**Summary of 2013-14 Elementary Talent Development Program**

**June 2014**

In March 2013, a plan to initiate an elementary talent development program was developed. This plan was part of a larger district wide plan to provide gifted services on every elementary campus and increase identification of gifted students from economically and racially diverse populations. The Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Renzulli) was used as the framework for talent development because of its focus on student engagement. Intended outcomes included: 1) Creativity exercises for all students in the school; 2) Identification of a talent group made up of students performing in the top 10% and services for these students as determined by a school based team; 3) Implementation of enrichment clusters in 6 schools; and 4) increased identification of gifted students.

**Gifted/Talented Schools**

The 34 Title 1 elementary schools were designated as Gifted/Talented schools. In these schools, the gifted teacher would be responsible for providing gifted services as well as providing opportunities for talent development to general education students.

Instructional units were assigned based on February 2013 gifted enrollment. Schools with 22 or more gifted students were assigned a full unit; those with 21 or less gifted students were paired and assigned a .5 unit. The paired schools resulted in 14 itinerant Gifted/Talented teachers. The itinerant teachers were assigned to each of their two schools for two days per week, with the fifth day alternating every other week.

**Title 1 Funding of Instructional Units**

The Title 1 funds supported the percentage of time spent on talent development in the general education setting. Funding varied based on the number of gifted students at each school: the fewer gifted students, the more instructional time was allotted for talent development, ranging from 25% to 70% monthly. Title 1 provided funding in the amount of 5 instructional positions spread proportionally over the 28 paired schools.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2012-13** | **2013-14** |
| **Schools designated as Gifted/Talented (all Title 1)** | 0 | 34 |
| **Gifted/Talented Teachers** | 0 | 20 |
| **Gifted/Talented Teachers funded by Title 1** | 0 | 5 teaching units allocated over 14 positions |

**Creativity Exercises**

In the Schoolwide Enrichment Model, creativity exercises are considered to be Type 2 or “how to” activities.

Teachers were asked to schedule 15-20 creativity sessions with classroom teachers. The creativity exercises focused on the development of fluency or production of ideas using lessons from *New Directions in Creativity* series (Renzulli, Creative Teaching Press, Inc., 2000). While the gifted/talented teacher was working with students, the classroom teacher was asked to observe his/her students engaged in the exercise. Classroom teachers were given a *Creative Thinking Jot Down* form (Whaley & Evans, The Center for Gifted Studies, Western Kentucky University) to record the names of students exhibiting characteristics of creative behavior.

A series of professional development sessions for gifted/talented teachers were held to provide a foundation in creativity and develop a plan for the implementation of the creativity program. Sessions were held: June 23 &24; August 22; and October 25.

A year-end survey of gifted/talented teachers provided the following information:

The table below represents the number of creativity exercises provided to students in 28 Title 1 funded schools.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **K** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **Total** |
| **Total sessions** | **126** | **168** | **212** | **165** | **169** | **190** | **1030** |
| **Total sessions x**  **Students per classroom** | **126x18= 2268** | **168x18=**  **3024** | **212x18=**  **3816** | **165x18=**  **2970** | **169x22=**  **3718** | **190x22=**  **4180** | **19,976** |

Gifted/talentedteachers reported that students reacted favorably to the creativity exercises. The most frequent response was “students loved it”. Other comments included: “fun”; “wanted more”; “concerned with the right answer”.

69% of the teachers reported that classroom teachers reacted favorably. Several commented that classroom teachers enjoyed the sessions and seeing their students in a different light. Negative comments included classroom teachers’ concern with struggling students and loss of instructional time for the exercises.

61% of the teachers reported that classroom teachers found the *Creative Thinking Jot Down* forms useful in recognizing creative attributes in their students. Several reported that classroom teachers were surprised by the students whose names kept popping up during the exercises. Some noted a suggestion for revising the document.

61% of the teachers reported that classroom teachers recommended students for gifted screening as a result of using the *Jot Down* form.

The table below shows the number of students considered for gifted eligibility in the Title 1 funded schools as a result of using the *Jot Down* form.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **K** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **Number of students recommended for screening** | **27** | **17** | **38** | **20** | **18** | **9** |
| **Number of students qualified for further evaluation** | **8** | **13** | **18** | **6** | **8** | **8** |
| **Number of students who have completed the referral process and were found eligible for gifted services.** | **3** | **5** | **3** | **0** | **5** | **3** |

**Talent Development Group**

Each school was asked to identify a group of students for specific talent development based on the needs of the individual school.Talent groups varied but included generally focused on math problem solving, reading enhancement, and creativity.Due to scheduling restrictions, most groups met every other week with sessions generally lasting 30 minutes to an hour.

**Collaboration with Administrators/General Education Teachers**

Information was provided to Title 1 principals by the gifted program specialist via large group presentation; individual face to face or phone conference; and email.

Principals were invited to a full day training on the Schoolwide Enrichment Model by Dr. J. Renzulli on October 31, 2013.

Gifted/Talented teachers collaborated with general education teachers mainly through individual contact following creativity exercises and discussion of their class. They also provided additional creativity activities and handouts on gifted identification. Additional information was shared by email or newsletter.

**Implementation of Enrichment Clusters**

On October 31, 2013 all Title I principals and gifted/talented teachers were invited to attend training on the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) presented by Dr. J. Renzulli. Following the training principals were asked to consider implementing enrichment clusters during the 2013-14 school year. Three schools, Bardmoor, High Point, and Mt. Vernon, agreed to participate. This number fell short of the initial goal of six Title 1 schools participating but many administrators expressed that while they were interested, their schools had multiple initiatives currently in place. Each SEM school designated SEM Team comprised of the principals, gifted/talented teacher and a teacher from each grade level. The SEM teams attended Enrichment Cluster training on April 18 with Dr. Renzulli and SEM coordinator, Nicole Waicunas. The three schools initiated the use of enrichment clusters prior to the end of the school year. A representative from each school will attend further training in July 2014 at Confratute at the University of Connecticut.

**Increase in Gifted Enrollment at Funded Title 1 Schools**

The table below represents the total increase by grade level at the 28 schools with a Title 1 funded itinerant teacher.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **K** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **Total** | **Increase** |
| **9.3.13** | **0** | **10** | **36** | **38** | **74** | **67** | **225** |  |
| **6.6.14** | **21** | **70** | **72** | **71** | **92** | **78** | **404** | **179** |

In closing, Title 1 supported the initiatives set forth by the new Talent Development Program by providing funding to ensure that a Gifted/Talented teacher would be on each school campus to work with students, teachers and administrators.