

Strategic Learning Initiatives: Lead Partner

Strategic Learning Initiatives (SLI), a not-for-profit Chicago school reform agency, proposes, in collaboration with its community partners, to implement a School Improvement Grant (SIG) lead partner a three-year demonstration and scale-up project. The project will focus on the Focused Instruction Process (FIP), a project that demonstrates how schools can both be turned-around or transformed into high performing and accelerated learning organizations of adults and children.

SLI utilizes a theory of change that integrates key systemic components for rapid school transformation:

- Identifying the Problem: Low student achievement levels of students of poverty attending schools without either a systemic, research-based model for transformation or access to appropriate technological support.
- Developing a Strategy: SLI integrates a research-based school and district success model, which increases student achievement. Rigorous Instruction, Shared Leadership, Professional Capacity, Family and Community Engagement, Culture of Trust, Collaboration, continuous Quality Improvement, Networks of Neighborhood Schools, and Systemic Problem Solving.
- Clarifying Assumptions: The success of the model depends on the buy-in from the district leadership and school staff and their commitment to the continuous improvement process.
- Acknowledging Challenges: Funders and schools have limited funds available for improvement services. The continuous change of the district level vision, priorities, and personnel can be an obstacle for achieving and sustaining high performance.

As a lead SIG partner, the overall goal will be to accelerate improved student and adult performance by leveraging systemic change focused in the improvement of school culture, principal and teacher effectiveness, and family engagement, the primary drivers of student success. SLI works with low-performing schools to develop a dynamic system of data-driven decision-making, professional development and peer support. These elements maximize the value and impact of the organization's process to sustain and continuously improve positive learning results. Over more than two decades, SLI has worked with more than 70 schools in Chicago, Springfield, Decatur, East St. Louis and DePue IL, Tucson, AZ and Los Angeles, CA. .

SLI believes that a powerful transformation process is within the reach of virtually every low achieving school district in the nation. It can be quickly demonstrated and scaled using the resources that most school districts has already available. SLI's school reform model reflects an accelerated pace of learning for both the students and adults in the district. The school and district leadership focuses on transforming the process of instruction using school leadership teams plus existing strategies and tools. Finally, the stakeholders learn how to continuously improve their results and sustain them with a commitment to data-based decision making on a daily basis, and sharing the results with the school and across the district. Moreover, SLI's process takes advantage of over 40 years of systemic research from education and business. The best results from this research about turbo charging organization performance and instruction have been integrated to create the breakthrough model, the Focus Instruction Process.

Reference: Dr. Robert Libka, Principal, Trinity Lutheran School, 405 S. Rush St. Roselle, IL.60172, rlibka@yahoo.com (630) 894-3263