

Project 720 Overview

The background on this project is that in April information was sent to all school districts across Pennsylvania, along with an offer to participate in an initial conversation and hear more about this project. We had over 150 school districts respond with interest, and 70 who attended meetings scheduled to have the conversations. Initial conversation took place on June 15th and 16th, and from those districts involved in the conversation, we have selected districts to move forward in Round 1 of the process. Schools and districts involved in Round 1 have committed to working on reforming their schools around the principles set forth in Project 720. These schools will receive technical assistance and funding from PDE to help them move toward the overall goals of a) increased rigor of educational programs, b) enhanced post secondary access and credentialing for increasing numbers of students, and c) producing active and productive citizens.

From this round of conversations, we hope to shape an aggressive, state-wide secondary agenda in which high schools could voluntarily participate and in which districts, PDE, IUs, colleges and universities, business and industry would work together to support the schools' efforts. We had a significant response to this project and are glad to see that so many people are passionate about reforming their high schools. Given the interest and the strong proposals, we decided to award both implementation grants and exploratory grants. The implementation grants range from \$50,000 to \$150,000 based on student enrollment at the high school. Exploratory grants are grants of \$10,000 that enable schools to purchase expert assistance, materials, and/or travel to related conferences and workshops.

At this time we have selected 41 schools and districts who attended the workshops in June to be a part of the first group involved in moving forward with this work, either as full implementation or exploratory sites. Over the next month or two we will be working with those selected districts to develop their implementation plans, and after that time we will discuss ways of involving other schools and districts who have expressed interest in this project. Other schools and districts will be invited to join the conversations and we hope to have other cohorts in the future.

Project 720 contact information:

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Project 720 Grant Recipients

Districts receiving full implementation grants of \$50,000, \$100,000 or \$150,000 based on enrollment (22 total) :

Gettysburg SD - \$100,000
Greater Johnstown SD - \$100,000
Harbor Creek SD - \$100,000
Harrisburg SD - \$100,000
Lancaster SD - \$150,000
Middletown SD - \$50,000
Mill Creek Township SD - \$150,000
Newport SD - \$50,000
Norristown SD - \$150,000
Palisades SD - \$50,000
Springfield SD - \$100,000
Washington SD - \$50,000
Huntingdon Area SD - \$50,000
Oxford Area SD - \$100,000
Purchase Line SD - \$50,000
Canton SD - \$50,000
Highlands SD - \$50,000
Perkiomen Valley SD - \$100,000
Quaker Valley SD - \$50,000
Sharon City SD - \$100,000
South Fayette SD - \$50,000
Williamsport Area SD - \$100,000

Districts receiving exploratory grants of \$10,000 each (19 total) :

Carlisle SD
Chambersburg SD
Clarion-Limestone SD
Ferndale SD
Fleetwood Area SD
Freedom Area SD
Northern Lebanon SD
Oley Valley SD
Quakertown SD
Reading SD
Westshore SD
Abington SD
Central Fulton SD
Cumberland Valley SD
Lakeland SD
West Chester SD
Northwest Area SD
Sto-Rox SD
Wissahickon SD

Project 720 Participation Commitments

Schools that are part of Project 720 have committed to the following process requirements:

1. Form a broad-based local work team (e.g. representatives of the school district, local employers, postsecondary institutions, community groups, workforce organizations, students and parents) to drive local reform efforts.
2. Meet regularly over the next year with PDE, other local teams and state and national experts on high school reform.
3. Advise PDE on needed statutory, regulatory and policy changes that promote high school reform.
4. Help to craft a package of statewide reform efforts that can be replicated by school districts across the Commonwealth.

Schools that are part of Project 720 have committed to implementing all of the following reform strategies:

1. Design and implement transformational pedagogy in the classroom by:
 - a. Taking immediate steps to increase adolescent literacy and to ensure that increasing numbers of students are enrolled in “gatekeeper” mathematics courses;
 - b. Implementing a rigorous “college prep” core curriculum for all students; and
 - c. Aligning school district and postsecondary academic expectations.
2. Use “Artful Use of Infrastructure” to support learning and teaching by:
 - a. Analyzing and reconfiguring the use of time and resources in your high school(s);
 - b. Replacing large comprehensive high school structures with smaller schools and/or smaller learning environments; and
 - c. Redesigning governance systems to fit smaller schools and/or smaller learning environments.
3. Design and implement responsive student advocacy services by:
 - a. Transforming counseling and advisory services; and
 - b. Using re-engagement strategies for out-of-school youth.
4. Build solid community connections that provide multiple pathways for students to complete high school and prepare for postsecondary success by:
 - a. Incorporating youth development principles (e.g. mentoring, service learning, and leadership development) into school program;

- b. Forming partnerships with employers that enable students to participate in work-based learning, internships and apprenticeships in high-growth/ high-wage career areas; and
- c. Forging alliances with postsecondary institutions that enable students to accelerate acquisition of postsecondary credentials while still in high school and establish K-16 data-sharing partnerships.

PDE Makes the following commitments to participating districts:

In order to provide the level of support needed for districts to be successful in this work, PDE has created a Division of Middle and Secondary Education. In return for districts' commitments to *Project 720*, PDE, in turn, makes the following to districts selected for continued participation:

- To provide ongoing leadership and support for participating districts;
- To seek needed statutory, regulatory and/or policy changes that inhibit local high school reform efforts;
- To broker access to state and national experts and to provide up-to-date research, analysis, and technical assistance in high school reform, particularly in the areas of adolescent literacy, use of time and infrastructure, transforming counseling, youth development and multiple pathways;
- To help convene local partners interested in participation, including employers, postsecondary institutions and other key stakeholders;
- To recognize and tout participating districts publicly as state leaders in adopting and implementing high school reform; and
- To provide grants that partially support costs of planning and early implementation.