the last three years, it identified academic competencies necessary to be successful in career and technical classes offered through the district, it developed educational coursework to prepare students for immediate employment and crafted college-readiness classes to prepare them for further education. The primary message of the Academy has been that graduation is no longer the end. The new goal is preparing for what comes after graduation. Southwest Metro created a help desk training program for high school students. It delivered instruction to students at Jordan High School. Students now operate a tech support program helping the district manage repairs that had increased as a result of a 1-1 initiative. Students became more engaged in learning as they explored and trained for career pathways in a partnership with Normandale Community College. Student homerooms intentionally supported students holistically and taught social/emotional skills. Students visited college campuses.

Of Note:

“Students enrolled in the program have the opportunity to receive real life training and explore a potential IT career pathway. Additionally, the district hires multiple summer technology interns each year, and the students who complete this training often apply and are interviewed.

--Career Technical Academy

Best Practices:

Academic content combined with soft skills authentically engaged students. Use of the Minnesota Career Information System and other tools helped students to identify their own interests and skills. Project structured on a case management model that offered stability to students. All students have access to mental health services.

New Designs for Education**Participating Districts (Operating Years):**

Farmington (2014- 2018)

Spring Lake Park (2014- 2018)

Project Summary:

Customized student learning took place through a digital learning platform. Many courses available at high school level. Some informally toggle between traditional instruction and digital. Other courses are intentionally hybrid. All courses included one-on-one instruction. Some flipped classrooms. Some opportunities at middle school level. Administrators, teachers and staff all got together across district lines to share ideas and have mornings devoted to learning.

Of Note:

“Teachers felt the freedom to explore – to be idea generators who could actually bring their ideas to implementation.”

--New Designs for Education

Best Practices:

The practices were already embedded in what the districts are doing as part of their strategic plans. However, teachers felt more freedom to explore.

Minnesota Center for Advanced Professional Studies

Participating Districts (Operating Years):

Prior Lake – Savage Area (2016-2018)

Lakeville (2017-18)

Farmington (2018-2019)

Project Summary:

CAPS is a nationally recognized innovation program. Students are immersed in professional culture, solving real world problems. They use industry tools and are mentored by employers. They receive dual high school and post-secondary credit. Provides disadvantaged students a network of supportive adults and mentors. CAPS is an example of how business, community and public education can partner to produce personalized learning experiences that educate the workforce of tomorrow, especially in high skill, high demand jobs. The project encourages support from industry leaders and community, and bridges a relationship that continues beyond high school. Students did on-site and real world projects. Many corporate sponsors took the research based findings of student work and the deliverables from students to improve their business model or project.

Of Note:

“Students did on-site and real world projects. Many corporate sponsors took the research-based findings of student work and the deliverables from students to improve their business model or project. Students utilize their teachers as coaches and consultants when preparing deliverables for clients so the traditional student-teacher roles have expanded.”

--Minnesota Center for Advanced Professional Studies

Best Practices:

Real world partnerships. All students matched with mentor in their field of interest. Concurrent college and Advanced Placement courses were available to all students. Workforce development.

Professional Development –Differentiation Camp

Participating Districts (Operating Years):

Leroy-Ostrander (2017-2019)

Southland (2017-2019)

Lyle (2017-2019)

Grand Meadow (2017-2019)

Glenville-Emmons (2017-2019)

Alden-Conger (2017-2019)

Project Summary:

The project provided a Differentiated Instruction Camp and Reading Camp for more than 60 students from across the South Central Education Cooperative districts. Concordia University taught different instruction techniques to teachers. As a small rural school, collaboration with between districts is critical. Two to three times a year, grade level meetings across the six districts offer a professional development opportunity that is lacking within one district.

Of Note:

“The students benefit by not being treated like cookie cutters. The teachers that were trained in differentiation techniques during the summer camp realized that not all learners think alike. The community of parents were informed of this camp and quickly realized that their children will be taught based off of their unique needs with a whole child approach. All students will learn.”

– Professional Development Differentiation Camp

Best Practices:

Differentiated Camp and Reading Camps. Professional development in differentiated instruction.

Zumbro Valley Public Private School Partnership**Participating Districts (Operating Years)**

Zumbrota-Mazeppa (2017-2018)

Pine Island (2017-2018)

Project Summary:

The districts worked together to coordinate staff development days between the districts and bring in a national speaker for both teaching staffs.

Of Note:

“It was neat to work with staff from another district. In our PLC discussions we came up with a few ways to share resources for students.”

– Zumbro Valley Public School Partnership

Best Practices:

Professional learning community’s teachers met to think of innovative ways to deliver curriculum.

Youth Work-Based Learning Initiative

Participating Districts (Operating Years):

Howard Lake-Winstead-Waverly (n.a.)

Lester Prairie (n.a.)

Project Summary:

Project was not implemented following withdrawal of Lester Prairie.

Best Practices:

Not applicable

Discussion

Two major challenges were noted by participants: 1) the legislation did not provide for additional funding, and 2) requested waivers were not granted. Other challenges noted included the limitations of MDE's Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS), which does not allow a student to be recorded in more than one district, even if participating in an Innovative Delivery project. Some participants observed that districts are by nature risk-averse. At the same time, the Innovative Delivery project provided a mechanism for superintendents to champion change, innovation and continuous improvement while engaging teachers and staff more fully in the change process. One superintendent observed there was nothing that took place that required the legislation.

Districts were surprised by the 2017 Innovation Research Zone legislation [2017 Minn. Laws 1st Sp. Sess. Chap. 5 Art. 2 Sec. 52](#). Some participating districts felt that MDE gave these initial projects short shrift when the new legislation for Innovation Research Zones was enacted. Districts would have preferred to be streamlined into the new program. Participants in the Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources Pilot Project were not given any special notice about the new initiative nor encouraged to apply for it.

Despite frustrations with the Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources Pilot Project legislation, the fact that superintendents in participating districts could take the bully pulpit on behalf of innovation, risk, brainstorming and letting ideas take flight mattered a great deal. It mattered, superintendents said, to say to the faculty and staff that their district was selected for this innovation pilot project and that here, in this district, ideas and risk were good.

Conclusion

The Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources Pilot Project brought seven projects across Minnesota symbolic and important permission to unleash ideas and creativity, networks and passion. Districts felt much more could have been true innovation with funding and with waivers to provide freedom.

School districts had different views on how successful their local projects were. Often they ranked their own project low because of the hopes for what might have been accomplished if funding was available or waivers granted. Participating districts still have much hope, because, despite the limitations of the Innovative Delivery of Education Services and Sharing of District Resources Pilot Project, ideas became accomplished plans and their school districts became known as places where good people innovate.

The commissioner recommends the innovative delivery of education services and sharing of district resources pilot program be discontinued, and that notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the pilot sites from this program be allowed to apply for the 2017 Innovation Zone Project. Minnesota should consider pursuing innovative options available under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act that would allow for more innovation in our schools.