

## United School District 304

### The Challenge

United School District 304 in Monmouth is a rural district that has experienced challenges hiring for some hard-to-fill positions, such as a Spanish teacher and kindergarten teacher. The Teacher Vacancy Grant has allowed District 304 to build on its strengths, improve conditions for teachers, and enhance outcomes for students.

### Strategic Local Investments

#### Strategy 1: New District-Run Pre-K Program to Better Prepare Students for Kindergarten

Data suggested that our students leaving pre-k were not prepared for our kindergarten program. The district decided to create our own state standards-based pre-k program to better prepare students for the rigor of kindergarten. We also decided to make the kindergarten class sizes smaller, so that we could better fill in the gaps that were not being addressed in the previous pre-k program. We utilized grant funds to recruit and employ an additional pre-k teacher to provide a smaller setting for our existing classrooms and a smaller environment for students with special needs in the pre-k department.

### Outcomes

- Hired additional pre-k teacher.
- Smaller class sizes: Class sizes decreased.
  - Previous Pre-K Class Size: 18
  - Current Pre-K Class Sizes: 13 for 3-year-olds and 17 for 4-year-olds
  - Previous Kindergarten Class Size: 20
  - Current Kindergarten Class Size: 12
- Students are better prepared for the elementary curriculum.
  - 100% of affected students have shown growth.
  - 57% of the 4-year-old students grew between 30-45% from August to December.

**\$92,164**

Annual Grant Award



## Strategy 2: Enhance Classrooms to Improve Teacher Satisfaction and Retention

United School District 304 used Teacher Vacancy Grant funds to provide teachers with mini-grants for innovative proposals to enhance classroom activities and improve teacher retention, as well as improve culture and climate. Approximately 100 teachers received grants ranging from \$250-\$350.

### Outcomes

- Purchased materials to enhance teacher instruction and student learning.
- Mini-grants allowed teachers to get items that may have been a reach in previous years. Purchasing these materials showed teachers they were appreciated and that enhancing their classrooms was a priority for the district. Last year, we hired six new elementary school teachers between our two elementary schools. To date, no one has announced they are leaving.

"My students love to look at books and manipulate them. They now have access to more literature based on our themes and topics we are learning about."

-- New prekindergarten Teacher

This particular teacher used the grant money to make adapted books for those with learning disabilities. There are multiple benefits to adapted books such as:

- Differentiated learning
- Enhanced comprehension
- Multi-sensory approach
- Better engagement
- Further language development

