



case study

*Implementing District-Wide
Change in a Large, Urban
School District*

For more than five years, a large, urban New Jersey school district has worked aggressively to turn the district around through systemic change. This change targeted all areas of curriculum and instruction. The district contracted with AUSSIE/Editure to help it realize several critical goals:

- to raise student achievement so the district would no longer be a failing district;
- to focus on improving student outcomes by improving instructional practices;
- to train its coaches, curriculum leaders and teachers in how to use assessment data to differentiate instruction;
- to build a comprehensive approach to using data.

With the full support of district leadership, AUSSIE/Editure began working alongside teachers in schools across the district to help realize these goals. What began as a modest school by school effort grew into a robust, district-wide initiative. District-level workshops and planning took place, as well as in-school consultancy. In due course, the need to build capacity within the district was recognized and this led to the creation of school-based literacy coaches who were trained to work with teachers across the district.

The success seen in this large urban school district was largely due to a strong collaboration between the district administration and AUSSIE/Editure. The former had a clear understanding of the needs of its schools and knew that in order to bring about change, a greater focus on improving teacher pedagogy was required. This mission included setting high expectations for both students and teachers.

FINDING A SOLUTION

The ongoing planning and assessment of the professional development meant that together AUSSIE/Editure and the district could adapt and revise the plan to ensure it made the greatest impact. Changing instructional practices in this district relied on:

- modeling in the classroom. This was at first led by AUSSIE/Editure consultants but is now led by AUSSIE/Editure-trained district coaches;
- full participation by school leadership and teachers in ongoing professional development workshops focused on the pedagogy they are developing and which is being reinforced in the classroom with modeling/coaching;
- the development of effective formal and informal assessment practices to inform instructional decisions;
- a consistent review process across the district, including daily goal setting and planning, followed by frequent feedback and debriefs to confirm the approach is working.

What was once one of the lowest-performing districts in the state has now been recognized as one of the five top urban districts in the nation and has been awarded the Broad Prize in Urban Education. This district raised student performance overall, while closing achievement gaps for poor and minority students. This success has resulted in the district being designated as a district NOT in need of improvement based on the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

integrating content and technology

To Positively Impact Curriculum and Engage Students

Across the country a wide array of questions face schools as they look for solutions for how best to utilize technology efficiently, such as:

- how do we take our school's use of technology from something that happens in the computer lab once a week to being an integral part of what is happening in every classroom every day?
- how do we make the best use of our computers and software to impact student learning?
- how can I prepare my teachers to be comfortable using technology to teach/for student projects and to know how to use it in their teaching to better engage students?

Over the past five years new learning models have emerged that take advantage of the latest advances in technology to bring easy-to-use, yet powerful tools into the classroom. The advent of Web 2.0 heralded accessible technology tools such as blogging, podcasts, and wiki. These tools make it possible for students to create, publish and share their work with their class, their school or with other students across the country and around the world.

AUSSIE/Editure consultants help impact change by working with school leadership and a teacher technology team to create a school-wide technology plan that focuses on:

- how to use technology to impact student learning and outcomes;
- how technology can drive instruction through project-based learning experiences that interest students, encourage creativity and encourage communication inside and beyond the school walls;
- how to build capacity within the school to improve teaching, enhance planning or further engage students through the effective use of technology;
- how to raise teachers' and students' comfort with technology so that its use becomes a regular part of the daily routine and that without it the curriculum would feel lacking;
- how to use model classrooms to show technology integration best practices.

In partnership with AUSSIE/Editure, schools have shifted from using technology for technology's sake to making effective and efficient use of technology in the curriculum.



POSITIVE GAINS

Through its dedication to improving learning outcomes for students, the district has outperformed districts with similar income levels at the elementary, middle and high school levels in both reading and math.

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC STUDENTS

Percentage point gaps in mathematics proficiency rates between disadvantaged and advantaged groups (2003-2006):

- overall average improvement of 11 percentage points among elementary African-American students;
- overall average improvement of 10 percentage points among elementary Hispanic students.

% INCREASE OF STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE PROFICIENT IN MATH 2003-2006

(Source: 2007 District data from <http://www.broadprize.org>)



URBAN NEW JERSEY DISTRICT STATE OF NJ

% INCREASE OF STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE PROFICIENT IN ELA 2003-2006

(Source: 2007 District data from <http://www.broadprize.org>)



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