

## **Strategic Learning Initiatives-Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention Incentives and Strategies**

Strategic Learning Initiatives (SLI) will collaborate with school and district leadership on plans to develop job descriptions that are linked to performance and recruit teachers and principals from colleges and universities of high quality, both in Illinois and across the United States. The hiring will be based on the need for teachers at various grade levels and in academic areas identified in the audit/entry processes. SLI will review, with the LEA, their hiring policies and procedures in order to ensure that they are consistent with affirmatively hiring a highly qualified and diverse school staff.

In order to effectively retain highly qualified principals and teachers, SLI will review with district and school administrators and school leadership teams how effective programs of induction can be established, which include programs of professional development (PD) and mentoring based on the needs of principals and teachers. An on-going PD process, for all teachers, will be job imbedded, based on the latest research on effective teaching and administrative practice, as well as teacher and principal expressed needs. SLI's comprehensive approach to PD is designed around a reform model that substitutes one-time workshops for deeper, sustained learning opportunities for all school staff, with extensive on-going PD sessions supported by follow-up support in terms of coaching, demonstrations, and reflection sessions. In this regard, the project will create professional learning communities at each school, a structure that has been shown to be effective in enhancing teacher effectiveness, creating a shared sense of responsibility for student success, increasing staff satisfaction and morale, contributing to greater likelihood of systemic change, and ultimately impacting student achievement (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2006). The projects focus on school-wide and grade level teams is an approach that helps schools to sustain improved teaching practice beyond the life of the project.

At the core of SLI's view of the teacher as a leader is the concept of learning communities that requires the principal to conceive the school as a learning organization under the principal's leadership, a school that has a continuing focus on the capacity to teach children to learn. Such a principal is continuously improving teachers' capacity to teach children. In this regard the principal in SLI's principal PD and coaching sessions will learn how to establish a culture of learning in their school, one where teaching and learning pervade the life and the interpersonal relationships within the school building.

SLI's perspective on the principal as instructional leader means the principal needs to become an expert on teaching and learning by keeping abreast of the latest research and practice on curricular and instructional designs. Having that knowledge, however, is only the first step in being an effective instructional leader. SLI's principal PD will demonstrate to principals how their actions must communicate that teaching and learning must be at the center of what is happening at the school. SLI will collaborate with principals to acquire five essential skills necessary for improved teaching and learning at their schools:

- Becoming effective resource providers.
- Learning to use interpersonal skills to maintain trust, spur teacher motivation, and develop a culture of collegially among their staff.
- Developing an instructional vision and accompanying instructional plan for the school.
- Providing teacher with on-going feedback on their teaching.
- Creating opportunities for teachers to learn about and practice the most recent research on teaching and learning.

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