**NYSED Teaching Is the Core Grant**

**Syracuse City School District / Education First Partnership**

**October 17, 2014**

|  | **Session/ Topic** | **Objectives** | **Content** | **Facilitator** | **Materials and**  **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9:00 - 9:40 a.m. | Welcome and Project Overview | * Participants will understand the high-level goals, requirements, phases, & key milestones for each phase of the project * Participants will understand the agenda and establish norms for the session | * Participants arrive, get coffee and their documents (copy of agenda & one-pager), and take a seat (5 mins) * Brandan welcomes the group and begins by noting that this morning is an opportunity to get to agreement on our shared core values about this work, and get the project off on the right foot * He explains why he thinks this grant has the potential to have a major positive impact on students and teachers in classrooms as well as the broader culture of the district with regard to assessment * He explains that he is going to briefly remind the group of our objectives and agenda for this morning; then, as an introduction, he will review the background and major components of this project * He says that he will then pass it to Emily to take us through setting norms for this morning’s conversation and a brief icebreaker activity (5 mins) * Brandan shares the objectives and agenda slide. On the objectives slide, he reminds the group that there is a tight timeline and budget for this project given all the phases and that agreeing on our core priorities will allow us to tightly focus and execute on those priorities rather than falling into the trap of trying to make the project all things to all people and thereby spreading ourselves too thin * Then he talks through several slides explaining the high-level goals, requirements, phases and key milestones for the project—slides will clarify which components of our plan for this project are *required* by the grant (vs. *optional* components of SCSD’s proposal, e.g., grain size of assessments to review); participants will have 1-page high-level overviews in front of them as well (5 mins) * He asks if anyone has questions (Tony takes notes if so) (up to 5 mins) * Brandan then turns it over to Emily * Emily explains that we are all excited to be here in person to begin work on this project together * She explains that we are going to do given the nature of the way we are planning to spend the rest of the morning, we want to start with a brief icebreaker to get to know each other’s experience with this topic better and then set some norms for our conversation * She also explains that given the specific goals for today, we will create a “parking lot” for other ideas or concerns that come up, and points to the parking lot (piece of flip chart paper) on the wall * Icebreaker: Everyone introduces themselves (1 minute or less—your background and your current role), then shares a memorable experience they have had with assessments, either positive or negative (as a classroom teachers, school leader, or other role)—Emily explains in advance that she will enforce time so we don’t go over (15 mins) * Norms: Tony takes notes on the chart paper while participants volunteer norms for our session today (examples: use your phone/laptop during break only, moderate your airtime, everyone participates, respectfully push back on each other’s thinking) (5 mins) * Tony then hangs the norms chart on the wall for the duration of the meeting | Brandan & Emily | * Slides * Post agenda and parking lot in advance * Participants copies of agenda & grant overview 1-pager (pre-reading) |
| 9:40 – 10:50 a.m. | Project Goals and Objectives | * Participants will clarify and come to agreement on shared core values about this work * Participants will clarify and come to agreement on the highest-priority project goals and outcomes (what success in this project will look like) | * Group discussion (70 mins): * Bill begins by outlining the objectives of the session: that identifying and agreeing to core values and goals/outcomes will help us understand the work at hand, stay on track and achieve what we set out to do. * He starts by asking the group, What are our shared *values* with regard to this work? Bill differentiates between “values” and “priorities” (could use Chip & Dan Heath hot dog vendor example--if your core value is “integrity,” how do you act when a customer drops his hot dog on the ground? Depends on your core priorities, i.e. making the most $ possible vs. engendering long-term customer loyalty). Ideas here might be teacher/parent/community buy-in, transparency, rigor of assessment or teacher evaluation, reducing testing time to increase instructional time, ensuring validity of assessments. Tony charts initial responses. * Bill asks: which of these values, if any, are in competition with each other? * He asks: Is your perspective that these are the most important values Syracuse-specific or does it draw on experience from work in other districts as well? (This question is meant to remind participants of the different backgrounds we’re all coming from and make sure we are focused on this specific context rather than on values we have regarding assessment in general.) * Bill then asks the group to prioritize the top ~3 values and confirms that they are all in agreement that these are what should drive the work moving forward, regardless of the values each individual started by sharing out initially—participants can make the case for each value (20 mins) * Bill then re-focuses the group toward objectives and asks “What are our most high-priority *objectives* for this project?” He points to the list of objectives on chart paper and asks for volunteers to flesh out the list while Tony takes notes. Bill groups like objectives together. Bill then asks the group to choose