



Illinois State Board of Education

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Abstract

Target Audience

All school districts, their leaders and their educators. Atlantic Research Partners (“Atlantic”) historically has provided intensive educational services at preK-12 grade levels nationwide, in geographic locations from New York City to Portland, OR. Comprised of teams of educators, authors and professionals in psychology, pedagogy, educational leadership and special education law, its faculty includes experienced urban school superintendents, authors including Pulitzer Prize nominees, and school district legal scholars licensed in multiple jurisdictions. (All resumes available upon request.)

Evidence of Effectiveness

Across the country, Atlantic has consistently delivered on the promise of raising student achievement. From the third largest system in the country (Chicago Public Schools) to rural South Carolina, Atlantic’s clients sing the praises of our collaborative approach toward school reform. As a firm, Atlantic has enjoyed high measures of success, for instance, in supporting CPS’ implementation of a system-wide formative assessment (NWEA’s Measures of Academic Progress). 67% of schools engaged with Atlantic during this implementation have reached the 99th percentile of performance compared against national measures. In Allendale County Schools, SC, Atlantic’s efforts resulted in the increased state rating of “F” to “C” in year one of our partnership. Our work in Jacksonville, FL resulted in:

- An increase in the high school graduation rate from 60.5% to 63.5% (2006 to 2007; FLDOE Preliminary cohort completion calculation)
- Increased enrollment in Advanced Placement courses by more than 230%
- An increase in the number of all students earning a 3 or higher on Advanced Placement tests by 34%
- An increase in the number of African-American students earning a 3 or higher on Advanced Placement tests by 52%
- An increase in the number of African-American students taking the SAT by 10%

Pre-intervention / Needs Assessment

For each school receiving its services, Atlantic begins with an in-depth, systematic, and comprehensive audit of existing protocols, programs, systems, leadership practices and human resource practices at each site; this initial site-specific process establishes baseline data that ultimately forms Atlantic's analyses and determinations. Importantly, Atlantic's determinations are rendered solely upon the basis of validated and documented evidence, and in accordance with clearly articulated criteria. Further, Atlantic identifies with specificity goals and objectives, achieved and not achieved at each school site, and provides detailed strategies for school leadership teams seeking to implement critical changes within their buildings. These strategies are deeply focused on one core outcome: significant growth in student academic performance.

A fundamental component of Atlantic's work at each school site is *collaboration*; the collaborative involvement of our teams with school leaders and teachers at each building we serve. Longitudinal studies—and efficacy research nationwide—establish that effective interventions and sustainable change occur only if those affected by the interventions “own” and participate in implementation.

General Description of Supports Provided

Atlantic is an industry leader in research-based professional development, school leadership services and assessment of organizational effectiveness. Its years of research and development led to the *Power of Teaching*—in recognition of a growing need for practical teacher professional development that is respectful of skills and remains focused on efficacy and student engagement.

Atlantic provides a comprehensive, research-driven program proven to accomplish two fundamental objectives in the United States: measurably increase student engagement and deepen teaching effectiveness within the classroom. For school leaders and instructional coaches, it includes a tool kit for demonstrable enhancement of their support for teachers. For teachers, it provides tangible efficacy reinforcements and a means to realistically analyze the results of their teaching strategies.

The first step in altering the trajectory of a low performing school is intense and objective analysis of all ongoing functions at the school site itself (including analysis of teaching practices, leadership behaviors, and performance structures in place). Atlantic's approach begins with an intense focus on six key areas:

- student academic achievement
- teaching behaviors
- curriculum alignment and rigor
- school culture
- resource management and efficiency
- school leadership

Atlantic recognizes that no single intervention or protocol is appropriate for all school sites; consequently, its work in each school is specifically designed and tailored to address specific needs with specificity—and maximize effectiveness. Elevating student academic performance—and ensuring that elevated levels remain sustainable—is the driving purpose of our work. The primary measure of successful schools is a student population demonstrating rigorous engagement and achieving at or above grade level. Using multiple measures to accurately quantify and establish levels of student achievement, Atlantic's focus is on each individual student, on the academic performance among student cohorts within the school, and on the totality of academic growth among all students at each specific school site.

