

Our Partnership with Newark Public Schools



District Challenge

How can Newark Public Schools (NPS):

- Select curriculum resources and supports that will strengthen instruction across programs serving three- and four-year olds?
- Create a shared understanding of developmentally appropriate practices for three- and four-year olds across all classrooms?
- Strengthen its shared vision of developmentally appropriate instruction for three- and four-year olds through professional learning for teacher coaches and school leaders?

Approach

Since 2015, the Bank Street Education Center and NPS have partnered together to develop Pre-K Instructional Expectations (PIE), a three-year system-wide instructional improvement plan for all Pre-K students and families. In addition, the Education Center and NPS worked together to build the capacity of school leaders and coaches to implement developmentally-appropriate curricula across classrooms.

Design

Strategic Planning

- Co-created an instructional vision for Pre-K, and a three-year strategy to support implementation, including plans for hiring, training, leadership development, curriculum, and assessments.

Curriculum

- Identified the strengths and weaknesses of existing curriculum resources--leveraging teacher coaches, veteran teachers, site leaders, and central office staff--and the implications for a broader Pre-K support strategy.

Professional Learning

- Built the capacity of school leaders at Pre-K sites to understand and support the vision for high-quality Pre-K.
- Provided school leaders and teacher coaches with a professional learning series focused on high-quality Pre-K and its alignment to child development, the Pre-K

Total Pre-K student population:

1,799

Current Project Reach

1,799 preschool children
7,000 three- and four-year-olds
25 teacher coaches
Over 50 school leaders
4 district leaders



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Teaching and Learning Standards, and curriculum implementation.

- Brought together teacher coaches and school leaders to build a shared understanding of the PIE.
- Provided the system with guidance around selecting a coaching model and training teacher coaches to support curriculum implementation.

Testimonials

By the end of the professional learning series, all of the teacher coaches reported gains in their knowledge of developmentally appropriate instruction and felt that they had the tools and resources they needed to be effective in their role.



"In the beginning, we were just a bunch of educators in a room for a workshop. We grew into a team through collaboration. We began to see each other as individuals and build a level of respect for each participant regardless of title." - Teacher

"I used to think that the coach-teacher relationship was one in itself. Now, I see how the teacher-coach relationship parallels the student-teacher relationship. My approach and interactions as a coach with a teacher parallels or aligns with the approach and interaction as a teacher with a student." - Coach

"Now I know that coaching requires more than just monitoring what's happening in the classroom. Coaching is about providing support and partnering with teachers to effectively develop and shape the minds and behaviors of children in a developmentally-appropriate manner." - Coach

Impact

Strategic Planning

- Established a clear and common vision of what high-quality Pre-K curriculum and instruction looks like with specific areas of focus that informed NPS's broader strategy around high-quality Pre-K for future years.
- Established a feedback loop between school leaders, coaches, and the Office of Early Childhood.

Professional Learning

- Built a cohort of practitioner-experts that can support the broader system-wide strategy of professional learning for the Pre-K workforce.
- Built teacher coach capacity to provide the necessary coaching supports to teachers and school leaders aligned to their learning and the system vision. The teacher coaches formed a community of learners that allowed them to support each other and promote sustainable practice.
- Co-created a toolkit of research-based coaching strategies.
- Supported coaches with listening, asking questions, and providing feedback effectively.
- Facilitated the sharing of experiences in order to establish a safe and supportive professional learning community.