their top two through dot-voting. Bill facilitates a group discussion to narrow down to top 3-4 priorities overall) (30 mins) * With the remaining time, Bill shifts the group to two additional questions that will be helpful to get this group’s high-level thoughts on in preparation for our work on immediately upcoming deliverables: the school assessment survey, the assessment review tool and process for teacher review teams, and the communications & engagement plan for district educators and staff. * First, what are the critical criteria for a strong assessment system in Syracuse? Bill points to the 5 NYSED requirements and the additional criteria—assessment *purpose*—that came up on the 10/8 call and asks folks to identify anything beyond this list (on slide). (5 mins) * Then, Bill asks the group what *level* (or grain size) of assessment we should be targeting for this work. Is it better for teacher teams to focus more *deeply* on fewer, higher-leverage assessments, or focus more *broadly* to ensure they tackle *all* classroom assessments administered by 2+ teachers (current proposal says any assessment given by “2 or more teachers” should be part of this work—this will be a huge number, vs. grant requirement speaks to district-supported assessments in the existing inventory)? Given the tradeoffs, what are your thoughts about this issue? (8 mins) * Finally (if time), Bill asks the group, What should be the key components of a communications and engagement plan for district staff and educators? What key messages will most resonate with these audiences? What should we *call* the initiative publicly in Syracuse (maybe something catchier and more topic-specific than Teaching is the Core, like Assessment Quality Initiative)? (7 mins) * Bill explains that we are going to take a 10-minute break, and when we come back we will summarize where we landed and discuss implications for our project work. | Bill | * Slides * Markers * Flip chart * White board * SMART Board |
| 10:50 – 11:00 a.m. | Break |  |  |  |  |
| 11:00 – 11:45 a.m. | Clarify and Confirm Deliverables, Roles and Responsibilities | * Participants will confirm and agree upon the project timeline and key deliverables * Participants will clarify and agree upon the roles and responsibilities of each team member | * Emily summarizes where the group landed: agreed-upon key values, highest-priority objectives and any key thoughts on the last discussion questions (3 mins) * She then refocuses the group around how to achieve those targets in a high-quality and efficient way * Emily explains that our goals for this session are to confirm and agree upon the key project deliverables for each of the 3 project phases and clarify and agree upon the roles and responsibilities of each team member, focusing on who will take the lead on each milestone * She adds that because our budget and timeline are tight, want to make sure we’re managing expectations / need to be efficient, and ensure district staff are engaged at a high level, so we can stay on track. Need to understand who is leading each stream of work (2 mins) * Emily then pulls up a version of the overview slides that include a column for the responsible organization (SCSD vs. EF) for each key step & deliverable to ensure understanding and agreement and/or surface any concerns * As we go through each key step and deliverable, agree on whether EF or Syracuse is taking the lead; if Syracuse, agree on which team? Tony takes notes on slides to update accordingly. Where we have open items or uncertainty, Tony tracks next steps so that SCSD and EF staff are able to follow up and complete the outline of division of labor (40 mins) | Emily | * Slides / SMART Board |
| 11:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Closing and Next Steps | * Participants will understand next steps | * Emily thanks everyone for their engagement throughout the morning * Emily separately explains next steps for the afternoon session and the identified next steps coming out of the morning conversation—immediate upcoming deliverables (5 mins) * If time, Emily turns to the parking lot to see if any open items can be addressed (5 min) * Emily asks Brandan to share any final reflections and close the morning (5 min) | Emily / Brandan | * Parking lot (hanging up already) * Agenda slide |
| 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. | Working Lunch: Sharing Feedback on Assessment and Grant Activities | * Get input and feedback on key issues from additional leaders from Paula’s team * Ensure key leaders from Paula’s team feel engaged and valued in this project from the beginning | * Group is joined by approximately 5–7 additional members of Paula’s team (principal, content supervisors, school EDs) for working lunch * As participants grab lunch, Paula opens and sets the expectation for what this group’s role is for this hour; explains that we brought this group here to get their crucial, on-the-ground input into some of the key issues as we begin to dive into this important project * Paula explains that before we get started, we should go around and do super-quick intros since our time is limited (just name and role; EFers will share very brief backgrounds—30 seconds each) (5 mins) * Paula reviews the overview of the project (which participants read as pre-work) using Brandan’s slides from a.m. (5 mins) * Paula then turns the floor over to Emily to lead the discussion * Emily explains that first the group will do an “empathy map” activity as a warmup. One of the reasons why this project is so important is that a negative culture around assessment has developed within the district and across the state and country. The goal of this exercise is for us to better understand your current perspectives around assessment in Syracuse; what you’re seeing, hearing, thinking & feeling * Emily instructs the participants, As you