Atlantic works with school teams to provide rich and rigorous curriculum offerings. Equally as important, it remains highly focused on ensuring that these robust curriculum offerings are in practice rendered available to *all* students. Atlantic purposefully develops interventions that are highly differentiated to provide students with realistic academic support needed for their success. Evaluation of existing curriculum is an essential component of this process—as is the freedom to work with teachers, staff and building leadership to alter curriculum deficiencies and inadequate systems upon which they have relied.

Atlantic provides professionals in multiple content areas to work with teachers and administrators in creating a comprehensive and sustainable approach to improving curriculum—and ultimately, student achievement. To effectively influence student achievement and reverse underperformance in high schools, teaching behaviors must be objectively evaluated; this component is of paramount importance, because nationwide research establishes it to be the most profound influence on student academic performance. Data also reveals that teaching behaviors—often unconscious—radically support, or fundamentally undermine, teaching effectiveness. Sensitive to this reality, Atlantic coaches teachers with insight and objective data relating to their teaching behaviors, and the effect those behaviors have on engagement of their students.

Atlantic’s work with teachers and school leaders affects all levels of teaching mastery. Novice teachers struggling in traditional classroom settings have substantively enhanced their delivery of instruction through the coaching and support components of *Power of Teaching*. More seasoned teachers and Master Educators have refined their skills to achieve greater, and quantifiable, results. *Power of Teaching*-based coaching has proven to be particularly valuable for those Master Educators assigned to mentor new or novice teachers; it has enabled them to measure behavioral outcomes—and assist with clarity.

School leadership is a necessary component to overall building success and student achievement. The principal is the building leader but needs a team approach and a support system in place to drive achievement and adequately maintain a school building. A principal and his or her administrative team often need training and support to fully manage the operations both in and out of the classroom and to ensure effective governance of the operation as a whole. Atlantic will provide leadership coaching for all principals and other members of the leadership team. Coaching will be provided by leadership experts who will work alongside the principal for the duration of the grant to:

- Support and guide the development of crucial leadership habits and processes
- Evaluate existing systems in the school to determine what needs to be altered to increase student achievement
- (For new principals) ensure that the transition into the school leadership role occurs in a healthy and effective manner

Atlantic will employ a variety of staff members and experts in content areas and school management/leadership for the purpose of increasing student achievement in school buildings and addressing underperformance. Atlantic provides a general project manager who will manage budgets, staffing and client relationships at each building. In addition to logistical/facilities/staffing managerial positions, each school will have a lead team member charged with guiding academic performance and initiatives in the building. This individual will drive the school reform initiatives and will be assisted by an associate lead team member in the building.

Finally, Atlantic will provide content area specialists for each building. The specific number of individuals in each content area will be determined after the audit and evaluation of the learning

environment. These individuals will include literacy coach(es), math coach(es), science coach(es), special education/RTI coach(es), community engagement coach(es), technology coach(es), instructional design coach(es), and AVID support/college advancement coach(es), as needed by the school. These individuals, and others as needed in the buildings, will be directly engaged in driving the reform efforts. They will be onsite providers who will work alongside teachers, staff, and building leaders to transform underperforming institutions into high achieving centers of learning.

Instructional reform, including assessment, curriculum and instruction

Data Driven Instruction: Atlantic provides teachers supports and protocols for meeting student needs on the basis of student assessment data. Three major components govern this work: (i) formative assessments, (ii) summative assessments, and (iii) State standards that must be student mastered. We assist teachers in analyzing data from student formative and summative assessments, using those data to develop strategic instructional plans, and ultimately assisting their students in attaining mastery of required concepts. Atlantic customizes its work on the basis of each school's—and often each classroom's—specific needs.

Differentiated Instruction: Atlantic provides teachers supports and protocols to individualize instruction on the basis of student performance data. Atlantic further uses research to focus teachers on teaching behaviors established to maximize their ability to engage students; these teaching behaviors are supported by the works of Carol Ann Tomlinson, and are used to accelerate, remediate and provide alternative approaches for reaching students most effectively.