complete this exercise, focus on what your experience is now with regard to local assessment in the district, generally * She unveils a blank empathy map (on chart paper) divided into 5 sections, portraying what the targeted persona *sees*, *thinks/feels*, *hears*, *hopes* and *is challenged by*. * She explains that for this activity, you will write your feelings on sticky notes, which you will then stick onto the respective section of the empathy map. She gives people 5 minutes to write on their post-its and another 3 minutes to stick them up on the map. (8 mins) * Once the chart is complete, Emily analyzes the empathy map aloud by reading the post-its in each category, then comments that this information about the “current state” of assessment in Syracuse will be very valuable as we all think about how to achieve our goals for this project (7 mins) * Emily explains that next we are going to move on to asking you some questions on issues about important upcoming deliverables. After we talk through each of these 3 categories, jot down answers to the questions on post-its and then put them up on the chart under the relevant question #. We will then organize your thoughts into “affinity maps” to see if we are on the same page or have different thoughts about each of these issues. You don’t have to answer every question for every category if you don’t want to * **ASSESSMENT SURVEY (15 mins)**   + Emily explains that we need to decide the appropriate grain size of assessment to ask about in the survey we plan to send schools in a couple of weeks. Our current proposal says any assessment given by “2 or more teachers,” which will be a huge number, vs. grant requirement speaks to district-supported assessments in the existing inventory)   + 1. Is it better for teacher teams to focus more *deeply* on fewer, higher-leverage assessments, or focus more *broadly* to ensure they tackle *all* classroom assessments administered by 2+ teachers? Given the tradeoffs, what are your thoughts about this issue?   + 2. How much time do schools need to complete a survey like this, given answer to previous question?   + 3. Who should be the point person at each school—data specialist? * **ASSESSMENT REVIEW TEAMS / REVIEW TOOL (15 mins)**   + Emily explains that teacher review teams will be comprised of members of the College, Career & Civic Readiness group and the Teacher Advisory Council   + What are this group’s strengths?   + What will this group find most challenging about the work?   + What are their current attitudes toward assessment within the district?   + (Given these attitudes, strengths and gaps,) what will be the most important initial PD content for this group before they dive into assessment reviews?   + Explain that we have added one category, “purpose of assessments,” to the 5 required review categories from NYSED. Are there any others you would add?   + If time, separate from post-its, ask group:   + Assuming we produce a teacher-friendly assessment review tool based on these categories, what PD about this process do you feel prepared to lead, and what might you need help with?   + Given the complexity of existing review tools and their focus on large-scale assessments, do you have any advice for what would make a modified review tool especially useful for teachers for this purpose? * **STEERING COMMITTEE FORMATION (10 mins)**   + Emily explains that we plan to convene a steering committee comprised of district, school, union, parent and community representations (approx. 20-25 people) to advise the grant activities   + Do you have any recommendations regarding the formation of the steering committee?   + Any specific recommendations of people for the steering committee?   + Any concerns about this committee? * Paula and Brandan thank the group for joining and explain that we plan to continue to draw on their expertise for this project throughout the course of this school year | Paula opens, then Emily facilitates discussion | * Slides * Grant overview 1-pager (pre-reading) * Chart paper, post-its |
| 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. | Digging in on Upcoming Project Deliverables / Next Steps | * Participants will agree on and surface concerns re: detailed next steps on immediately upcoming deliverables | * Emily, Bill, Tony, Brandan, Paula, Nate and Margaret stay for this last part (and possibly key members of Paula’s team) * Emily explains that, based on our original proposal, our conversations over the past month, our decisions from this morning’s session about values and priorities, and the feedback from Paula’s team members, our goal for this final hour is to flesh out nitty-gritty details and specific roles & responsibilities for immediately upcoming deliverables * Emily facilitates this discussion, turning to the roles and responsibilities slides as well as the hanging notes from lunch as a guide, using the detailed discussion questions below. Tony takes detailed notes. * **Develop a communications and engagement plan for district educators and staff to explain the goals of TitC as well as how teachers and students will be supported (10 mins)**   + Briefly review our team’s thoughts on this topic from this a.m. and Paula’s team’s feedback during lunch   + **The plan is to finish this by the end of the month**; we agreed EF would draft it and that X from SCSD would be point   + What is the best *mechanism* of engaging district educators and staff through this plan? (i.e., does this go in the school leader memo, does something go directly to teachers?)   + WHO exactly within these categories need to be engaged?   + Beyond developing a document explaining the grant (or incorporating this message into existing documents like the school leader memo), should there be any other initial stakeholder engagement work?   Initial info to school leaders, teacher groups, STA   * **School-facing survey tool (10 mins)**   + We agreed that EF would draft the survey and that SCSD (X in particular) would own the administration of the survey   + Review feedback from Paula’s team   + Our plan is to have a polished draft of this survey in your hands by early November, **launch it by mid-November**, give schools 2 weeks to complete it and then extend the timeline for a week into early Dec. after sending one reminder (so 3 weeks total)—does that sound right in terms of time for schools?   Yes.   * + Do you want to use the assessment inventory as a list they can choose from? Or part of it? Anything else?   Is it helpful for us to manage the survey?  Survey should also ask are you doing it faithfully?  Do you find the assessment useful? (what are you using it for)     * + If we haven’t resolved the grain size issue (either because we don’t have an answer from the lobbyist or couldn’t get to agreement across our group and Paula’s group), re-introduce that now—how are we going to get to resolution on this, and when?   Cast a wide net. Ask ALT “2 or more teachers” (connect with staff, do best you can) AND assess a unit of time longer than 4 school days   * + Logistically, is SurveyMonkey OK, or do you have your own internal survey tool or prefer another?   Wufoo   * + Are we agreed that this survey goes to the data specialist and they are our points on this? Do we need to engage principals at all? If so, how/when/ who?   Ps, ALTs   * **Teacher review team formation and initial PD (20 mins)**   + Review feedback from Paula’s team on this   + We agreed that SCSD (specifically, X) would take the lead on putting together these teacher teams; our goal is to have membership in these teams finalized by early November   Yes. $28 contractual hourly rate.   * + We agreed on our last call that members would be culled from 2 existing educator groups as discussed   + In our proposal we said we would have 7 review teams, each with 3-9 educators   + We said each review team would have ES, MS & HS members and that we would a team in ELA, math, social studies, science, fine arts, CTE, and ELL and world languages, each supervised by a content lead—does this still sound right?   + Are we OK with having the same people on multiple committees? Should we encourage it?   No.   * + Which content leads should oversee which group?   Yes.   * + 3-9 is a big range; what do we think our goal should be for # of educators on each committee?   + How will we decide who goes on what committee—invite anyone in these groups to apply? Then what criteria will we use? Or hand-pick? If so, who will do that? And how (over email, at group meeting? When?)   They’ll figure it out.  WE will create 1-pager—top half is here’s what you’re signing up for, then they respond electronically.   * + How much time do you think is realistic/ideal for each team to spend reviewing each assessment, or to spend on reviews total? (Reviews will take place from January-February) (We can revisit this once we have our assessment survey results but should have a sense of approx. time commitment for participants in advance)   Board sees budget once a month from Feb-April, but we need ASKS to bring to supt in Jan.  Instead of changing timeline, Nate puts benchmarks in budget and then flesh it out later. Placeholder.  We can accelerate action planning timeline.   * + Given all of this, what exactly should next steps be in terms of putting together review committees?   + What are next steps for planning initial PD for this group—what exactly should it focus on, who should lead? (We agreed EF would develop materials & SCSD, specifically X, would facilitate) * **Steering Committee: (15 mins)**   Pass out existing 1-pager or post it on the website   * + We decided this morning that X person from SCSD is the lead on this workstream   + Review feedback from Paula’s team on this topic   + Our plan is to recruit this group by early November and have the first meeting in mid-December (to outline project goals, identify SCSD’s assessment needs and affirm guiding principles)   + We said in our proposal that the categories of people would be: district, school, union, parent and community representations (approximately 20–25 people). Does this still sound right or are there categories we should add/delete?   + We decided on our most recent team call that this group would be used to give “tweak”-level feedback on mostly-baked ideas rather than come up with big ideas themselves, to keep the process moving—do we know yet if Supt Contreras agrees?   + Given all of this, who specifically should we recruit to be on the steering committee? (names)   + Who else should weigh in on this decision?   + What union engagement, if any, do we need to do in advance of recruiting STA members onto the steering committee? What exactly does that look like, who will lead, and when?   Weekly meetings  Here’s what we’re doing, here’s when we’re going to engage with you and how  Here’s what we’re doing, we’ll schedule some time to talk with you about it in mid-December  Pre-survey note to school leaders  Teacher Advisory Council, C3 working groups (in November)   * + Any other pre-engagement we need to do? (i.e., attend a meeting of Supt’s parent advisory group?)   + Next steps: EF will create draft recruitment materials for the SC based on this discussion * Emily asks if there are any final questions or thoughts (5 mins) * Emily thanks everyone for participating and explains that she will follow up with notes from this meeting and next steps | Emily | * Chart paper * Slides from a.m. session * Notes from working lunch session |

Need to rework timeline—1-pager

Assessment Quality Initiative

Comprehensive Assessment Plan

**Assessment 4 Learning**

Learning from Assessments

Streamlining Assessments

It’s not a grant, it’s a project—got a grant to support it—don’t lead with SED

New Tools for Great Teaching