Meeting Special Needs: Atlantic understands inclusion and the specific needs of teachers to address anomalous learning patterns and special needs of individual learners. Our faculty of education experts assists teachers in analyzing the learning styles and abilities of special needs students, and in drafting plans that specifically address those styles and abilities.

Instructional and Leadership Coaching

Atlantic will provide managerial leadership, academic leadership, and appropriate support staffing in specific and identified high-needs areas. Additionally, Atlantic will provide coaching and support personnel to assist teachers and school leaders in all reform efforts. Professional Development shall be tailored to meet specific and identifiable needs at each school site. We will work with staff on a daily basis to provide the support and training necessary for success.

Program Management / Progress Monitoring and Data Driven Decision Making

Atlantic provides support and training in three critical areas for school leaders and faculty in low performing schools: (i) The development and implementation of protocols governing student behavior and academic expectations, (ii) Leadership training focused upon consistent, readily identifiable goals and (iii) The use of data to drive instruction effectively.

Community and Family Engagement

In its community outreach and support services, Atlantic assists school personnel in mapping out appropriate strategies based on specific factors and anomalies associated with each school's particular community and neighborhood to increase awareness about the school's offerings and needs and to increase active engagement and ownership in the school's improvement efforts. When parents are familiar and connected with the school, they are much more likely to share in the desire for success of the school. Likewise, when businesses and community groups understand that they have a connection to the school through students and families as customers, they are much more likely to be interested in progress in the school.

School Climate and Culture

The creation of positive culture begins by engaging students, parent, families and teachers in the planning process and giving all parties a stake in the success of the school. Atlantic will work with the school to build those connections between families and educators. Research demonstrates that school culture must be changed from the inside out; it requires working with teachers and staff members to create positive factors daily. It requires the making of connections to enable students to understand and recognize the value of their work—and to recognize that their educational experience goes far beyond the high school world itself. Atlantic advocates for and assists in the establishment of school-wide advisory programs designed to increase personalization and support of students in their college and career goals. Atlantic will provide these and other services to schools to help positively influence school culture—and lay the groundwork for higher student achievement and improved school performance.

Strategies for Post-grant Sustainability

The model that Atlantic follows in providing school improvement services is fundamentally a train-the-trainer prototype. Our staff and faculty work alongside teachers and staff members in the process of school reform, under the premise that once trained, the site's existing staff will continue the embedded work. Atlantic is responsible for intervention and manages all of the programs, training, initiatives and changes prescribed in the school. But Atlantic recognizes what nationwide data establishes: “top-down” management techniques are consistently resisted, and any implemented change employing such techniques is unsustainable. Consequently, the Atlantic team works with school leaders and teachers to initiate necessary changes and achieve results. By working alongside teachers, leaders, and staff, Atlantic establishes a collaborative environment that enables participatory buy-in to reforms that might otherwise appear threatening or initially overwhelming. The school will be ultimately a high achieving institution because the teachers and staff are part of the School-Atlantic team, and share in clearly defined goals. When Atlantic leaves the site at the end of its engagement, school leaders and teachers are positioned to seamlessly carry on the implemented reforms—primarily because the reforms are theirs.

Other Organizational Hallmarks

We work with schools and districts nationwide to ultimately create a high-achieving school from one that is underperforming. This realistic goal can be achieved; Atlantic's track record throughout Illinois—a record of providing school improvement services and teacher training—is strong. Atlantic is confident in its ability to move schools from underperforming to high-achieving within this intervention program.

The professional development and the skills that Atlantic imparts to the school building staff ultimately will be embedded in the structure and processes of the school. Professional development will be consistent, relevant, and specific. Further, building leaders and teachers will be empowered and trained to provide their own professional development in the building or within their grade levels or content areas.

Most importantly, student achievement will increase. All of the work that Atlantic will do and the primary focus of our organization is to provide to the adults and students within our schools the supports, protocols and tools to increase student achievement in an authentic, rigorous and sustainable manner. We will provide hands-on classroom interventions designed for both students and teachers, we will train and support teachers and building leaders, we will assist in the development and use of assessments and measures for students and student achievement, and we will implement structures and protocols that convert a school site's simple functionality to an environment that instills and wholly supports advanced learning.